

"The righteous . . . shall grow
like a cedar in Lebanon"

Psalm 92:12

Reading Companion

to the Book of

Revelation

"So they read in the book in the law of God . . .
and caused them to understand the reading"
Nehemiah 8:8

By

Bill Daniels

Preface

The contents of this book were the essence of a course taught in the Bible College at New Germany Baptist Church in 2006. In order to present these materials in a form more readily available for further class use we have kept the class divisions used in the course. Therefore listed separately on the Contents page you will find the starting pages for both the 20 class portions as well as the 22 chapters of Revelation.

An honest study of this book of Revelation is as frightening as it is heartening. Within these stunning, stirring chapters we find greatest hope; of justice upon the wicked, of Christ's return to His kingdom, and of redeemed man's complete restoration and joy in God's presence. A study of Revelation is most effective together with or following a careful study of Daniel's prophecy, for therein is provided the framework for an understanding of all of God's prophecy. May you find the blessing promised in the first and last chapters of this blessed book (Rev. 1:3; 22:7). May you find the One revealed within these pages as your own Saviour, Lord and God.

Bill Daniels

Our **Reading Companions** are simple commentaries, covering various books of the Bible, providing easy to follow help in understanding what you read in your Bible, without becoming overly technical. These Bible study books are earnestly taught, practically applied, and have been a blessing to many.

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As well as; "Through the Beloved Book of Books
A Survey of the New Testament"

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"Behold, He cometh
with clouds;
and every eye shall see Him,
and they also
which pierced Him"

(Rev. 1:7)

Class 1 – Introduction

The Apostle John's book of Revelation is the great New Testament (N.T.) book of prophecy. This final contribution to the Bible is a bit like that ancient image of Moses standing up on Mount Pisgah's height, the wind gently blowing his grey beard, squinting his aged eyes as he looked out over the hazy view of the Promised Land of Canaan from across the Jordan. He could not go there then, but he would someday. Even so the book of Revelation is the last breath-taking gaze off into the misty, distant future from the summit of God's faithful revelation. We cannot go there now, but we will someday.

In the book of Genesis, the beginning of God's revelation to man, we find the record of the beginning of heaven and earth and all that are in them, the fall of mankind into the tragedy of sin, and the beginning of God's supreme expression of love in His plan of redemption for fallen man. Throughout the 66 books of the Bible never do we find man recovering himself from his fall to sin (quite the opposite). His evil sinks to its very lowest at the last. Yet God's determined response throughout the Bible record is relentless grace and enduring patience in man's behalf. The whole

divine programme leads progressively upward to the height of the closing chapters of this book of Revelation with mankind fully and finally restored to God at last, dwelling with Him in the new heavens and earth. In this final book of John we experience that magnificent *crescendo* of the heavenly cantata of the ages. Here is the *capstone* of all of God's earth works, the last glorious chapter in God's story of man, sin, justice, judgment, redemption, and restoration.

Throughout the centuries since the day God gave this book of Revelation human hearts have been stirred to encouragement, optimism, and *terror* through a study of it. Believers have believed it, and infidels have ignored it, laughed at it, or attempted to explain away its message. And as a result, all manner of highly imaginative views have sprung up over the years concerning the meaning of this prophecy. But understood properly, this book of prophecy becomes one of the most uplifting and motivational books of the Bible, filling the perceptive reader with hope and courage, for the ultimate victory is already recorded in its pages. The Lord of the book challenges the reader to perceive (13:18; 17:9), implying that an understanding of the details here is kept on a bit of higher shelf. Yet this is the only book of the Bible carrying a conspicuous

promise of blessing to all who read it and hear what is written with understanding and *"keep those things which are written therein"* (1:3). Does it not then become one of the strangest quirks of church history that the one book containing such a striking promise would become the one most avoided (or twisted) by church leaders? I want that promised blessing, and I want it for you. Therefore I refuse to drift to the other side of the road and pass this blessed book by on our way to the Celestial City.

Background

We are told by John in Revelation 1:9 that he *"was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."* History confirms that John was banished to this little windswept island of 35 square kilometres off the coast of Asia Minor (modern Turkey) by the Roman emperor, Domitian, toward the end of the first century. He was banished there for reasons made obvious there in 1:9, *"…for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."* John would have been an old man, well into his 90's at that time. It was a day when prejudice against the Christian religion was on the rise. And it was while there in that place of punishment and dishonour that John received the visions recorded in this crowning book

of the Bible.

See how God turns the tragedy of persecution, a barren isle of shame, into a veritable Mont-Aux Sources! God did the same with the tragic unfairness of Joseph's dungeon, transforming that dismal chapter of his life into a springboard to blessing. He did the same through Daniel's captivity in Babylon, putting him there at the head of *"the times of the Gentiles"* to chart the way forward. Out of bitterest persecution in the present came clearest perspective into the future, both for John and for millions of blessed readers ever after.

Theme

John was instructed by the Lord in 1:11 to write down what he was to see and to send the book to seven churches throughout the province of Asia, the heart of the Christian world at that time. What the Apostle was to see becomes evident from the very first words of the book. It was *"The Revelation of Jesus Christ".* John's book receives its name from the first word of the book in the Greek, *apokalupsis* (apocalypse), meaning to remove from hiding, to unveil or uncover. This book is the revelation or unveiling of Jesus Christ. It is the disclosure of His glory, leading up to the spectacular event of His

coming in all of His splendour, with happenings before and following that crowning pinnacle of history. This central theme of the Messiah's splendour unveiled is confirmed from the first, through the record of John's stunning encounter with Jesus Christ, the Lord of the churches, in the second half of chapter 1. God's entire revelation through the whole Bible holds Jesus Christ as its pivotal point throughout, and the book of Revelation is that Christ-centred theme rising to its very summit! There are constant allusions to the Old Testament (O.T.) throughout John's Apocalypse, particularly to the book of Daniel. Displayed in this book is the coming together of all things prophesied, all themes converging and conclusively entwining the Old and New Testaments together.

Now consider with me how that phrase in 1:1, *"the Revelation of Jesus Christ",* could also be understood a bit differently. It could refer to the revelation of Jesus Christ in that He is the One revealed, or it could speak of Him as the One doing the revealing. Perhaps a touch of both? Christ revealed to us, or what Christ reveals to us. And this latter sense of revelation, not only *about* Jesus but also *from* Jesus, finds support in 1:1-2. God the Father gave the message to Jesus, who sent it through an angel to John, who wrote and sent it to

the seven churches, and through them to all churches of every age – God the Father to Jesus to angel to John to churches to world. And do not miss a very important point here. John does not hesitate in 1:2 to refer to this record coming down to us from God the Father, through this chain of both heavenly and human links, as *"the word of God"*.

So we have in these words recorded by John an awesome but accurate, terrible but true accounting of the future, final events leading up to the very pinnacle of world history, the resplendent return of Jesus Christ to His earthly kingdom. The record of it as true and trustworthy as God Himself! Makes me smile!

Purpose

The Apostle John, that aged representative of the worship of Christ, was being persecuted under the ban of human government and banished to a remote island of the Aegean Sea. It was a situation representative of the world's attitude toward the true religion of Jesus Christ. Thus the stage was set for the book's purpose;

- To encourage saints to perseverance under persecution for *"the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ"*, with an eye to the

greatest trouble the world will ever experience yet to come at the last (Matt. 24:21).

- To put momentary persecution into an eternal perspective (II Cor. 4:17).
- To instil hope;
    - Of the ultimate victory of Christ and all who are His, no matter what we face on earth.
    - Of final deliverance from evil.
    - Of justice upon evil in all of its forms.

Running throughout John's book is such a note of victory! Revelation is a book just brimming with singing saints and gloriously promising announcements to God's own people!!

Major Views

Over the centuries there have arisen many views of interpretation of John's Apocalypse. This development perhaps for many reasons;

- Because of the seemingly strange and disconnected visions and scenes in the book.
- Because of the abundance of figurative language.

- Because of the graphic, and even bizarre details of predicted judgments.

- Because of the differing kinds of human hearts seeking interpretation, and moved by various purposes, some good and some not.

- Because of the Lord's purpose to hide His great truths through symbolism from those who have no eyes to see (Matt. 13:10-16).

- Because of Satan's effort to mar the message through his hatred and fear of the handwriting on the wall written into the pages of this book. For he shall be cast down out of heaven (12:7-13), down into the abyss for 1000 years (20:1-3), and then finally down into the Lake of Fire to *"be tormented day and night for ever and ever"* (20:10). His doom is underscored here like no place else in the Bible.

Irving Jensen lists four basic schools of interpretation of Revelation;

1. <u>The symbolic view</u> – Does not view Revelation as prophecy (foretelling) of any specific future events at all, but only a teaching of general spiritual truths about suffering and affliction and such through a symbolic style.

2. The preterist view – Acknowledges some reference to future things in the last two chapters, but apart from this it sees the message of Revelation as fulfilled in the first century.

3. The continuous-historical view – Recognizes that chapters 19-22 speak of Christ's coming and events following, but sees chapters 1-18 as symbolically, prophetically describing the entire time period from Christ's first coming to His return. For example, they commonly equate the mighty angel of chapter 10 with the Reformation. Predictably these folks differ widely among themselves over the details of interpretation.

4. The futurist view – Sees chapters 1-3 as written for the churches of Asia, but with application throughout church history, and then chapters 4-22 as speaking of end time events yet future, basically describing the final 7-year tribulation period before Christ's return. Here is where conservative scholars tend to land. Some folks of this persuasion see the seven churches of the first three chapters as predictive as well, of stages of church history.

Then there are differing views as to the interpretation of the first half of chapter 20, more specifically the 1000-year reign repeatedly mentioned there;

1. Premillennial view – Future events will be in the order described in chapters 19-20, according to a normal reading. Jesus Christ will return to the earth before (*pre*) His earthly rule of an actual 1000-year period.

2. Postmillennial view – Jesus will return after (*post*) a "millennium" (not necessarily a literal 1000 years) period of blessedness and prosperity upon the earth. Something like Israel's kingdom rising to her golden era under David and Solomon.

3. Amillennial view – There will be no (*a*) actual 1000-year reign of Christ on earth. Christ's reign is spiritual, in heaven and in the hearts of His saints on earth, extending throughout this age, from the time of His death and resurrection to the end. Such folks suppose that God only ever meant for Christ's promised kingdom to be understood in this spiritualised sense. Yet Jesus never discouraged the expectation in His disciples of an actual earthly kingdom (Acts 1:6-7).

A normal reading of the book leads to a *futuristic* and *premillennial* viewpoint. We find key verses in 1:7 & 19, clearly pointing out the forward, future look of John's vision *("and the things which shall be hereafter")*, and centring around the 2nd coming of Christ *("Behold, he cometh").* Do not miss the very physical references in the summary statement of 1:7 (clouds, eyes), highlighting the literal, physical, actual nature of Christ's return, *"in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven"* (Acts 1:11). We read it simply, normally, as we are taught throughout the Bible to do.

Basic Outline

Chapter 1-3 – Letters to the Churches.

Chapter 4-5 – Heavenly Throne Scene.

Chapter 6-7 – Seal Judgments.

Chapter 8-11 – Trumpet Judgments.

Chapter 12-14 – Characters in Conflict.

Chapter 15-16 – Bowl Judgments.

Chapter 17-18 – Babylon's Destruction.

Chapter 19-20 – Christ's Coming & Reign.

Chapter 21-22 – New Heaven & Earth.

Highlights

Chapter 1-3 – Letters to the Churches.

- 2:1-7 – Ephesus church was commended for their righteous intolerance of evil, but had lost their first love.

- 2:8-11 – Smyrna church was encouraged against fear of persecution. Not that they would be kept from such, only that they were not to fear it.

- 2:12-17 – Pergamos church was commended for their faith and martyrdoms, but was too tolerant of evil.

- 2:18-29 – Thyatira church was commended for their love, service, faith, patience, and works, but was tolerating the presence and even the propagation of evil (vs. 20).

- 3:1-6 – Sardis church only had a few yet undefiled, mostly dead, living only a name. So it was from a bit of evil among the good at Pergamos to a bit of good among the evil at Sardis! From *in*tolerance of evil (Ephesus), to tolerance (Pergamos), to tolerating its promotion (Thyatira), to evil tolerating the presence of some good (Sardis)!

- 3:7-13 – Philadelphia church with a little strength had kept the word and had not denied God's name.

- 3:14-22 – Laodicean church would be spewed out of Christ's mouth as useless. Things both hot and cold were good for something, but things lukewarm were good for nothing.

Chapter 4-5 – Heavenly Throne Scene.

- 4:1 – From the Lord's command to *"Come up hither"* the word *"church"* suddenly goes conspicuously missing. This is in sharp contrast to the *20 times* the word *"church"* is found in the first three chapters. It is a picture of the focus of God's attention upon the church in this current age, and then the removal or Rapture of the church before God's judgments fall on the earth.

- Chapter 5 – The Lamb alone is worthy to open the seals of the book.

Chapter 6-7 – Seal Judgments.

- 6:1-8 – The four horsemen combine to form a picture of Antichrist; the white horse depicts Antichrist's rise in peace, the red horse, his about-face at the midpoint of 7-year

Tribulation with peace quite gone, the black horse, the resulting worldwide devastation by famine, the pale horse, death to ¼ of the earth's population, especially God's people.

- 6:9-11 – Martyrdom of believers will characterize Antichrist's rule.

- Chapter 7 – Two multitudes; 144,000 Jewish sealed servants (evangelists?) and a (resulting?) great multitude of redeemed out of tribulation.

Chapter 8-11 – Trumpet Judgments.

- Chapter 8 – Destruction by thirds (*"third"* found 11 times).

- 9:1-12 – Fifth trumpet (first woe) – Demonic creatures from the pit.

- 11:1-14 – Two witnesses – Marking the midpoint of the 7-year tribulation, with the time remaining greatly emphasized (vs. 2-3, 9, 11).

Chapter 12-14 – Characters in Conflict.

- Chapter 12 – Conflict on earth and in heaven, showing the heavenly causes for the earthly conflicts.

- Chapter 13 – Rise of antichrist and false prophet, characterized by blasphemy, persecution of saints, demand for universal worship, and *"great"* miraculous powers granted to him.

- 14:14-20 – A glimpse of the approaching horror of human harvest at Armageddon.

Chapter 15-16 – Bowl Judgments.

- Chapter 16 – A chapter of great things (*mega* found 11 times in the Greek).

Chapter 17-18 – Babylon's Destruction.

- Chapter 17 - Religious Babylon falls.

- Chapter 18 – Commercial Babylon falls.

Chapter 19-20 – Christ's Coming & Reign.

- Chapter 19 – Two suppers – The marriage supper of the Lamb (vs. 9) and the great supper of God (vs. 17-18).

- 20:1-7 – The 1000-year earthly reign of Christ. The duration repeated *6 times* so even amillennialists might not miss it.

Chapter 21-22 – New Heaven & Earth.

Breath-taking prospect!!!

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Think About It

Consider God's sovereign control of world history, so strongly underscored in this book.

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Consider how very many things come in sevens in this book;

Churches, spirits, golden candlesticks, stars, angels, lamps seals, horns, eyes, trumpets, thunders, thousands slain, heads, last plagues, golden vials, mountains and kings.

The word *"seven"* is found *40 times* in the book. The most prominent number.

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Consider what will flee from the hearts of all, as a dream when one wakes, in the moment Jesus Christ splits the skies at His actual, physical return;

- Every thought that Christ is less than magnificent.
- Every hope of in any way deceiving Him.
- Every doubt of His reality.
- Every hope of escape.
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- Every sneering scorn, and all laughter on the lips of pseudo-intellectual scoffers and heretics.

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Consider how John's Patmos experience is perhaps that to which Jesus was referring in His comment to Peter in John 20:21-23. At the end of his long life, before he left this world for the next, John "saw" the return of Jesus Christ. Compare Christ's comment in Matthew 16:28, speaking of His coming transfiguration (Matt. 17:1ff), in which some would see Him *"coming in His kingdom".* Not that they would still be living in the day of that great event, but that they would see the prelude of it.
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"Write the things
which thou hast seen,
and the things which are,
and the things which
shall be hereafter"

(Rev. 1:19)

Class 2 – Revelation 1

Rev 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:
Rev 1:2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

Chapter 1

1:1-8 – Introduction

Vs. 1 – This is the book of *"the Revelation of Jesus Christ"*. Though its content has much to do with *what* will come to pass, its primary concern is with *who* will come, the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the display of who He really is, His revealing in His return.

Vs. 2 – As we considered earlier, we find in these first two verses the source and sequence of this book's presentation to us; God the Father → God the Son → *"his angel"* → John → churches → world. And without hesitation John described what was written as *"the word of God"*.

Vs. 3 – May we ever be seekers of this promise of

Rev 1:3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.
Rev 1:4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;

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blessing as we pursue an understanding of this book.

"For the time is <u>at</u> <u>hand</u>" – Compare in vs. 1, *"things which must <u>shortly</u> come to pass".* We are constantly reminded in God's Word that the end of all things is near. We are ever to live with an expectant hope, for to be sure, the brevity of our life and of this current age will be so apparent from the perspective of eternity.

Vs. 4-8 – John brings greeting from the triune God.

Vs. 4 – The *"Him"* of this verse appears to be God the Father, He who is and was and *"is to come".* He is the eternal, unchangeable One who refers to Himself as *"I AM THAT I AM"* (Ex. 3:14), for He is eternally self-existent.

"The seven Spirits which are before His throne" – Compare 4:5. This is a description of the Holy Spirit

Rev 1:5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,
Rev 1:6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

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in the fullness of His glory and power.

Vs. 5-8 – Notice from the start here the great emphasis upon Jesus Christ. With brief greetings from Father and Spirit, the show is now largely handed over to God the Son. Jesus had said of the Spirit, *"He shall glorify Me"* (Jn. 16:14), and so the Spirit does here in bringing us this word from God. With the briefest mention of Himself, the Spirit quickly turns the focus upon Jesus. Every ministry truly guided by God's Spirit will be centred the same, squarely upon exalting Jesus Christ. Concerning that exalted Son we are taught;

- <u>Who He is</u> – *"The faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth"* (vs. 5). He spoke as the *"faithful witness".* He arose as *"the first begotten of the dead".* He rules as *"prince of the kings of the earth".*

- <u>What He did</u> – He *"loved us, and washed us*

Rev 1:7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

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from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests" (vs. 5-6). Out of the wonder of His love He *"washed us from our sins in His own blood"*, even lifting such fallen ones to appointment as *"kings and priests unto God and His Father"*.

- Of what He is worthy – *"Glory and dominion forever and ever"* (vs. 6)!
- What He will do – *"Behold, He cometh"* (vs. 7).

Vs. 7 – Here is the key verse of the book and the crowning summit of things future. This is the summary statement, with detailed expansion coming right up. Underscored at the outset is the absolute certainty of Christ's coming, and that His return will touch all mankind. Again, do not miss the very physical, earthly references here (clouds, eyes, wailing), highlighting the literal, physical, actual nature of His return. The reference here is to Christ's 2nd coming after the tribulation, not to the Rapture of the church. In His return Jesus will

Rev 1:8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

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not come as He did the first time, never breaking *"a bruised reed"* or quenching *"a smoking flax"* (Matt. 12:20; Isa. 42:3). Rather here is Jesus Christ coming as the all-powerful One.

"They also which pierced Him" – Obviously refers to the Jewish nation (Zech. 12:10).

Vs. 8 – *"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord". "Alpha and Omega"* are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. It is a figure of speech meaning the beginning and the end. Compare *"Author and Finisher"* in Hebrews 12:2. Jesus is the One who can and will finish what He began. In fact, He begins and ends this final revelation through John with the same statement (22:13).

"Which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty" – Jesus, as God the Father, is the *"I Am",* the eternally self-existing One. There is never a time through all eternity past or future when He is not (Mic. 5:2, *"from everlasting"*). *"The Almighty"* is a great title of God so common in this book of

Rev 1:9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Revelation; of God on His throne (4:8), of the *"Lord God Almighty"* (11:17), of *"the Lord God Omnipotent"* who reigns (19:6). Ten times this name of God is found in the N.T., nine of them here in this book of Revelation. The name describes He who holds sway over all things, Ruler of all. It is a name comparable to *"the Most High God"* whom Nebuchadnezzar met in Daniel 3-4. Yet, amazingly, it is by this divine title that Jesus is now revealed here. Again, this is the revelation of Jesus Christ. This is Jesus shown for who He really is. The way He shall be seen when He comes the 2nd time. All will see Him in that glorious day, and none will be the least mistaken then as to who He is, *Almighty Creator of heaven and earth!*

1:9-20 – Vision of Jesus Christ

Vs. 9 – John was forced to an island of exile, a *"companion in tribulation"* there to all who have ever suffered for Jesus. But though evil men might force and limit the outward circumstances of that old saint, they could not touch his spirit. Inwardly, *"in*

the spirit", he soared to the heavens.

No earthly situation is ever so bad that we cannot see our God in it and enter boldly into His very presence there and walk with Him through it. Never do we see Jonah's spirit soar higher in sweeter communion with his God than when in the belly of a fish *at "the bottoms of the mountains"* (Jon. 2). The worst of times can be the best of times, if we are willing to meet God there.

Vs. 10 – John was *"in the spirit on the Lord's day".* He was in a heightened spiritual state. As when Peter *"fell into a trance"* that God might show him a vision of Gentile inclusion in His church (Acts 10:10). The phrase *"on the Lord's day"* employs an uncommon word in the Greek behind the English, indicating a day especially relating to the Lord. Some believe *"the Lord's day"* a reference to Sunday. More likely the point is that John was transported in the Spirit to *the day of the Lord*, that day so prominently featuring in the prophets, that day when the Lord holds sway and shows Himself. Just as Peter, James, and John experienced *"the Son of Man coming in His kingdom"* at Christ's

transfiguration (Matt. 16:28ff), even so this was a preview, like stepping into a time machine and being transported ahead to see a vision of things yet future. There John heard *"a great voice, as a trumpet".* Compare 4:1, where it seems he heard the same voice speaking in the same manner. The clear, loud, and unmistakeable sound of the trumpet was often used for announcements and commands in the O.T. (Lev. 25:9; Num. 10:1-10; Zech. 9:14). In the N.T. we often see a trumpet involved in the Lord's coming (Matt. 24:31; I Cor. 15:52; I Thess. 4:16). Again, this is the voice of Jesus in His 2nd coming. In His 1st coming His voice was gentler, bringing the offer of salvation. In His 2nd coming He comes with authority, announcing God's judgment. Now He stands at the door of human hearts, shut out and knocking (3:20). Then He breaks down every closed door. His word, as a sharp sword, will then overwhelm every foe (vs. 16; 19:15; Heb. 4:12).

Further on the voice of Jesus, we read in vs. 15, *"and His voice as the sound of many waters"*. Booming like continual thunder, alarmingly loud and majestic, like the pounding of the powerful ocean waves on the shores of Patmos. It is a voice of terribleness to the lost, expressing God's thundering authority before whom all human

Rev 1:11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

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authority withers. Compare the power in Christ's words when all fell backward in the garden with His simple statement, *"I am He"* (Jn. 18:5-6). Compare the power in the words of He who spoke creation into existence. Note elsewhere the sound of such power in God and His messengers (Ezek. 1:24; 43:2; Dan. 10:6; Rev. 14:2; 19:6).

Three things are said of Christ's voice here;

- *"A great voice, as a trumpet"* (vs. 10) – Speaking of authoritative announcement.
- *"His voice as the sound of many waters"* (vs. 15) – Speaking of booming majesty.
- *"Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword"* (vs. 16) – Expressing the overwhelming, inescapable destruction of His words in judgment at His return (19:15).

Vs. 11 – John was commanded to write all that he saw in a book and send to seven churches in Asia,

Rev 1:12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;
Rev 1:13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

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starting in Ephesus, the centre of his labours in his later years.

Vs. 12 – Upon turning toward the voice he had heard, John saw *"seven golden candlesticks"*. We discover in vs. 20 that these candlesticks or lamps represent the seven churches mentioned in vs. 11.

Vs. 13 – John then saw Jesus, *"the Son of Man"*, standing *"in the midst of the seven candlesticks"*. Jesus is there still, tending His churches as a vine-keeper moves about his vineyard carefully tending his vines.

Do not miss the comparison with scenes in Daniel. Here, as in Daniel 7:13, we meet the *"Son of Man"*, that name Jesus most commonly used of Himself, describing His relation to us (even as His name, "Son of God", expresses His relation to God). The clothing and appearance here is very similar to the glorious One seen in Daniel 10. Compare the Ancient of Days (Dan. 7:9) clothed in garments

"white as snow".

Jesus wears the clothing of a priest here. For He is indeed our *"Great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens"* (Heb.4:14). He is the *"better"* priest of that *"better"* priesthood, for He ever lives to make intercession, showing and offering the power of an endless life. One of the responsibilities of the high priest was to keep the seven-branched golden candelabra trimmed, filled, and burning through the night (Lev. 24:1-4). The candelabra in the holy place gave light only through the night, as enough light was admitted in by day through the upper windows of the holy place. The priest filled the lamp bowls at evening with holy oil, trimmed and lit them to burn until they burned out in the morning. In the symbolism here the lamps are the churches, with the unadulterated oil depicting the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence. The remnant of God's people in every age are set as the light-bearers, shining forth the truth of God to a world dark with perversion, until the day dawns and our shining is needed no more in the excelling glory of the Son's presence in His coming.

Now see here in vs. 13 those lamps being tended personally by our Great High Priest. It is in fact what we see Jesus busy with in the next two

chapters. He assesses each church in righteousness as to their responsibility to burn brightly. He trims for greater brightness where trimming is necessary, just as the Husbandman prunes his vines that greater fruit might result (Jn. 15). He fills to the brim and empowers with the holy oil of the Spirit. He lights the fire, enflaming our hearts in His purpose to shine His truth into the darkness. It is our wisdom to join Him in this great cause. We must do the same toward each other, as our brother's keeper, helping to trim away the old grave clothes of our pre-salvation life, helping to wash the saints' feet, helping each other to burn our very brightest for Him.

Vs. 14 – *"His hairs were white like wool"* – Compare again the *"Ancient of Days"* in Daniel 7:9. This presents Jesus in His pure righteousness, His venerable dignity, His wisdom of countless years, His perfect maturity, discernment, and understanding. As the dignity of an old wise one who has seen every aspect of life, has observed every cause and effect, and knows where every path chosen now will eventually take us. Even that O.T. name *"Ancient of Days"* speaks of the same. It is

the superlative of the Hebrew idiom "full of days". "Fullest of days" is the God of eternity, seeing and knowing *all!*

"And His eyes were as a flame of fire" – Eyes represent awareness and understanding. In tracing the eyes of the Lord through the Bible, we see a picture of the wholly penetrating gaze of His omniscience;

- Every**where** – *"The eyes of the LORD are in every place"* (Prov. 15:3).
- Every**one** – *"Thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men"* (Jer. 32:19).
- Every**thing** – *"For He knoweth the secrets of the heart"* (Ps. 44:21).

We see the same in Jesus during the days of His earthly ministry, His awareness penetrating to the secret thoughts of men (Matt. 9:4; 12:25; Mk. 2:8; Lk. 6:8; 7:39-40; Jn. 16:19). As well, with each of the churches in chapters 2-3 the Lord begins with His acute awareness of them, affirming, *"I know thy works"*. For *"nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad"* (Lk. 8:17).

The flame in Christ's eyes speaks of fiery judgment,

Rev 1:15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

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for we are introduced here to a judgment scene. First judgment upon the churches of Asia, representing the church throughout this age. Then judgment upon the world (19:12). Compare the great focus upon fiery flames from God's throne in Daniel 7:9-10. Here is a visual commentary on Christ's penetrating awareness, and piercing, consuming, enflamed indignation toward all evil in that day of His coming, all things open and exposed before *"Him with whom we have to do".* Compare the coming refiner's fire of Malachi 3:1-5 and I Corinthians 3:11-15. The only right response for man is to *turn now* to Him with the heart of the psalmist, saying, *"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"* (Ps. 139:23-24). *"Examine me, O LORD, and prove me: try my reins and my heart"* (Ps. 26:2).

Vs. 15 – *"His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace"* – Brass is often used in the Bible as a symbol of things strong or lasting (Job 40:18; 41:27; Ps. 107:16; Jer. 1:18; 15:20). It is

Rev 1:16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

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also used as a picture of hard-heartedness, obstinacy, and insensibility (Isa. 48:4; Jer. 6:28; Ezek. 22:18). With Christ's feet of brass He will tread *"the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God"* (19:15; 14:19-20; Isa. 63:1ff). God meets man's brazen rebellion with brass in judgment, ultimately returning brass for brass, attitude for attitude. In contrast, Jesus touched John, His own dear one, with His hand (vs. 17). The Lord's attitude toward all sin is *hard* and unbending like brass. He is by no means soft on sin. Even in the O.T. tabernacle all points of contact with sinful man were made of brass (altar of burnt offering, grate, altar vessels, pots, and censers). Jesus Christ is revealed here standing in the midst of the churches and dealing with them and the world on the basis of divine and righteous judgment.

Vs. 16 – *"His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength"* – At last John looks fully upon the glory of Christ's face. *"Countenance"* refers to the area of the face. In attempting to describe what he saw there he makes comparison to the brightest

Rev 1:17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

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thing in our earthly experience, the sun shining in its full strength. Absolute, unclouded brilliance is the image of God's glory. It is the brilliance that blinded Paul on the Damascus road. *"Above the brightness of the sun"* is the way Paul described that light (Acts 26:13). John saw the same in Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration, where *"His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light"* (Matt. 17:2). Here is He who is;

- The *"day star"* (II Pet. 1:19).
- The *"true Light that lighteth every man coming into the world"* (Jn. 1).
- *"The bright and morning star"* (Rev. 22:16).
- The *"Sun of Righteousness"* (Mal. 4:2).

Vs. 17 – Such a vision of Jesus Christ in His stunning brilliance filled John with such terror, with the result that there simply was no strength in him. All within him crumpled and withered as if he were a dead man. Of all men John was closest to Jesus, that *"disciple whom Jesus loved".* Yet look well to John's reaction here. This is no friendly

Rev 1:18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.
Rev 1:19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;

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handshake and shoulder clap. Jesus is no chummy buddy. *He is God!* John's response is further proof of Christ's deity. Men respond so only to *God* (Isa. 6; Ezek. 1:28).

Then the tender touch of the Lord, and words of comfort (as Daniel in Dan. 10). The unsaved receive no such word of encouragement when facing Christ their Judge at the last. *Dreadful thought!*

Vs. 18 – Jesus Christ conquered death in His resurrection, and thus holds the keys of death and hell. He is Lord of death and the place of the dead. He is the One with ultimate power over the greatest enemy of man. No one dies without Christ's divine permission. No one finds eternal life without the same. If you have not received eternal life from Jesus Christ, then you *do not have it at all!!* Such can be found in no one but Him.

Vs. 19 – Here in this verse is the basic outline of the book of Revelation;

Rev 1:20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

- *"The things which thou hast seen"* John was already recording in this 1st chapter.
- *"The things which are"* relate to the state of the seven churches at that time (chapter 2-3).
- *"The things which shall be hereafter"* the bulk of the book relates, from chapter 5 onward.

Vs. 20 – The seven stars in Christ's right hand *"are the angels of the seven churches".* He holds them protectively in His right hand, a place of honour. The term *"angels"* literally means "messengers". These angels in Christ's hand could refer to guardian angels over each church, or they could perhaps refer to human "messengers" of the churches. The word translated "angel" here is generally used in the N.T. to refer to actual angels, though the word can be used of human messengers (Matt. 11:10; Lk. 9:52). As well, we do see angels acting in guardian roles of some sort over children (Matt. 18:10), over believers (Heb. 1:13-14), over the nation of Israel (Dan. 12:1), and over other nations of earth (Dan. 10:13, 20). But if these are actual

angels, could Jesus address letters of concern *"unto the angel of the church"* (2:1, 8, 12, 18, etc.)? Could Christ express concern with the *failings* of a church's guardian angel, when God's good angels always keep His words in every way (Ps. 103:20-21)? Could perfect spirit beings be called upon to repent? These *"angels"* must rather be human messengers of the churches, the pastors or representatives of the individual churches. And my heart skips a beat when I look again to those stars in Christ's hand! In His *right* hand! *Held in a place of honour!* There is no greater occupation for a man on earth than to be a spiritual leader of Christ's church. It is such a place of privilege, responsibility, opportunity, commendation, reproof, reward, chastisement! And even though these leaders and churches had diminished the Lord's place in their lives, He held them still in His right hand. ***GRACE!!***

"If we deny Him, yet He abides faithful".

Note the close association here between leader and church. If the pastor alone had left his first love (2:4), he could simply be removed. But Christ seems to speak to the whole church of their lampstand potentially removed (2:5). Leader and church are inseparably linked! The church rises and falls with leadership. It will seldom rise above

its leadership. With what greatest care you should be praying for your pastor!

Class 3 – Revelation 2:1-17

We find in these next two chapters of Revelation personal letters dictated by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself to seven individual churches then existing in what was then the province of Asia (western Turkey). In chapter 2 we find 4 letters, to the churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, and Thyatira. In chapter 3 we find 3 more letters, to the churches of Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. The order of the presentation of the letters geographically scribes something of an arch, north from Ephesus, then east and then south. The presentation of these letters is not according to a normal fashion. There is none of the customary introduction that we see in other N.T. letters. They all follow a similar pattern;

- The church is named.
- The author, Jesus Christ, is described, with details varying each time but expressing aspects of the vision of Jesus given in chapter 1. There is then perhaps some agreement stated between the aspects of Jesus presented and the condition of the church addressed, or what Jesus promises to do; i.e. the One tending the lamps threatens to take

away their lamp, or the One holding the sharp sword threatens to use it.

- A statement is then given of the church's condition. Three churches have both good and bad, Ephesus, Pergamos, and Thyatira. Two have only good, Smyrna and Philadelphia. Two have only bad, Sardis and Laodicea.
- Then an exhortation to do something.
- Then a call to hear.
- Then a promise to the overcomers or true believers among them.

Questions arise. What does the message to these churches mean for today? Why were these churches chosen out of the many then existing? Obviously God would not have included these brief letters in His Word if there were no benefits for us today. Indeed He has assured us in 1:3 that there *is* treasure to be found in these pages. It seems these churches were chosen by the Lord in order to express His counsel to His church in typical situations arising in essence again and again throughout this age. These letters were aimed, as the larger epistles of the N.T., at an immediate audience, yet they were meant as well for the wider

hearing and instruction of the church through the age.

Some hold to a prophetic view of these seven churches. Such interpreters see in each church circumstance a progression through the various eras of church history, from the 1st century until Christ's return. They might suggest that the situation at the first named church, the church at Ephesus, depicts the nature of the church as a whole in the world during John's day and into the following decades. The church at Smyrna then perhaps describes the character of Christ's church on earth through the next couple of centuries, marked by persecution. It might be suggested that the church at Pergamos depicts the nature of the church in the era of Constantine (about 300-600 A.D.). Thyatira, the founding and prominence of Catholicism (600-1500 A.D.). Sardis, the Reformation era (15-1800's). Philadelphia, the missionary era of the mid 1800's to mid-1900's. Laodicea, the modern rise of neo-evangelicalism from the mid 1900's, with right doctrine but wrong behaviour and careless associations. Such a view is neat and fanciful, but unsupportable. The Bible gives no clear authorization for such a view, neither do the details really fit with church history. As well, such a view destroys the doctrine of the imminent

Rev 2:1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

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return of Jesus Christ. In our study we will approach these letters just as we would any other N.T. epistle, recognizing a local, immediate message to the church addressed, yet placed here in the Book of books that we might glean what God would have for us as well.

These are messages of reproof and reassurance from the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ, Saviour and Guardian of the churches. He who is loving yet holy, watchful and concerned. He who walks among the churches, tending them as a shepherd his sheep, watching over them with the keenest interest and most penetrating awareness. He who loves us enough to wash us from our sins in His own blood.

Chapter 2

2:1-7 – *"Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus"*

The city of Ephesus had seen an abundance of labour through God's men and women over the decades. Apollos, Aquila and Priscilla, Paul,

Rev 2:2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:
Rev 2:3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

Timothy, and John all lived, loved, and laboured there. Over 40 years before the writing of this letter the Apostle Paul had laboured for about 3 years in and out of Ephesus (Acts 19), with the result that *"all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks"* (Acts 19:10).

Vs. 2-3 – The Lord knew these saints at Ephesus for their patient, persevering labours for Him. In their favour was their righteous hatred of both evil and error. They were a gloriously intolerant, uncompromising church. They carefully examined folks and were not readily given to believing their claims, in an effort to keep Christ's church pure. They were more concerned for purity than personal feelings, more intent upon the Lord's happiness than happy people. They joined the Lord in His hatred of *"the deeds of the Nicolaitans"* (vs. 6). Nobody knows for sure who these "Nicolaitans" were or what they believed or practiced. The point here is that they were false teachers whose deeds were appropriately hated by the believers at Ephesus.

These were saints valiant for truth, right, and purity, who were hard on sin and sinners. And for this the Lord of the churches gave His "Well Done" (*"this thou hast"*). Hear His praise, oh generation so given to compromise in moral purity and truth! In the churches of our day there is more a lurching after the world than a righteous pitching of it. We want to dress like prostitutes and sing like pagans in the pews. We want to hold hands with any and every soul who says, "Oh I am a Christian too", rather than examining whether they really show the truth of it, the fruit of it, before we join with them. We try nothing, test no one, proclaiming God's love quite tolerant of most every religious perversion. We play down doctrinal purity for the sake of unity and tolerance. We bow to the demand of conventional wisdom that we must step down from being *"the pillar and ground of the truth"*, which God's church is meant to be, that we should rather join them in their drift from the sure moorings of God's Word. As the lion looks up to the monkey in the tree, and with toothy grin says, "Come on down here. We are both creatures of God's making. Let's be one". With a far different meaning of oneness than his words might imply. As the louse looks up to the bird, and says, "Come down here. We are meant for close fellowship". To the bird's detriment. So the world speaks to every believer and church

Rev 2:4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.
Rev 2:5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

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standing strong and true. God's wisdom on the other hand insists that it is wise to be loving enough to hold firm to sound doctrine for the eternal good of mankind, even if that is upsetting to other "Christians", even if that means division through intolerance of views that do not lead to the glory of God or the eternal well-being of men. We pitch doctrine instead of holding it dear and pitching those who will not. We care little about purity of life and beliefs before the Lord and give ourselves to comfort and popularity before the world. Do not miss the Lord's commendation here! *"He that walketh with wise men will be wise: but the companion of fools shall be destroyed"* (Prov. 13:20).

Vs. 4 – Backslidden in love – Though these saints were valiant for truth and purity, yet they had lost their first love, and to this the Lord was calling them back.

Vs. 5 – How severe the warning! The Lord threatens to remove the light of their testimony from earth.

Rev 2:6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.
Rev 2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

The Lord of compassion speaks praise where praise is due. He is not ambiguous in this, leaving no uncertainty about what pleased Him. But as well, He is firm and forthright in reproving where there is fault. He is far from vague in this either. Many in our modern world promote the powers of positive affirmation, teaching the need to lavishly pour on the syrup of positive praise in dealing with children, and to back off on the more negative side of reproofs and punishments. Such an approach is like sandpaper without the sand, devoid of any real shaping power. Tact and tolerance to the point of tepidity. In Jesus we see the proper balance of forceful shaping and genuine compassion. God means business and is not to be taken lightly, yet He loves with an everlasting love!

It is not that these at Ephesus had departed entirely from love for God, but the fervency and depth of their love was not as it once was. Zeal of stance and busyness had in some sense replaced passion it seems. More the cloud of dust and blur of motion,

but with a marked decline in devotedness to the Master Himself. Martha waxing, and Mary waning. *"That good part"* was slipping away (Lk. 10:41-42). Orthodoxy and service are not enough. The Lord looks with clearest insight upon the heart, upon the reasons and motives for what we do. He is the white-haired One, who knows where today's trend will take us tomorrow. The sincere devotion of the 1st generation often moves the 2nd generation to adopt the standards and practices of the 1st, yet without the inward passion of their parents, not really knowing the reasons for what they do. These at Ephesus were 2nd generation Christians. What they were doing was good, but the why of it was deficient, for they were losing sight of the Who. The Lord sought to curb that common pattern where *consuming love* turns to a *cooling off*, falling to *compromise*, and then to *corruption*.

What does a waning first love look like?

- Obedience and communion with God more a tedious chore than a delight.
- View of sin more the bored "so what".
- Dying interest in God's words, fellowship with believers, and outreach/missions.
- Conversation filled more with things of my

Rev 2:8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;
Rev 2:9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

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own interest than things of God.

- Passion for fashion, appearance, entertainments, leisure, and other trifling, passing-away things.

The Lord would that they (we) *remember*, *repent*, and *return*. Do not drop the insincere works to match diminished devotion, but add genuine devotion to good works.

Good Works **+** Devotion = Blessing

2:8-11 – *"Unto the angel of the church in Smyrna"*

This church was passing through a time of persecution, with even greater distress forecasted. Reviling would turn to prison and even death. Note that to such ones at such a time Jesus revealed Himself in vs. 8 as one who Himself had suffered persecution and death and yet had overcome. He being Lord of life, all in Him will know endless life. He being *"the first and the last",* He will be there at

the last when all is said and done and the wicked have done their worst here on earth.

"And poverty" – Perhaps robbed of their goods in a form of persecution (Heb. 10:32-34).

"But thou art rich" – Though outwardly poor they were inwardly rich, with treasures laid up in glory. Here is a divine perspective the Lord would have us to share with Him at all times and never lose sight of.

"I know the blasphemy" – Referring it seems to Jews who considered believers traitors from the Jewish faith, who mocked Jesus in dying a shameful death, so evidently cursed by God. Jews by birth they might have been, but in persecuting Jesus and His followers they lost the right to the honourable name of "Jew". Though they were descendants of great men and women of faith this was in blood only, for they showed themselves rather to be of their *"father the devil"* (Jn. 8:44). Though the Lord's name be on their tongues, yet their responses revealed a lord of a very different kind in their hearts.

Not all that glitters is gold. Not every deed of service done in the Lord's name is acceptable to Him, as Cain's rejected sacrifice (Gen. 4). Not every

Rev 2:10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.
Rev 2:11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

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apparent worship and prayer is real worship and prayer and acceptable to God. There is much done in God's name that is not worthy of His name. Satan's seat of opposition of true religion has always resided more in the "synagogue", more within religion than in the world.

"I know", Jesus assures His saints of every age. He is fully aware of all that we suffer, missing not the least detail.

Vs. 10 – The Lord makes no promise of exemption from bitterest persecution. He promises only His help to bear it in a way victorious. He gives no counsel on how to avoid inevitable trouble. He gives only encouragement to endure faithfully, even unto death. Persecution in this world is both the *proof* of purity, and the *means* to it. It is both the *result* of pure testimonies, and *results* in pure testimonies.

Rev 2:12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;
Rev 2:13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

2:12-17 – *"To the angel of the church in Pergamos"*

Vs. 13 – This Pergamos church had gotten tired of the fight and thus had fallen to compromise. Weary of the work of maintenance, their house had fallen to disrepair. Like many churches today, they still held to a good doctrinal position on paper. They could still point to a history of persecution, and even faithful martyrdom. But persecution was a thing of the past for them (*"in those days"*), for they had begun to allow the enemy into the camp.

"Where Satan's seat is…where Satan dwelleth" – For reasons not given, the city of Pergamos was portrayed as especially a centre (throne) of Satan's influence. Perhaps the reference is to the temple then in that city built for the Greek god, Asclepius (the Romans called this god Aesculapius), god of healing and medicine, and symbolized by a serpent. More likely the reference is to the fact that Pergamos had become the centre of Babylonian religion when

Rev 2:14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.
Rev 2:15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

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this ancient mother of false religion, stemming from Nimrod (Gen. 10:8-10), was driven from Babylon.

On the Side

Interestingly the high priest of this Babylonian cult was called the "Chief Bridge Builder", which in Latin is "Pontifex Maximus". He was considered to be that individual bridging mortal man to the godless underworld, the source of the Babylonian cult. This title was later assumed by the Roman Catholic Pope.

Vs. 14-15 – Unrighteous tolerance – In contrast to that righteous intolerance of evil so commendable at Ephesus, this church allowed to remain among them those who held two hateful beliefs;

- *"Them that hold the doctrine of Balaam"* (vs.

14).

- *"Them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans"* (vs. 15).

There is an interesting parallel between the words *"Balaam"* and "*Nicolaitan"*. Both words express the idea of dominion or lord or conqueror over people. The former from the Hebrew and the latter from Greek. Thus perhaps there is some association or similar nature between these two doctrines so hated by the Lord.

Concerning the *"doctrine of Balaam",* we have the record of the O.T. book of Numbers to offer some explanation. Balaam was that seer whom the king of Moab hired to curse the nation of Israel as they were approaching their Promised Land. Numbers 22-24 relates how the Lord would not allow Balaam to directly speak a curse over the nation of Israel. Numbers 25 then relates Balaam's "plan B" in the evil effort to bring curse upon Israel, giving detail as well on how this further effort played out. Balaam's *"doctrine"* was the subtle approach of drawing the people of Israel into the pagan idolatry of Moab through the eating of things offered to idols and involvement with the immorality associated with their "worship". This invitation to participation in perverted pagan corruptions proved very effective,

and would have been far more devastating had it not been for the strong, hard actions of their spiritual leaders in so forcefully stamping it out (Num. 25). Balaam's corrupting doctrine was simply this, if you cannot *kill* them or *curse* them then *corrupt* them! Make them cursable through their toleration of filthy moral freedoms within God's own camp. If they cannot be cursed as they are, then lead them by subtle means to become such that God Himself will curse them. God's answer to this crafty approach is for His wise and watchful leaders to purge evil out.

"Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (II Cor. 6:17).

Much of the modern church has fallen for this same approach through the subtly deceptive teaching that we must join the world if we would win them, that we must make Christianity acceptable or "relevant", more user-friendly to the world. Through this cunning doctrine of the devil many have sold out to the corruptions of "Christian" rock and raves, discos and drinking, immorality, homosexuality, etc., all in the Lord's name. Thus promoting the foolishly godless notion that the Lord's church should be as worldly as the world, putting *"no difference between the holy and*

Rev 2:16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.
Rev 2:17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

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profane…between the unclean and clean", as the corrupt spiritual leaders of Ezekiel's day (Ezek. 22:26). As a result the Lord promised there to *"blow upon"* them *"in the fire of My wrath"!*

It seems the church at Pergamos was sound on paper, but was much too tolerant of sin and those who practice it. In the same way the moment Israel stopped fighting and became tolerant of the Canaanites among them, in the days when the judges ruled, their rising graph peaked and tipped sharply into a downward plummet.

Vs. 16 – The Lord demanded their repentance. "You turn from your foolish tolerance of what is wrong, and you return to the wisdom of hating what I hate! You show the wisdom of Nehemiah in boldly ejecting Tobiah from the temple" (Neh. 13:4-9).

Overcomers

Jesus turns at the close of each letter to words of encouragement and promise for *"him that overcometh".* Are these believers? Some special group of believers? John tells us in I John 5:4-5, *"whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world".* It seems clear that *"him that overcometh"* refers to those with a true heart of faith. But carried as well here is the thought that true believers;

- *Will* keep God's commandments (I Jn. 2:3-5; 3:24).
- *Will* tend to do righteousness (I Jn. 2:29; 3:10).
- *Will* not continue in sin (I Jn. 3:6-9).
- *Will overcome!*

So in each of these seven letters the Lord first addresses the church as a whole, and then gives special promise to the true believers in the congregation. At Ephesus (2:7), true believers are promised *"the tree of life…in the midst of the paradise of God".* At Smyrna (2:11), they are assured of no *"hurt of the second death"* (20:6). At Pergamos (2:17), they are promised *"the hidden*

manna", and *"a white stone"* with *"a new name written"* in it. Jesus is the *"bread of God"* who came down after the manner of the manna in the wilderness (Jn. 6:33ff), and all who *"eat of this Bread…shall live for ever"* (Jn. 6:51). In ancient courts of justice, when one was condemned he was handed a black stone, and when acquitted a white stone. One given a white stone was called an overcomer. Pictured is the believer's heavenly acquittal before God through the work of Jesus Christ our great Advocate. The new name speaks of the believer's new and special relation to the Lord.

"And I gave her space
to repent of her fornication;
and she repented not"

(Rev. 2:21)

Class 4 – Revelation 2:18-3:13

Rev 2:18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;
Rev 2:19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

2:18-29 – *"Unto the angel of the church in Thyatira"*

Thyatira was a city famous for its manufacture of purple dye. Do you remember Lydia in Acts 16? She was saved in Philippi when Paul and Silas passed through on the 2nd missionary journey of Acts. Lydia was a seller of purple, from the city of Thyatira (Acts 16:14-15).

This 4th letter is the longest, and one of the severest of the 7 letters. The spirit of worldliness had gotten a large hold in this church.

Vs. 18-19 – The Son of God, with eyes like a flame of fire, knew their works, expressing His penetrating awareness as well as His burning indignation. And what did their attentive Lord notice? The upward tilt of their impressive numerical growth chart? Afraid not! Pastoral academic qualifications?

Rev 2:20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

Nope. Thriving income? Building programme? Vision? Five & ten year plan? Great team approach to ministry? No, no, no! Have you noticed that there is not a *shred* of reference to the size or growth rate of any of these churches? Not the least mention of any dung collection of pastoral pedigree either. Only commendation for their love, service, faith, patience, and works. Things available to us more regular folks. There is much the Lord speaks well of here. None of the other churches were commended for their love.

"The last more than the first" – Seems their labours were on the increase.

Vs. 20 – Though mention is made of *"a few things against thee"*, one principle objection is raised. Wicked toleration! These folks were allowing a woman referred to as *"Jezebel"* to promote evil among them. Claiming to be a prophetess, the doctrines of this one were the same as Balaam's (vs. 14), the subtle promotion of immorality and idolatry. These two vices go hand in hand.

Look well to the progression;

- Ephesus was faithfully intolerant of evil and error.
- Smyrna was not tolerated by those who were evil, and therefore were persecuted. The world and worldly church are tolerant of all but those intolerant of evil.
- Pergamos tolerated the *presence* of those who believed wrongly. Standing against the tide in an unpopular place can be tiring and lonely. These had succumbed to the pressure, allowing what they knew they should not.
- Thyatira now actually allowed the *promotion* of evil and error in their midst! The step further.

When evil secures a place within,
Its forward agenda soon begins.

The insidious cancer of evil and error is virulent and missionary. It is never idle! When allowed in, it comes as a seed seeking opportunity to propagate, even as the speck of a germ can lead to complete infection. Paul warned Timothy of the influence of those who promote error, that *"their word will eat as doth a canker"* or gangrene (II Tim. 2:17). Forceful removal, cutting it out, is the only hope for

Rev 2:21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.
Rev 2:22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

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saving the body.

Vs. 21 – Space of grace – God in His grace gives every soul time and opportunity to repent, for He is not willing that any should perish. The scoffer misunderstands God's judgment delays, thinking them license for continued rebellion. Compare Psalm 50:21; Ecclesiastes 8:11; Romans 2:4-5.

The work of this woman appears to have been much like her O.T. predecessor of like name. Ahab's wife, Jezebel, sought to use her position of prominence among God's people to thoroughly corrupt the worship of the Lord in Israel, that ultimately it might be snuffed out altogether and replaced by the worship of Baal. Even so the approach of this N.T. Jezebel involved a subtle depravity that gradually pushed aside the restraints of moral right, obscuring and redefining holiness to suit her own unbridled lusts, allowing, and even promoting, unholy practices, while claiming to belong to Jesus.

Vs. 22-23 – Certain judgment was promised upon

Rev 2:23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.
Rev 2:24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.
Rev 2:25 But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.

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this Jezebel and her followers if repentance was refused. Part of the purpose of judgment is to maintain purity, that others might see and learn to fear (I Tim. 5:20).

Vs. 24-25 – Notice that we find no instruction here to remove the evil. There is now no threat of the Lord's coming with the purging sword of His mouth (vs. 16). At Thyatira it was just too late to talk about removal of corruption. The inroads of evil had pressed too far, too deep. They could only hope to hold on to what was left. Time and again history has repeated itself in this very manner. A godly institution is less than vigilant to stand against and purge out ungodliness, and to do it early, diligently, firmly, in an Ephesus fashion with continual watchfulness. And with time godless, carnal, compromising influences become too great, too entrenched. Until the only recourse is for the godly

to cut their losses and get out altogether, beginning all over again somewhere else. If a man should be nurturing the foolish notion that evil tolerated, in self, children, family, church, business, etc., will wishfully get better or will in some way sort itself out, then his day of tragic loss is already on the calendar. There is a place for hesitating long enough to pray, but the whole leaning must be toward the *refusal* or *removal* of evil, either removed from the heart and hands of the individuals involved, or those persons removed from the midst (I Cor. 5:13). True Christianity comes demanding an end of all things morally wrong. It stands in the way of carnal pleasure. To be sure, it will appear to be a strange, unwanted killjoy, considered ridiculously restrictive by the world. The worldly wise laugh, quite convinced that such a head-on, "legalistic", "judging" approach simply is not the way to win friends and influence people. If you want to build up your church membership then you cannot afford to make yourself so far-out, with restrictions few will tolerate. Nobody will even stick around to listen to your gospel if you make your Christianity such a drag. This was Jezebel's approach and purpose, the subtle and even forceful encouragement toward compromise. The same driving purpose is ever with us, ever promoting its doctrines in the church of every age, coming even

with the good outward motivation of evangelism, seeking to draw more souls to Christianity. Yet it comes peddling carnal, arm-of-flesh methods for achieving this goal faster and "better", seeking to lead "narrow" (biblical) Christianity to think more broadly, more in keeping with current views on ministry approach and religious life, demanding a make-over of the old religion of Christ to something more "relevant", more attractive to the masses, justifying compromise of holiness for the "greater good" of the more ready acceptance of hearers. It is still Christianity, mind you, but with just the slightest touch here and there of little dark brush strokes, using the more popular earthy hues of the world. Yet again, we must understand that those subtle, earthly touches come with the principle of propagation onboard. For every shade of compromise is in essence a turning away from the Lord. And the ultimate direction and purpose of all compromise is complete corruption. Full-blown Baal worship is where Ahab's Jezebel had her sights aimed, with the true worship of the true God relegated to the religious museum. Be wise to recognize this pressure to adopt or accommodate worldly standards toward the end of greater popularity. Be wise to ever stand strong in the Lord's strength against the weariness of fighting that relentless, driving current.

Rev 2:26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:
Rev 2:27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.
Rev 2:28 And I will give him the morning star.
Rev 2:29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isa. 40:31).

Vs. 26-28 – Believers' rewards.

Vs. 26-27 – Promise of co-reigning with Christ in His kingdom. Compare 20:6; Daniel 7:18, 22, 27; II Timothy 2:12.

Vs. 28 – Promise of *"the morning star"*, referring to the bright dawning of Christ's return.

Chapter 3

3:1-6 – *"Unto the angel of the church in Sardis"*

This was the church of dead orthodoxy.

Rev 3:1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

Vs. 1 – The One holding the Spirit of God, the very source and Author of life and revival, appeals to these who were dead. The only thing that lived there was a name. N.B. the focus upon *"names"* in this letter (vs. 1, 4, 5). Reputation appears to have been an issue of import among these. Interestingly it seems they struggled with none of the troubles the other churches faced. No persecution or opposition. No false teaching mentioned. No immoral practice or idolatry. No specific difficulties of any kind mentioned. All appeared to be quiet and even-keeled. Apparently they even tended to be appreciated, with a reputation for life and godliness. But in reality they were quite dead – destitute of spiritual life. Ordinance, orthodoxy, and organization gave an external impression of spiritual vitality. But all was a façade, like the whitened sepulchres of Christ's stinging analogy. With their mouth they voiced love, but with hearts far from God. Let the world and worldly church have their names so honourable upon earth. With Paul *"I am crucified with Christ"* (Gal. 2).

This Sardis church had only a few yet undefiled among them, for they were mostly dead. Do you see it? *Only a bit of good among the evil now!* See how the image has fallen to almost *all* earthy hues now, with only the odd little brush stroke of heavenly brilliance. The seed of evil had effectively pushed its agenda and done its ruinous work within. The result was spiritual DEATH, even as the parasite that kills its host.

"And art dead" – Too many among these were unsaved, still quite spiritually *"<u>dead</u> in trespasses and sins"* (Eph. 2:1). As well, consider how the father of the prodigal used the term *"dead"* of his wayward son (Lk. 15:32). No less a son than his brother, but dead in that he was;

- Wholly distracted by *"the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in"*, choking out the fruitfulness of God's Word in his life.
- Wholly given to himself. Spending on himself what he had inherited from his father.
- Serving *others*, far from his father's fields of service. Distant from his father.
- Wrenching his father's heart.
- Travelling the downward spiral to ruin where

Rev 3:2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.
Rev 3:3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

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such an attitude always leads.

With his son in such a selfish spiritual coma the father called him "dead". In this same way it seems many true sons of God at this church of Sardis were dead as well.

Vs. 2-3 – Jesus now levels His cannon and fires 5 sharp commands at them;

- Be watchful. They had left off all observation, falling into a stupor. How commonly the N.T. commands us toward vigilance.
- Strengthen or keep the things remaining.
- Remember what you received and heard (Eph. 2:5).
- Hold fast.
- Repent.

There is an interesting history behind Sardis. The

city was ideally situated for defence. It stood on the northern slope of Mt. Tmolus, high above the Hermus Valley. The city was surrounded by steep cliffs, at the base of which flowed the River Pactolus, serving as something of a moat. It was a city considered practically impregnable. But in 549 B.C., when under siege by the Persians, Cyrus sent an able soldier up the sheer rock face in the dark of night. He made it up, crept into the sleeping city unawares, and opened the way for the Persian army to enter. Over 3 centuries later Rome took the city by the same method. Overconfidence and failure to watch caused the city's fall on both occasions. Thus the city's history fixed a proverbial importance upon watchfulness. The lesson for us is the same. Be ever aware of the dangerous inroads of compromise with evil. This is particularly the function of spiritual leaders, who must take the oversight (I Pet. 5:2). Watch always your own heart for that relentless tendency to get too caught up in our own things, with little time for the Lord and His surpassing things. The subtle soldier of evil attempts to make his cunning entrance when none are watching, that he might then throw open the

Rev 3:5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.
Rev 3:6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

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way for the greater onslaught of compromise, ultimately bringing death to the warmth of our spiritual life. The only answer is eternal watchfulness over the flock and our own hearts, dealing <u>*hard*</u> with the first efforts of evil or error to make their subtle entrance, before it becomes entrenched. ***No compromise!*** Christian, keep your heart with all diligence! Spiritual leader, keep your church with all diligence!

Vs. 5 – *"I will not blot out his name out of the book of life"* – The book of life appears to be a heavenly roll of those who will enter the eternal rest and joy of God's presence. In fact, the Great White Throne judgment of those eternally lost will be based on names not found written in this book (Rev. 20:12 & 15, twice repeated for emphasis). Comparing other Bible mentions of this book leaves a bit of uncertainty, but it seems that all names begin in the book of life, with some later blotted out when confirming their souls in sin (Ex. 32:33; Ps. 69:28). Understand that Christ's words here are more

Rev 3:7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

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assurance of eternal security, than inference of *in*security. Though some consider this promise a problem for the biblical doctrine of eternal security, to be fair, this is only an assurance of names not possibly removed, proving the possibility of gaining such security without threat of removal. 'Tis a word meant to *release* not *increase* anxiety.

3:7-13 – *"To the angel of the church in Philadelphia"*

The city of Philadelphia still exists today, now called Allah Shehr or "City of God".

Vs. 7 – *"He that is holy"* – That Jesus would be referred to in this way seems again to set Him as equal with God. Could a mere man be so described?

"The keys of David" – Keys speak of authority or power over the door or way of entrance. Jesus quotes here from Isaiah 22:22. Because Jesus, as Eliakim there in Isaiah's record, showed Himself faithful and zealous for His Father's house and things, He as well is made keeper of His Father's

house, having complete control over His Father's domain. His will is supreme, such that none may oppose. Even so all who are zealous for the Father's things and faithful in the lesser responsibilities of earthly opportunities shall be entrusted with much in kingdom appointments.

The battle between Jesus and the Jewish leaders over the Sabbath was a lordship thing as well. Was the Sabbath day *servant* or *master* of the Almighty? The Jewish leaders cherished their position as lordly administrators of all-powerful tradition. Many times throughout the centuries religions have sought to wield the same power, assigning to ordinances the power to save. To all such Jesus has given answer, *"For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath day"* (Matt. 12:8). He Himself is Lord of all, holding the only key of entrance to God's blessing. Churches or religions do not save or administer grace or hold the power to admit souls to heaven or to commit them to hell. *Jesus Himself* is the door (Jn. 10), holding *"the keys of hell and of death"* (1:18). Every soul who would find his way to heaven *must* find it through Jesus Christ. He alone is that One with whom we have to do. And everyone claiming to come *"by some other way, the same is a thief and a robber"* (Jn. 10:1).

Rev 3:8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.
Rev 3:9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

Vs. 8 – This faithful little flock had kept the Lord's word and had not denied His name. This Jesus noticed and recorded. Again and again we see the reminder that every faithful work done for Jesus is seen by Him, as well as every dark and filthy thing. All is naked and exposed before Him. Do not ever pine for man's praise or recognition or appreciation. Do not ever cut corners or cheat the Lord concerning what is right. Let the Lord see and Him alone.

Vs. 9 – Again there was opposition from the *"synagogue of Satan",* as at Smyrna (2:9). This apparently refers again to unbelieving Jews. Jesus promised these troubled saints that even their persecutors would be made to recognize who God's true loved ones were, and they would pay them homage.

N.B. that the two persecuted churches (Smyrna & Philadelphia) were the two praised churches.

Rev 3:10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.
Rev 3:11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

Whether their persecution brought their purity or their purity brought their persecution we are not told. But bring on the persecution if we must have it that we might know our Saviour's praise! Men do not normally choose the way of compromise with evil because they are particularly comfortable with it in their spirit, but because of the perceived advantages it brings. Just as normal folks do not go out of their way to mess with a beehive because it is an especially comfortable thing to do, but because of the sweet honey to be found there. Very often the immediate payback of compromise is sweet peace, the momentary ceasing of scorn, the quieted storm of troubling persecution, acceptance into the fellowship of others, breaking the stifling isolation. This is why God's pure ones are earthly persecuted and heavenly praised. Because it is with God that they prefer to have sweetest peace. Because *His* acceptance they would seek above all else. And the world cannot tolerate one who denies their pleasure to pursue God's holy pleasure.

Rev 3:12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.
Rev 3:13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Vs. 10-12 – Believers' rewards.

Vs. 10 – A pointer to the pre-tribulation Rapture of the true church?

Vs. 12 – Again the new name expresses personal relation with Jesus Christ (compare 2:17).

Class 5 – Revelation 3:14-4:11

Rev 3:14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

3:14-22 – *"Unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans"*

The church at Laodicea is the last of the seven churches addressed by the Lord, and they received the most scathing letter of all. The city of Laodicea, mentioned repeatedly in Paul's letter to the Colossians, was just down the valley from the city of Colossae. Today the old city site is a heap of ruins. It is an interesting ponder that both the churches (messengers) at Sardis and Laodicea were severely reproved by the Lord in these seven letters, and both city sites are windswept wastelands today. On the other hand both Smyrna and Philadelphia were commended by the Lord, and both remain thriving cities to this day. Could it be that we just do not realize the extent to which the church influences the world, when the world is not allowed to influence the church?

Vs. 14 – *"These things saith the Amen"* – The word

Rev 3:15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.
Rev 3:16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

"amen" means truth or true. No mere man could so title Himself (Jn. 14:6). Jesus is the One is *"faithful and true".* He is the One who saw the condition of this church as they truly were and faithfully spoke the truth to them in love. Those among them who loved the truth would respond with repentance. Those despising the sometimes painful truth would reject to their ruin.

"The beginning of the creation of God" – There is a question of word meaning here. The word translated *"beginning"* can refer to the start of something as in first in order. The word can also refer to beginning in the sense of active cause, or even first as in the highest office of rulership. Jesus is the active cause or Originator of creation, and He is Chief or first over all He has made (Col. 1:16-18).

Vs. 15-16 – *"Because thou art lukewarm"* – Hot, cold, and lukewarm do not describe three different spiritual states, as in those fervent in spiritual things (hot), those utterly unmoved by the gospel (cold), and those fallen from their previous spiritual

Rev 3:17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

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warmth to luke-warmness. How could the Lord wish any man to be *"cold"* or unsaved? More likely the thought is that both hot and cold were good for something. Cold is a good thing on a hot day, as the cup of cold water Christ spoke of in Matthew 10:42 or as the cold water to a thirsty soul of Proverbs 25:25 (vs. 13 as well). Hot is a good thing on a cold day. But Lukewarm is good for nothing. People of that day and culture served nothing lukewarm. Such was never appropriate, always disgusting. What is emphasized here is that these had come to the point of being good for nothing, a condition highly obnoxious to the Lord. Mingling with error had taken this messenger, with his church, even past the point of the deadness of Sardis, to the point of *repulsiveness* to the Lord. Jesus goes on to describe that to which He referred.

Vs. 17 – They were pretentious, blind, ignorant of their true condition, self-confident, and independent. They proudly imagined themselves rich and self-sufficient. But they were deceiving themselves. God would have us think *rightly*

concerning ourselves. And the only way to achieve this right perception of ourselves is for us to listen as he speaks to us straight. This only comes through unclouded, unbiased gazing into His perfect law of liberty. James informs us that it is like one *"beholding his natural face in a mirror"* (James 2:23-25). One who honestly does this will not *"think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but will think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith"* (Rom. 12:3). He will know that his heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. We should not seek to be pumped up with self-esteem as some would insist. Neither should we drag ourselves through the muck of self-hate or self-pity. Both are forms of godless self-centredness. We should seek only to be full of love for a God who would love us in spite of us. Full of *Him*, not of me! Full of wonder in His grace. Remember Paul's progress in sanctification;

- I Corinthians 15:9 – *"For I am the least of the apostles".* This written in 57 AD.

- Ephesians 3:8 – *"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints".* Written 5 years later, in 62 AD.

- I Timothy 1:15 – "*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief".* Written 1½ years later.

From lowliest apostle to lower than the very least saint to the greatest of sinners. All three of these portions are in a context of grace, and all three within discussion of ministry appointment. As Paul grew in the Lord he knew more fully his *exceeding sinfulness* and his utter unworthiness for the least of God's grace, let alone His gracious appointment to ministry. But never did such self-awareness lead Paul to muck about in the mire of self-hate or self-pity. He remained ever confident of his appointment by God, ever wondering in the God of grace who would love one such as he. Every fresh reminder of his heart's blackness, every new revelation of the further extent of the decay immediately sent his heart heavenward in confession and praise for One who would love him so, who would love Him still.

But these at Laodicea were of quite an opposite nature. Full of *themselves* they were. Self-satisfied. Not only would they not look to the Lord to fulfil their needs, they refused to even recognize their need of Him and what He longed to provide. Perhaps these at Laodicea were materially rich. It is likely. How often a growing wealth in material things contributes to spiritual pride and poverty. If the Lord should allow you a measure of wealth, oh be diligent to ever be rich toward God! These were blind to the reality of their spiritual nakedness, as

if strutting about convinced that they were gloriously arrayed, yet unaware of how silly they appeared to the only Onlooker who really matters. As a peacock stripped of his feathered finery. All pink and stubble, yet unaware of his condition, strutting elegantly as always. A sight to stir pity! As the story of the emperor with his "new clothes". Convinced in his head that he is beautifully arrayed, while in reality all laugh in their sleeves. For he is as naked as the day he was born, but none dare tell him. He had been convinced by a persuasive, smooth talker. Convinced against the obvious. Convinced of the impossible. How like such a foolish king are many "religious" people of our day. Convinced by persuasive, consoling, smooth-talking preachers. Convinced of the impossible, that one could be saved from eternal judgment without the white robes of righteousness that only Jesus Christ can give, through simple faith in Him.

The description of these easily fits the experience of all the unsaved; wretched in God's displeasure, miserable in their troubled existence, utterly poor without the eternal riches only Christ can give. Without faith they are blind to heavenly realities and fully exposed to God's anger. That they are not in the torments of hell even *now* is purely of His grace.

Rev 3:18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.
Rev 3:19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.
Rev 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.
Rev 3:21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.
Rev 3:22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

"But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isa. 57:20-21).

Vs. 18 – To *"buy"* of Jesus is to receive freely what can be found only in Him; the priceless wealth of eternal salvation, the white robes of His own righteousness, and God's remedy for blind eyes. All are given freely in Christ. Compare Isaiah 55:1ff. Jesus Christ is the only source of eternal help. Every other form of religious endeavour is a "clothing" of sorts, but is woefully inadequate to cover the nakedness of the lost. Every form of manmade religious finery covers nothing in God's sight and is unfit attire for the wedding feast (Matt.

Rev 4:1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.

22:11ff).

Chapters 4 – Heavenly Throne Scene

Vs. 1-3 – The splendour of God.

Vs. 1 – A phrase very similar to that at the end of 1:19 is used here as John is called through a door *"opened in heaven"* offering sight of *"things which must be hereafter"*. Indicated here is a shift of focus to the last great general section of this book of Revelation, prophecy of things to come. How very appropriate that the revelation of things future should begin at the throne and with He who sits upon it, the Almighty Father and sovereign Ruler of all. We, with John, are allowed right into God's throne room, to the very presence of the unseen One. The voice commanding John to come up is Christ's, the same he heard in 1:10. And as *he* was called up, so *we* have the blessing of entering with him as we read.

As suggested earlier, from the moment the Lord

Rev 4:2 And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.
Rev 4:3 And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

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commands John to *"Come up hither"* the word *"church"* drops from mention, is found further in the book only in 22:16, and is never pictured again upon earth. This strange absence so sharply contrasts with the 20 times the word *"church"* is found in the first three chapters within cities of earth. This sudden absence from this point onward would appear to be an evident picture or foreshadow of the Rapture of the church from earth before God's judgments described herein fall.

Vs. 2-3 – John was immediately *"in the spirit"*, though his body likely remained on Patmos. Paul in a similar experience did not know the actual nature of his transport, *"whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell"* (II Cor. 12:2). Either way, John's presence there was no less real than our presence here on earth. In heaven John saw God the Father upon His throne. And so typical of other visions of God's throne in the Bible, no attempt is made to describe Him in any definite way. Compare Isaiah 6:1; Ezekiel 1:26-28; Daniel 7:9-10. We are given the impression of a human-like form seated on the

throne, with scroll in His right hand (5:1), but with no clarity of bodily description. *"God is Spirit"* (Jn. 4), and therefore no concrete representation of Him can be made. *Jesus* is the expression of the Father before the eyes of man (Heb. 1:3).

How beautiful the sight before God's apostle. With the words of Thomas Kelly's hymn John could join, "Look, ye saints! The sight is glorious!" Almost fumblingly, John begins to describe the splendour before him. The One seated on the throne is *"like a jasper", a* quartz-like precious stone of various colours. The same type of stone is used to describe the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, *"Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal"* (21:11).

"And a sardine stone" – *"Sardine"* or sardius is a very hard, deep red variety of chalcedony, a kind of quartz with waxy lustre. Sardius and jasper were the first and last stones on the breastplate of the O.T. high priest (Ex. 28:17-21).

"A rainbow round about the throne" – Praise God for that rainbow! It is the emblem of His promise, that He is a keeper of His promises, especially of the promise of peace after the storm of His terrible

Rev 4:4 And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.
Rev 4:5 And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

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judgment of the Flood (Gen. 9:13-16). It is as if that rainbow describes a gracious disposition encircling God's throne. Greatness yet graciousness, terror yet tenderness, united in such a glorious way in Him.

Vs. 4-11 – God's attendants.

Vs. 4 – Around God's throne John saw 24 seats or thrones (same word as in vs. 2) in which 24 elders are seated, clothed in white and crowned with gold. These seem to be representatives of the redeemed of all ages. Their number (24) may express a combination of the 12 tribes of the O.T. combined with the 12 apostles of the N.T. era – glorified, rewarded, crowned, and enthroned with God!

Vs. 5 – Understand that all is not peaceful here. There is a great storm brewing. Thus the lightnings and voices and thunders from the throne. For there are unspeakable judgments about to descend upon

earth. Thunder is often seen in this book (8 times), and primarily accompanies scenes of wrath and judgment. How very different the throne scene of 22:1ff. For there, instead of the threat of an approaching storm of fiery, flashing judgment, there is *"a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God".* There all is a river of peace, for all storms will be past in that day, and eternal peace will be ours. Sin will have been entirely dealt with at last.

From Genesis to Revelation, in every age the principle is always the same, *only in righteousness can true peace be found.* And righteousness is only possible after godlessness and the godless have been removed as the dross. If you are lacking God's peace in your heart it is because you are lacking God's righteousness in your heart. Only when you believe in Jesus Christ will you find true heart peace, only within the righteousness that only He can give. At the moment of faith in Him the storm of conviction brought on by the Spirit of God, the anguish of your soul's guilt, breaks forth into release and pardon. Guilt is gone at last, and peace comes flooding in as a deep flowing river. For those yet unsaved, yet outside of Christ, *"there is no peace sayeth my God to the wicked".*

"And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and

Rev 4:6 And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.
Rev 4:7 And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.
Rev 4:8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

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the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever" (Isa. 32:17).

Vs. 6 – *"A sea of glass like unto crystal"* – Can we even begin to picture the breath-taking brilliance, colours, and splendour of the scene John describes here, and that reflected as well from this crystal sea before the throne? We are given the impression that this is a solid surface rather than a body of water (*"of glass",* not "as glass").

Vs. 6-8 – The living ones – We are introduced now to some interesting creatures indeed. Though the King James Version (KJV) refers to them as *"beasts",* the word behind the English means "living creatures". It seems the nature of these creatures is especially characterized by life. This is not the first time we meet these beings in the Bible. The prophet Ezekiel as well describes what are referred

Rev 4:9 And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,
Rev 4:10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,
Rev 4:11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

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to as "cherubim" (Ezek. 1 & 10). Though we are not specifically told, these appear to be angelic beings. They are described with something of the form of a man, yet each with four faces and four wings and with some strange configuration of "wheels" alongside, full of eyes, seemingly depicting supreme awareness.

Vs. 9-11 – Heavenly worship. The work of these cherubim (?) is to tirelessly, ceaselessly lead the worship around God's throne, proclaiming God's holiness, praising Him as Creator of all. It is praise that Satan tirelessly seeks to remove from God through various forms of deception (evolution, false religion, materialism, etc.).

Things to consider in the flashing brilliance of this heavenly throne scene;

- Heaven is no sealed place from us. How

thankful I am that God Almighty, resplendent in glory, Creator of all, would desire the redeemed beside Him. N.B. that a door opened, with Jesus appropriately the porter bidding entrance. *"I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved"* (Jn. 10:9).

- God is supreme Ruler of the universe. Though unseen, He is real nonetheless. Though men make war upon Him, forget Him, deny Him, yet He is Ruler of all. One day He will be seen so by all and will respond to His enemies in derision.

- God is not only holy and just, or there would be no salvation.

- God is not only mercy and grace, or there would be no punishment for evil, no justice or fairness.

- As all the colours of the spectrum combine to make white, so all the moral qualities of God combine to describe His nature as pure and unspotted, white as pure light. To emphasize any one over others taints the pure whiteness.

- God's thunderings hold no terror for His true children, for we safely abide under the shadow of His wings. His throne is a place to

approach, not to flee, a place of grace to find help in time of need.

But oh what fearful trembling such scenes of splendour bring to unsaved hearts. Peace may come in a moment, if you would only believe in Jesus.

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Class 6 – Revelation 5:1-6:8

Rev 5:1 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.

Chapter 5 – Lamb Alone Found Worthy

5:1-7 – *"A book written…sealed"*

Vs. 1 – In a sense, the glorious heavenly throne scene of chapter 4 is an introduction to this main portion of Revelation, introducing to our attention this *"book"* or rolled up parchment scroll in God's right hand, with seven seals. The chapters to follow will be the opening of those seals, with the resulting progressive revelation of the contents of the scroll. It is the unfolding of God's mind and purpose for earth and man, both saved and unsaved. Perhaps the seals were in some way attached to the ends of the scroll so that as each seal was broken the scroll could be partially unrolled a bit more. For with the breaking of each seal more of God's purpose is made known, each successive portion adding to our knowledge of His revealed will concerning things to come. We were told in 1:1 that what came through John was directly from the mind of God. This is God's mind, written in the scroll, portrayed in vision

Rev 5:2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?
Rev 5:3 And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.

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before us, and recorded in this book of Revelation.

Now let's take a step back and consider what we see here on the whole. The true book of the future is in *God's* hand. It is utterly sealed from man, available only by special revelation from God. The future is not in *man's* hand, so reading palms cannot display it. The future is not in *Satan's* hand, so no powers of the occult can reveal the truth of it, except as God allows. The future is not in the hands of *the dead*, thus consulting with "the dead" offers no proper help. Attempting to do so is only to dialogue with deceiving demons. There are countless ways men seek to find the future apart from God, because it is a subject of supreme interest to mankind. But they are wasting their time. The future is a book written *by God alone*, and sealed until He alone who is worthy breaks and opens the bread of life to us.

Vs. 2-3 – John saw an especially strong angel issue a challenge to all creation if any might be found worthy to break the seals and open the book. But

none could be found. I have read that in ancient contests a herald would often appear first to make known the power of the champion coming after him, and to issue a challenge to combat. Goliath's challenge perhaps a variation on that theme. "Who is fit to stand against this mighty power?" he defiantly mocked, as a collective shiver went through King Saul and his army. Then young David strode out affirming, "By God's grace I am fit!" "Who is worthy", thunders this mighty angelic herald, laying down the challenge to all creation. And then in vs. 4-5 the Son or *"Root of David"* stepped forward to the challenge, for He alone is worthy. And look well! Does this great descendant of David come as a Goliath, facing the challenge with formidable armour and flashing sword as we might expect? No! He comes as with a sling and stones. He comes as *"a Lamb as it had been slain"* (vs. 6), yet very much alive. In His sacrificial death and resurrection, that which appeared so weak, Jesus conquered all the powers of darkness, *"that <u>through</u> <u>death</u> He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil"* (Heb. 2:14). For in His resurrection He displayed the power of an endless life. How much more so when He at last appears as the Lion!

Vs. 4 – See John weeping *"much"* here, when he thought none could reveal the contents of that book.

Rev 5:4 And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

Why these tears? Why would it matter so much to him that he have access to the words of this book? John was a man of God, a man after God's heart. He was the disciple whom Jesus loved, but he was also a disciple who loved Jesus. And as in all who have ever loved God in truth, there is a passion to know His mind as expressed in His words. Enthusiasm for God's words is the surest indication of true love for God. One who loves Him with all of the heart, soul, mind, and strength, as John did, would say with the Psalmist, *"O how I love Thy law! It is my meditation all the day"* (Ps. 119:97). Here is love in truth. The psalmist actually picked up God's Book and drank deep from it, all the day. *"His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law doth he meditate day and night"* (Ps. 1). Again true love actively ponders God's words day and night. So John was now given hope of more of God's mind in this sealed book and yet none could be found to open it. It was more than he could bear! He must have it! He must have all of God, all of God's heart! He was told that these were words concerning things to come. But far more than mere intrigue with things future, John was moved by a love for the

church he had spent his life for, longing to know of her welfare into the future. And he was moved by a love for Christ, longing to see Him enthroned. And he was moved by a love for the world, longing to know the outcome of God's dealing with them. And he was moved by a love for God, longing to know all of His mind and purpose, to see His kingdom come and will done on earth as in heaven, to see a responsiveness to Him below as John had seen above. Daniel was of the same heart. Do you remember how he received a brief glimpse of the future in his reading of Jeremiah? As if pressed up against the door, peering intently through the keyhole at a 2 or 3 degree angle of the great wide world on the other side. There was promise of so much more, but the door was locked. And under the same constraint of love Daniel pressed the Lord for more, fasting with sackcloth and ashes and praying his confession, until God sent His angel with answer on swift wing in Daniel 9. And that man of God received the key to God's prophecy, one of the clearest prophetic chronologies in all the Book of books. Yet still we see Daniel later pleading for more (Dan. 12:9). Even so this apostle of God wept because the book in God's hand was closed to him, and *he must have it!* So again the Lord sent One worthy to open it. God is pleased and responds positively to our earnest search for understanding

Rev 5:5 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.
Rev 5:6 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.
Rev 5:7 And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

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of His words (Prov. 2:1-9). He is displeased when there is in us only the slightest interest, when we cover a yawn and turn on the rugby.

Consider the descriptions of Jesus in vs. 5-6;

- *"The Lion of the tribe of Judah"* – Perhaps referring back to Jacob's prophecy of Judah in Genesis 49, as he who *"couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?"* (vs. 9), for his would be the tribe bearing the sceptre.

- *"The Root of David"* – The word translated "root" can also refer to what sprouts from a root. Christ is the fulfilment of the Davidic covenant (II Sam. 7), the promised descendant of David's royal line.

- *"A Lamb as it had been slain"* – Expressing

Rev 5:8 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.

Christ's sacrificial death as the fulfilment of all of the O.T. sacrificial system, and referring back to the words of John the Baptist, "*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"* (Jn. 1:29). Jesus bore in His body the marks of nails, spear, scourge, and thorns, evidence of having been killed.

- Seven horns – Describing the completeness of power or authority. *"All power is given unto Me…"* (Matt. 28).

- Seven eyes – The completeness of insight and intelligence in the All-Seeing One.

5:8-14 – Creation Praising

Immediately upon Jesus receiving the scroll, as if stepping forward to receive a prize or well-earned degree, the celebration in song begins, then expanding to an ever-widening extent. *What a moment John relates!* Every soul who loves Jesus Christ longs for this, longs to see Him so honoured.

Vs. 8-10 – The 24 elders, joined by the 4 living

Rev 5:9 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;
Rev 5:10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

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creatures, fall before Christ and sing the song of the redeemed. We who have been redeemed shall also join in singing His praise throughout eternity. Here on earth there are many breaks in the song, perhaps more interruptions than there ought to be. Joy gives way to sorrow at times. But there? The song will be continuous. The saints will never again hang their harps on the willow as God's people did in Babylon (Ps. 137). All tears forever wiped away, our song of adoration will ever be of the Lamb.

Vs. 8 – *"Fell down before the Lamb"* – Do not miss how they worship Jesus just as they worship the Father on the throne (4:10). Can there really be any doubt of that deity of Jesus Christ?

"Which are the prayers of saints" – The prayers of God's children, yet unanswered, stored up for this time when God at last begins to bring the answer. Notice that the prayers of the *unsaved* do not feature, for they are not heard by the Lord. God

Rev 5:11 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;
Rev 5:12 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.
Rev 5:13 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.

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hears only *one* prayer from the lost soul, only the cry of the repentant publican, *"God be merciful to me a sinner"* (Lk. 18:13).

Vs. 11-12 – As in Luke 2 over the plains of Bethlehem on the night of Christ's birth, suddenly here too John saw the throne of God encompassed and heard the voices of a praising angelic host. Literally, myriads of myriads and chiliads of chiliads, a countless host.

Vs. 13 – *"And every creature…"* – Now every created thing joins in, as the circle of praise expands ever wider, from the smallest microbe, to the largest beast, to the farthest reach of God's creation. In Romans 8 Paul wrote of all creation groaning and travailing in pain together, waiting for God's

Rev 5:14 And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

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restoration of all things. Here is now the long-awaited fulfilment when every created thing joins in exultant praise to the One on the throne and to the Lamb. Compare the same rising to crescendo in Psalm 150, to the last verse, *"let everything that hath breath praise the LORD".*

Chapter 6 – Seal Judgments.

6:1-8 – Four Horsemen

Chapter 6 begins a consideration of the 70th "week" of Daniel 9. We now enter upon that remaining seven of years when God's focus shall turn again to the nation of Israel, beginning sometime after the church is removed from earth in the Rapture, beginning officially with a covenant between Antichrist, *"the prince that shall come"*, and many among the Jewish people (Dan. 9:27). This is *"the day of the Lord"* featuring so prominently in the prophets, the last of *"the times of the Gentiles"*.

As the Lamb begins to open the seals of the book we are introduced to the famous "Four Horsemen of the

Rev 6:1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.
Rev 6:2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

Apocalypse". As the first 4 seals of the book are opened the 4 living beings successively call for John's attention, *"Come and see"*. Introduced before us are 4 horses of different colours, with 4 riders, expressing 4 differing themes. Yet all 4 horsemen describe aspects of the same man, Antichrist in his coming!

Vs. 1-2 – White horse – Not a prefigure of Christ's return as some have suggested, or of the gospel conquering the earth, as the postmillennialists might like to imagine. The context here is of judgment, the *beginning* of it, not the *end* of it. And the riders to follow obviously relate to destruction and judgment coming *before* Christ's return. Daniel's prophecy helps us here, for we must remember that there is another "prince" coming. Jesus Christ shall come as Conqueror at the *end* of that final seven of years, and Antichrist shall arise as conqueror at the *beginning* of that final time of judgment. This is an image of Antichrist arising in peace and power out of the revived Roman Empire

to world rulership. He is that coming one prefigured in Antiochus IV Epiphanes of the Grecian Empire, who *"shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries"* (Dan. 11:21 & 24). This is that one who *"shall confirm the* [a] *covenant with many for one week* [seven]*"* (Dan. 9:27). He shall enter onto the world stage with a covenant and he shall come seemingly bringing great promise of peace. He shall arise to prominence as man's great answer, the image of brightest hope. He shall be the very ultimate of manmade solution. Man at his best, at his cleverest, at his most powerful. Remember Nebuchadnezzar's awesome statue in Daniel 3? So imposing and terrifying, it represented all the kingdoms of man. It was an image created by man, representing man's kingdoms as seen from man's perspective. And in what form was that gleaming statue? In the form of *a man!* Antichrist will represent man on the throne, at his awe-inspiring pinnacle! And mankind will discover what man without God becomes when placed on the throne of ultimate world power. For this is the *"man of sin…the son of perdition"* (II Thess. 2:3). This is the *beast* out of the sea (chapter 13). This is Satan's great masterpiece, the counterfeit of all that Jesus Christ is. This one will enter the scene all bright and white, hiding his true colours. He will come with greatest promise, hiding his true agenda. He

Rev 6:3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.
Rev 6:4 And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

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will come lauded as a victor, cast in the role of a conqueror, coming on the white horse of the conqueror. So convincing he will be that even the Jewish nation will join in singing his praises. Yet he will be a beast, whose defeat is sure. He comes with a bow in his hand, but no arrows. A buzz, but no sting. A growl, but no bite. For he will be ultimately toothless. Though he be terrifying in prospect before men, though all humanity be transfixed before him, he is merely *allowed*, even *appointed* by God who is the true Sovereign of the universe. The days of this one are numbered from of old, repeatedly so. He will have only seven years, the last 3½ within which he will display his true nature (Dan. 12:7; Rev. 12:6 & 14; 13:5). And then he shall be consumed at the last with the Spirit of the Lord's mouth and destroyed *"with the brightness of His coming"* (II Thess. 2:8).

Vs. 3-4 – Red horse – Here is now an image of Antichrist's about-face at the midpoint of the 7-year Tribulation, with peace now quite gone. If ever there

was a fulfilment of David's words in Psalm 55:21 it will be in this one, for *"the words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart".* And quietly echoing from history past come the words of our friend, Daniel the prophet;

- Even in the initial rise of this one to power three kings shall fall before him (Dan. 7:20).
- Though beginning with a 7-year covenant of peace with Israel, watch the mid-point when sacrifices in the temple are forcibly stopped (9:27).
- He will make war with the saints and prevail against them (7:21).
- He *"shall do according to his will"* (11:36).
- *"He shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god"* (11:36).
- *"He shall magnify himself above all"* (11:37).
- He shall *"honour the god of forces"* (11:38).

He is a man of war! This is in his *heart* during the first 3½ years of his rule and in his *practice* during his last 3½. This is the turning point pictured in this 2nd horse and horseman. Here is where Satan's messiah displays his true colour – <u>*red*</u>;

Rev 6:5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.
Rev 6:6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

- The colour of sin (Isa. 1:18).
- The colour of the dragon (12:3).
- The colour of the harlot's mount (17:3).

This one is <u>*Anti*</u>christ, demonstrating the very opposite of the true Christ in His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Jesus was acclaimed there by the crowds, then crucified by the same. Antichrist will be acclaimed by the crowds, and will then turn to crush his praisers. With *"a great sword"* of war in his hand, all of the initial peace will be removed. *"When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them"* (I Thess. 5:3).

"That they might kill one another" – We can well imagine the treacherous nature of his reign of fear.

Vs. 5-6 – Black horse – Now it is an image of worldwide famine resulting from war.

Rev 6:7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.
Rev 6:8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

"A measure of wheat for a penny" – The Greek word translated "measure" here expresses a volume equal to about one litre, about the quantity a labouring man would eat in one day. The "penny" or denarius was a coin commonly paid a man for a day's labour (Matt. 20). Thus pictured is a time when the world will labour for mere survival. A day's wage for one loaf of bread, if wheat, and three loaves, if barley (cheaper grain). Nothing will be left over for anything or anybody else. It will be a world reduced to existence living, and that barely. And woe to the man with a family to feed in that day. This is an image of the inevitable aftermath of the devastation of a war like the world has never seen.

Vs. 7-8 – Pale horse – Pale yellowish green. A ghastly coloured horse! The colour of sickness, with *"Death"* the name of the horseman. With war and famine and malnutrition many will fall prey to disease in their weakened condition, resulting in death to a quarter of the earth's population! Over 1

billion people by today's standards! It will be death on a scale like the world has never seen. These will be days unprecedented in terror and sorrow and loss. Compare Jeremiah 30:7 & Daniel 12:1; Matthew 24. Death has always been the king of terrors. How terrible for the one with no promise of life in Christ. And how much more terrible the 2nd death than the 1st (20:14). Only in Jesus is the 1st death made as sleep (I Thess. 4:13-15) and the 2nd death swallowed up in victory (I Cor. 15:54). This rider named "Death" frightens no true believer in Jesus.

"And the beasts of the earth" – Food shortage will affect the whole food chain.

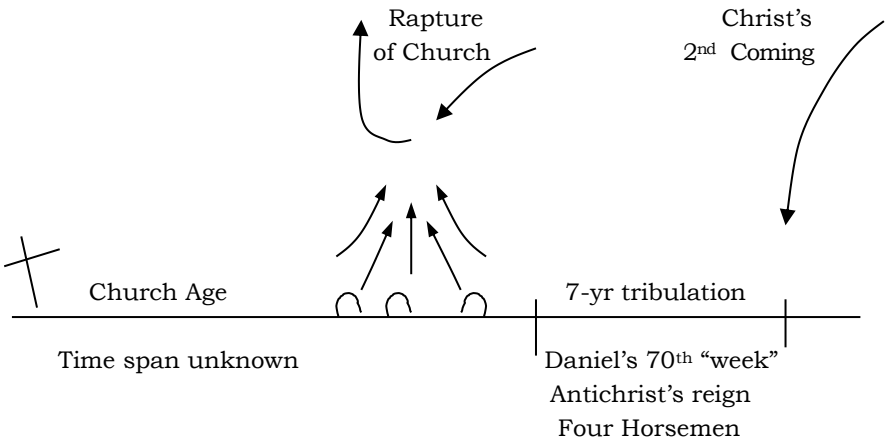
May the contents of this chapter of Revelation begin to put away from your mind the false view that God would not judge a wicked world. God is wrath as well as love, cursing as well as blessing. And His judgments can prove to be greatest blessing. I trembled one day at the law I had spurned, before the God I had denied. I came to fear Him as I learned of Him. And in so fearing Him I found wisdom (Pr. 9:10). Moses was rebuked by God and grew in wisdom as he responded in humility. Pharaoh was rebuked by God and grew hardened and embittered, and perished. It all depends on the heart of the

hearer.

And what of you? What will you do with God's warning of things to come? Will you be wise to find refuge in Jesus?

"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest…and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. 11:28-29).

Coming Events in Picture



Class 7 – Revelation 6:9-7:17

Chapter 6 – Seal Judgments

6:1-8 – Four Horsemen

- White horse – Antichrist arises in peace out of the revived Roman Empire and goes forth as a conqueror.
- Red horse – Antichrist turns peace to war at the midpoint of 7-year Tribulation.
- Black horse – Worldwide famine resulting from war.
- Pale horse – Death to a quarter of the earth's population through war, famine, and *"the beasts of the earth".*

6:9-11 – Fifth Seal

With the opening of the 5th seal there is a change from the pattern of the first four;

- A living creature does not bid John to come and see.
- No horses or horsemen.
- Focus shifts from earth to heaven.

John sees souls of the dead under the heavenly altar. They are identified as those *"that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held"*. Martyrs! The Greek word translated *"slain"* here is the same used in vs. 4, a word speaking especially of violent death. The reference is to those put to death for their faith in Jesus Christ and their willingness to testify of Him. Consider these martyred dead introduced here at this point, immediately following the four horsemen, that revelation of Antichrist coming and becoming what he will during Daniel's 70th "week". The obvious indication is that martyrdom of saints will characterize Antichrist's rule. These are believers put to death for their faith within the tribulation period.

Now perhaps you would say, "But wait a minute! Will there be believers on earth during the tribulation period? I thought all true believers of the church would have already been raptured from earth by then, and taken to be with Jesus". Yes, there will be believers on earth during the tribulation period after the Rapture of the church. God does not end His work of grace in hard times of judgment. Again, those hardest times can be the best of times. Times of great persecution of believers have been times of great growth of God's

work on earth. Therefore this time of *greatest* persecution will see *greatest growth!* Obviously these martyred dead will have been saved during that terrible time of great tribulation. These are not church saints but Tribulation saints. Antichrist's world will be a magnification of all that is barbaric within the human heart. He will most diligently murder every last believer he and his worldwide system of control can lay their hands on in that day. And with a techno-twist, employing all that modern technology can provide, with the most advanced surveillance and tracking systems. Look again to God's ancient prophecy concerning this one;

- Dan. 7:21 – He *"made war with the saints and prevailed against them".*

- Rev. 13:7 – *"It was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them".*

He will succeed in this purpose, for a time. It will be a replay of Daniel 3. Not just death but *ghastly* death to all who will not dance to the monarch's music, but on a much grander, worldwide scale, making Nebuchadnezzar's evil efforts look like a church picnic. The reign of this one will be as Christ's, with a rod of iron, yet with absolute, unscrupulous brutality at the heart. *Woe, woe, woe to the one finding himself still on earth in those days!!*

Rev 6:9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:
Rev 6:10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

It will be a day of martyrdom on a scale the world has never seen. This *"man of sin"* will ruthlessly strive for an entire world of absolute homogeneous worship of himself.

"Under the altar" – Why under the altar in heaven? Remember that Moses made the earthly temple after the heavenly pattern he had been shown by the Lord on Mt. Sinai (Heb. 8:5). As there was an altar in the earthly temple, so in the heavenly temple. And as the blood of the sacrificial bulls was poured out under the brazen altar in the consecration ceremony of the priests (Ex. 29:12; Lev. 4:7), so the position of these souls seems to indicate the pouring out of their life's blood in sacrifice of their lives for our great High Priest. As if in consecration of Him.

Vs. 10 – They plead for vengeance upon their wicked murderers still alive on earth, after the fashion of the imprecatory prayers of Psalms, longing for justice to prevail. Note how humbly they speak to

Rev 6:11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

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the Lord with reverence. In fact the Greek word translated "Lord" here is *despotes*, meaning despot or Master. Yet we hear them freely making their heart's desire known to the Lord. And the Lord does not reprove them. There is nothing wrong with asking why and when and how long, if you ask it of your Master, as long as you deal with Him as if *He* is Lord, not you.

Vs. 11 – The Lord comforts, clothes, and encourages them. He tenderly gives them what they need. His answer is that they wait a little longer, for there were yet more to be killed. "My plan is best, My child. You have trusted Me thus far, trust Me still". Faith and patience will be necessary there as well. The Lord treats them tenderly, as if they are His treasures, the apple of His eye. Cast out as unworthy of life on earth, these are received by God as worthy of life eternal with Him. And note again how for those who are the Lord's, who come to Him as Master, there is comfort <u>*in*</u>, not necessarily *out of* the fire. Compare the experience of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in Daniel 3.

Rev 6:12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;
Rev 6:13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.
Rev 6:14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

6:12-17 – Sixth Seal

It would be difficult to visualize a more terrifying scene on earth than the one here described with the opening of this seal. Not just an earthquake, but a *"great"* one. The sun black. The moon blood-red. Stars (meteors) falling to earth. The sky in some way departed as if a rolled up scroll (Isa. 34:1-4; Heb. 1:10-12; Ps. 102:26ff). Every mountain and island moved (Heb. 12:26-27). This seal seems to relate God more directly expressing His wrath upon earth in response to the lives of those He loves so violently taken from them. And as well, expressing experientially the passing, unstable nature of our earth and heaven. Far more stable than all we consider to be fixed and secure here on earth (lands and mountains) is the Word of God, *"which liveth and abideth forever".* It simply is not wise to be a man of this life and earth only.

Rev 6:15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;
Rev 6:16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:
Rev 6:17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

Some would like to understand such things as we see here symbolically, expressing seasons of government upheaval throughout history or the odd pocket of anarchy. But we are wise to take this quite literally. Described here is no ordinary trouble, but *"great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be"* (Matt. 24:21). These are scenes common to prophecy. Joel spoke of the day when *"the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the LORD come"* (2:31). Compare Isaiah 13:9-13.

Vs. 15-17 – The reaction among men of earth. All men are brought level in such catastrophic calamity. All levels of society, from greatest to least, seek equal accommodations in Hard Rock Hotel. Where on earth do you go to find some security when all you ever thought secure is shaken, when

the wrath of Almighty God is lined up against you? When it is God for us, who can be against us, and when it is God against us, who can stand?!

Vs. 17 – Do not miss the inherent recognition here in the unsaved of earth in the face of such earth-shaking phenomena;

- That *God* is the One doing the shaking.
- That He is *Master*, sitting *"on the throne".*
- That it is His *wrath* being displayed.
- That there is an expectation in man of such a coming day of His wrath.

"Who is able to stand?" – The answer to their question is found in the next chapter. Only those who have taken refuge in Jesus Christ will be able to stand in that day. See Joel 2:32.

Chapter 7 – Two Multitudes

This book of Revelation is chronological, fundamentally but not strictly so. This 7th chapter is now a parenthesis or pause in the chronological progression, a stepping aside briefly in order to express related events. It seems this chapter is placed here in answer to the question of who is able

Rev 7:1 And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.
Rev 7:2 And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,
Rev 7:3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

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to stand in the *"great and terrible day of the Lord"*. Chapter 8 will pick up with the 7th seal.

Chapter 7 is a record of two groups of redeemed ones coming out of the tribulation period;

- A Jewish remnant of 144,000 sealed servants.
- A great, innumerable multitude out of every racial group.

7:1-8 – The Jewish Remnant

Vs. 1-3 – John saw four angels holding the four winds, such that there is no wind on the earth or sea or on any tree. As in the eye of a hurricane or the calm before a storm, expressing great foreboding. As if all of creation holds its breath. These are angels to whom it is granted to hurt the earth and sea. They are poised and prepared to

Rev 7:4 And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

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execute their commission with power. Pictured here is ominous judgment pending, only temporarily held back. As if the horror of what had already fallen in the 6th seal was only the distant rumble of the real approaching storm. And before it falls in all of its fury God first sets apart and protects His servants.

Vs. 3 – The seal *"in their foreheads"* implies protection and ownership, as a slave was often marked. Who are these sealed *"servants of God"*? They are some who will be redeemed from the nation of Israel out of the tribulation (Daniel's 70th "week"), after the church has been removed in the Rapture. The Jews of our day do not normally know what tribe they are from, but God knows, and will find 12,000 men from each of the 12 tribes for His salvation, sealing and service during that coming era. It seems these will be specially preserved from harm through the tribulation. There is tremendous emphasis placed upon these men here; sealed through angels, a scene of breathless quietude on earth, and the listing of their number from each tribe in vs. 5-8. This seems to imply some vastly

Rev 7:5 Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand.
Rev 7:6 Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nepthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand.

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important role these men will have on earth during that era. It is hard to imagine how any of God's redeemed could survive through Antichrist's determination to kill all who belong to the Lord in that day. But we must remember;

- Noah and family were preserved by God through the worldwide devastation of the Flood.
- Rahab was preserved at Jericho because of her faith and faithfulness.
- Israel was preserved through the plagues upon Egypt, and that quite miraculously.
- The two witness of chapter 11 will as well be untouchable until God's time.

In chapter 14 we find these same men triumphant still. There will be other Jewish people saved during this time, some of whom will suffer a martyr's death, but these it would appear are preserved through,

Rev 7:7 Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand.
Rev 7:8 Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.

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untouchable by Antichrist.

Many who believe the Lord to be finished with national Israel attempt to get away from a literal fulfilment in Israel here. Such folks would tend to read this passage allegorically, identifying these 144,000 in some way with the church or some other group. But we must remember what God spoke through His angel to the prophet Daniel in chapter 9 of his book of prophecy. Daniel was told in 9:24 that 70 "weeks" or sevens of years were *"determined upon thy people* (Israel) *and upon thy holy city"* (Jerusalem). This time period of 70 x 7 or 490 years was to be counted *"from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem"* (9:25), which was decreed by the Persian king Artaxerxes and recorded in the book of Nehemiah. Daniel was then told that after the 69th seven of years *"shall Messiah be cut off"* (killed) and the city and temple destroyed (9:26). From that time of the death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah the

current church age was begun, as the Lord turned His attention from the Jewish nation and out the world of Gentiles. But remember that there are 70 sevens of years determined upon Daniel's people. That one remaining seven of years is what this book of Revelation describes. After the Lord removes His church of all true believers in Jesus from the earth to Himself in the Rapture, He will then turn again to deal with Daniel's people, the Jewish nation. This is what we see beginning here in Revelation chapter 7 with these 144,000 Jewish men called and sealed in the Lord's service (see Reading Companion to the Book of Daniel for more detailed coverage of this important prophecy of Daniel). The fact that the Lord actually listed the tribes points as well to literal fulfilment, rather than any symbolic sense. If He meant to speak of actual sons of Jacob, how could He have put it more clearly? Where does the Bible ever speak of the 12 tribes of Israel when it is not referring to exactly that, according to a normal reading? This is not the church! These are certainly not specially chosen super-Jehovah's Witnesses. God continues to watch over His chosen people Israel, even in that coming day of their greatest distress. He still has a purpose for them and will fulfil *every promise* He ever made to them. *"Blindness in part is happened to Israel",* Paul said, *"until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in"*

Rev 7:9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;
Rev 7:10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

(Rom. 11:25), only until *"the times of the Gentiles"* comes to completion in Antichrist.

Notice also that there are no "lost tribes". There is no support here for the foolish notion that the ten lost tribes of Israel are perpetuated in the English-speaking people of the world as some believe.

7:9-17 – The Gentile Remnant

Oh happy throng!

Vs. 9-10 – This is a different group than the former. These are;

- Not sealed but apparently martyred.
- Not on earth but in heaven.
- Not numbered but innumerable.
- Not out of the tribes of Israel but from every nation.

Rev 7:11 And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,
Rev 7:12 Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.
Rev 7:13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?
Rev 7:14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Clothed in white, these are singing a symphony of praise before God's throne, ascribing salvation to God and the Lamb.

Vs. 11-12 – Again the song extends wider, now involving angels, elders, and living creatures, as in chapter 5.

Vs. 13-14 – The question and answer concerning the identity of these – These are the happy throng of those saved out of the tribulation, having died by war, famine, disease, earthquake, or martyrdom. They had been hounded upon earth until at last they were captured and killed, having refused to bow to Antichrist's demand of their worship. It will be a day of greater threat upon life for receiving Jesus as Saviour than ever before, when to do so

will be to face that most solemn of decisions, deny Christ and live, or hold Christ and die! The number willing to give their lives for their Saviour in that day is seemingly beyond human computation. This is amazing! When it will be hardest to become a Christian is when the most will come to Christ! This is a denial of the modern push toward a soft, smooth cross, seeking to make "Christianity" as easy as possible, to be sweet and inoffensive at all costs, that we might win the more to Christ. It seems the worst of times will be the best of times for the saving of souls.

The introduction here at this point of this innumerable multitude of those saved out of the tribulation seems to suggest their redemption resulting from the work of those 144,000 Jewish men mentioned first, who will be *"the servants of our God",* perhaps as His protected evangelists carrying the gospel to the ends of the earth during that era. Compare this same group of 144,000 associated with the preaching of *"the everlasting gospel…to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people"* in 14:1-6.

Rev 7:16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.
Rev 7:17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Vs. 15-17 – These tribulation saints are found in God's presence, before His throne, facing *"Him that sitteth on the throne"* rather than fleeing in fear (6:16). *"And so shall they ever be with the Lord"*, serving Him *"day and night in His temple"*. Heaven is not just a place of rest from earthly labours, but a place of the privileged service of God.

Vs. 16 – The hunger, thirst, and exposure described speak of their experience on earth in their flight from the wrath of Antichrist's regime. They will be driven from the shelter of civilization to seek refuge in the wilderness. Hunger, thirst, heat, and cold will be their experience in those days, being *"strangers and pilgrims on the earth"* like never before. *"Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city"* (Heb. 11:13-16). Then like never before will they wander about *"in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in*

mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" (Heb. 11:37-38).

Vs. 17 – In God's presence the Lamb Himself will see to their care at last, all tears finally wiped away, all grief and tears past, with only *fullness of joy* in His presence. Then will be the very fulfilment of Psalm 23. There is a special place in God's heart for those who suffer for their faith as the Lamb of God did. Remember Jesus standing to receive Stephen as he gave his life in faithful testimony of his Saviour (Acts 7).

These *"washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"* (vs. 14). Only Christ's blood can wash away sin and grant a sinner the white robe of God's righteousness.

"Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Ps. 51:7). *"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool"* (Isa. 1:18).

Class 8 – Revelation 8:1-9:12

Rev 8:1 And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.
Rev 8:2 And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

Chapter 8 – Trumpet Judgments

As this chapter begins, the 7th seal judgment introduces the next round of 7 trumpet judgments, as if the trumpet judgments are contained in the last seal.

8:1-6 – 7th Seal Judgment

Vs. 1 – This period of silence in heaven compares to the great calm on earth as chapter 7 began, expressing a sense of anticipation for what comes next, as if breathlessly waiting. One writer made the comparison to the silence before the foreman of a jury reads the verdict.

Vs. 2 – John's attention is now fixed on seven angels who have stood before God, and seven trumpets are given to them. These are angels appointed by God to direct the next series of judgments by means of seven trumpet blasts. Again, the trumpet or ram's

Rev 8:3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.
Rev 8:4 And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

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horn ("shofar") is used in the Bible in making important announcements, particularly in announcing God's presence (Mt. Sinai and Christ's coming).

Vs. 3-5 – There is something of a ceremony before the trumpeters begin their work. Another angel approached the golden altar before the Lord carrying a golden censer, where he received incense to burn on that altar. A censer was used in the O.T. worship to carry live coals from the brazen altar to the golden altar of incense inside the holy place, before the veil. At the golden altar the priest would then throw incense on the live coals. And the smoke would go up before the veil of the most holy place, filling the temple with its sweet smell. The clear implication here (5:8 as well) is that the incense symbolizes the prayers of believers (*"the saints"*) going up before God's presence. It is a reminder that our intercession is as the sweet aroma of incense to the Lord, and it is an indication that our

Rev 8:5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.
Rev 8:6 And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.
Rev 8:7 The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

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prayers *do* enter His presence. Compare Luke 1:9-10, where the people gathered for prayer before the temple as Zacharias went in to burn incense. Compare Psalm 141:2, *"Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as incense".*

Vs. 5 – There follows great trouble upon earth. Behold how the prayers of believers have an effect. Compare 6:9ff, where again the martyred dead appealed to the Lord with greatest trouble resulting upon earth. God's wrath falls in response to the prayers of God's saints who are suffering at the hands of the wicked. No man is powerless upon earth who has a prayer-hearing God in heaven.

8:7 – 1st Trumpet Judgment

Do you suppose the people of earth will actually hear these trumpet blasts from heaven?

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

With the sounding of the 1st trumpet hail and fire mingled with blood fall to earth, resulting in 1/3 of the trees and all grass of earth torched. Can you imagine the effect of this upon a stunned world?! Can we even begin to comprehend the devastation upon global productivity, communications, services, farms, food production and distribution, etc? *All green grass gone!* It will be a day of destruction by thirds. The term "third" appears 11 times in this chapter.

As with much that is described in Revelation, there is a tendency in Bible commentators to not consider this literal hail and fire, but rather symbolic representation of divine chastening generally falling over any given era. Yet the parallels with one of the plagues upon Egypt are unmistakable (Ex. 9:22-26). Were those 10 plagues through Moses only symbolic as well? We are wise to just read and understand it normally. It is the way God has taught us to read His prophecies.

8:8-9 – 2nd Trumpet

Now if earth-dwellers can hear these trumpet blasts, we can well imagine the collective, global snap to attention with the sounding of the 2nd, with all eyes heavenward, or ducking for cover. With this 2nd trumpet John saw some type of meteor, something like (*"as it were"*) a great flaming mountain cast into the sea, bringing the following results;

- 1/3 of sea turned to blood. No mere language of appearance is in evidence here. Actual blood is indicated. He who created all with a word, who turned fresh water to wine, can easily turn salt water to blood. Again, as the plague upon Egypt, but on a worldwide scale (Ex. 7:19ff).

- 1/3 of sea creatures dead. These events are absolutely unparalleled in history! The force of the ocean waves would be quietened by the multiplied millions of square kilometres of floaters and bloaters. Harbours, beaches, and shorelines will be choked with great masses of rotting flesh, and stretching right out into the sunset. *Imagine the putrefying stench!!*

- 1/3 of ships destroyed. Perhaps mostly

Rev 8:10 And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters;
Rev 8:11 And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

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through the tsunamis resulting from the impact of this great meteor.

It would seem the effects will mostly relate to the coastal areas of earth around the point of impact.

8:10-11 – 3rd Trumpet

With the 3rd trumpet John saw a great flaming meteor fall to earth, blazing like a torch, this time affecting the *fresh* waters of earth. Note that from the moment that angel collected fire from God's heavenly altar and cast it to earth we have seen falling flames; fire mingled with hail and flaming mountain and star. Result of this 2nd meteor strike; 1/3 of fresh water rivers and springs of earth are poisoned, bringing death to many.

Vs. 11 – "Wormwood" is a plant that grows in desert places, producing extremely bitter dark green oil. It is a substance so bitter even worms do not like it.

Rev 8:12 And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.

It is used in making absinthe, a medication effective in deworming.

Compare how evil men gave Jesus only vinegar mingled with bitter gall to drink in His thirst, as He died for their sins (Matt. 27:34; Ps. 69:21). They would not even give a cup of cold water to One greater than a prophet among them (Matt. 10:40-42). Now the Lord at last returns justice upon earth-dwellers.

8:12 – 4th Trumpet

With the 4th trumpet 1/3 of sun, moon, and stars are darkened, so that they do not shine for a third part of day or night. Understand it literally. This appears to be some type of eclipse disrupting the light of all heavenly bodies. A visual representation of the way of the wicked as darkness, not knowing at what they stumble (Prov. 4:19).

8:13 – Warning of Woes

God's messenger flies through the air speaking with

Rev 8:13 And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabiters of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!

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a voice loud enough for all upon earth to hear, giving a triple *"woe"* to all *"inhabiters of the earth"* because of the 3 remaining trumpeters yet to sound, a "woe" for each remaining trumpet judgment. As if the horrors already having come upon earth are not dreadful enough! In Jeremiah 22:29 the Lord pleads *"O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD".* Now we hear triple woes to those ignoring His triple plea to heed.

Consider

In Psalm 19 David proclaimed that the heavens declare the glory of God the firmament (expanse of the atmosphere) shows forth His handiwork. His reality and abilities are written there on the pages of creation. God's creative handiwork is mentioned frequently in the Bible, as a witness to His power, wisdom, and sovereignty. In fact in Romans 1:20 Paul declared that the invisible things of God, His eternal power and Godhead, are so clearly seen and understood by all, through the handiwork of His

creation, that all men are without excuse. No man can fairly say, "But I did not know! I did not understand!" God assures us that every soul both knows and understands quite enough. In Jeremiah 31:35-36 God's prophet speaks of the sun and moon as tokens of God's faithfulness to His promises to the nation of Israel. These very emblems of blessing and revelation of God's glory, power, promise, and care now become the arena for His display of His glory and power to judge! These now become tokens of wrath, speaking only of greater outpouring yet to come in that day. How many earth dwellers have been willing to recognize the Lord's hand in the heavens? How many acknowledge the power of His voice in the booming waves of the sea? How many ever see His grace in the beauty and benefit of the trees and grass of earth? Such wonders have seldom been an occasion for thanksgiving to the living God from the hearts of *"the inhabiters of earth".* And now, that which came from God's gracious hand and has been so taken for granted, the sea, the blessing of water, the beauty of majestic flowing rivers, the splendour and benefit of sun, moon, and stars, all gifts from a caring God to an undeserving world, now all begin to come under the blight of God's judgment upon rebellious, rejecting mankind. Tokens of His blessings undeserved, now turned to tokens of His

cursing much-deserved! So dramatic are these judgments and so unmistakably evidence of God's power and attitude that blaspheming men on earth can no longer ignore the fact that God is dealing with them. Yet do not miss His grace even in this dismal setting. Do not ever lose sight of God's grace. Look for it and you will find it in all His works. Even in that coming day of which we read here, He does not simply lower the boom! First He turns tokens of blessing to tokens of His wrath. Unmistakably so. With ever increasing intensity. Why? In order to give ample warning. In order to lead men to repentance. Still He is not willing that any should perish, but that all might come to repentance (II Pet. 3:9). He will be fishing for souls still, even in such a storm. The opportunity to turn will yet be available, but with time so evidently running short. The Lord is long-suffering indeed, but not eternally so. No soul will ever be able to stand before the Lord and justly claim he never had fair warning.

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Chapter 9 – Fifth and Sixth Trumpets

9:1-12 – Fifth Trumpet (First Woe)

Remember that these last three trumpet judgments are proclaimed to be *"woes"* (8:13; 9:12). We find in
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Rev 9:1 And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.

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this 1st woe one of the most shockingly terrifying predictions in all of Revelation! Mystifying beyond description. The events brought on by the sounding of the 5th trumpet are given a surprising amount of detailed explanation, implying a note of particular importance.

Vs. 1 – John saw *"a star"* having fallen from heaven to earth. Now remember the Golden Rule of Hermeneutics – "If the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense. Take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning, unless the immediate context, or related passages, or basic biblical truths *clearly* indicate that the text is not to be interpreted literally". So John saw a *"star"* fallen here. He has seen stars fall before (6:13; 8:10), and we have had no cause to see them differently from actual material objects falling from heaven to earth. But this time there is a degree of personhood attributed to this *"star";*

- *"To him was given the key to the bottomless pit"*.
- *"He opened the bottomless pit"* (vs. 2).

Rev 9:2 And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.

Some kind of intelligent being seems to be intended here. This fallen "star" may very well refer to Satan or Lucifer, that *"son of the morning"* who is *"fallen from heaven"* (Isa. 14:12). Jesus told His disciples how He *"beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven"* (Lk. 10:18). This fall, seen by John here, may be the result of the war in heaven described in 12:7-10, where the devil is cast to the earth. Perhaps this is a time indicator, marking this as the mid-point of the tribulation period.

Vs. 2 – *"The bottomless pit"* – Literally "the pit of the abyss". This is where Satan will be bound and kept through Christ's thousand-year reign on earth (20:1). This is where the demons begged Jesus not to send them to be tormented before their time (Lk. 8:31; Matt. 8:29).

On Demons

Demons are not mythology or the fabrication of somebody's imagination. They are very real beings, fallen angels, busy with Satan's evil, subtle

Rev 9:3 And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.
Rev 9:4 And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.

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purposes among men. We see Jesus often dealing with demons often throughout His earthly ministry. They are intelligent beings, and not ineffectual. They are in truth powerful, active servants of evil (Acts 19:16), having a strong influence among men.

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Vs. 3-6 – The opening of this pit seems to release a "pandora's box" of a wicked, demonic horde. Upon opening, there burst out furiously churning columns of thick, black smoke, as if out of an opened furnace, rising quickly, filling the sky and blotting out the sun. Then, out of the churning smoke, there began to arise a terrifying sound as of an approaching stampede (*"as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle"*), thundering and building in power. And then, appearing out of the thick blackness, a great swarm of what appeared to John like locusts. Again we see a parallel with the plagues upon Egypt (Ex. 10:12ff). Yet these are locusts like the world has never seen. "Locusts of a
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Rev 9:5 And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.
Rev 9:6 And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.

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hellish species, animated by devilish instincts and equipped with infernal powers" (Peake). Though appearing and functioning something like locusts, these will not bring threat to the green vegetation of earth as normal locusts. Instead they will be given the capacity to sting like scorpions. This feature is very prominent (vs. 3, 5, 10). Please understand that this is not figurative language referring to men in tanks or planes, or representing "heretics, or Goths, or Mohammedans, or the mendicant orders, or the Jesuits, or Protestants, or Saracens or Turks" (Peake). Rather these are some sort of unholy, unleashed demonic host, with the focus of their attention upon the people of earth, touching all but those who belong to the Lord, even as with the plagues on Egypt. Note the effects of their sting;

- Pain with the severe intensity of a scorpion's sting.
- No fleeting, passing pain of a few moments or days, but lasting for *5 months!!* Either

through repeated stinging, or pain that just does not quit. This horrific feature is repeated so we do not miss it (vs. 5 & 10). Who could eat or sleep?

- Will not kill people, though the effect of the terror and strangeness and agony will bring the sincere longing for death in every affected soul (vs. 6). In fact all will be denied the death they will long for in those days.

Do not miss the ironic twist of justice here. Throughout history the wicked of earth have forced death upon untold thousands of the righteous, tortured and murdered for their faith and faithfulness when they would have preferred to live. But they were refused that choice by wicked men. Now, in this end times turn of the table, by the decree of the Righteous One, the wicked will live on in the torment of their agony when they would prefer to die, when they will *long* for it in fact. But they will be denied that choice by the Righteous Judge! This is the most unimaginable description of demonic domination, to such an extent that men in agony of body and soul will lose their ability of free choice as well. It is a bizarre image of demonic torment beyond even the experience of the demon possessed man of Gadara, who was *"always, night and day…crying* [screaming] *and cutting himself*

Rev 9:7 And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men.
Rev 9:8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.

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with stones" (Lk. 8; Mk. 5). He too was in agony through demon activity, with the same preoccupation with death it seems. And his too was an existence he had no control over, no ability to end. *Then Jesus came!* And something within the man, some desperate hope, moved him to run to Jesus and bow at His feet. And there he found deliverance and peace at last. It is a picture of the unsaved, dominated by their sin, *"all their lifetime subject to bondage".* Until Jesus is at last allowed in, bringing blessed deliverance.

Vs. 7-11 – Detailed description of these "locusts". It soon becomes apparent that these are no ordinary locusts. Note the prominence of the words *"like"* or *"as"*, as John attempts to describe these terrifying creatures in his vision;

- Comparable in shape to horses prepared for battle (vs. 7).
- As if they wore crowns of gold.

Rev 9:9 And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.
Rev 9:10 And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.

- Faces as men.

- Hair like that of women. How so? Colour? Texture? Style? What else but length? These creatures will have long hair, *women's* hair. Do not miss God's obvious assumption in passing here. In God's mind there is a clear difference between the hair of men and women. Even so there should be that same clear distinction in the conduct of His saints. Women should have long hair, for their hair is their glory (I Cor. 11:15). Men should not have the long *"hair of women"*, for this is to their shame (I Cor. 11:14).

- Teeth like lions.

- *"Breastplates as it were…of iron"* (vs. 9). Shell? Exoskeleton of some type? As if iron, depicting their individual indestructibility.

- Winged – Indicating great speed, and giving them their terrifying sound as well. It will be

Rev 9:11 And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.
Rev 9:12 One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.

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impossible to flee or evade them. No one will be able to escape! The only escape is to flee from the wrath to come *now,* in fleeing to eternal refuge in Jesus.

- Special attention is given to their tails (vs. 10), which are *"like unto scorpions".* Here resides their power to hurt – for *5 months!* – 150 days – 3,600 hours – nearly 13 million seconds of agony, lusting after death!!

- This demonic horde will have *"a king over them"* (vs. 11), *"the angel of the bottomless pit".* Abaddon (Hebrew) or Apollyon (Greek). Both words mean "destroyer". This is a clear reference to Satan. All masks of goodness and light will be stripped away in that day, and the evil one will be seen in his true character as the great deceiver and destroyer of mankind (chapter 12).

It is an awesome, fearful description of the most dreadfully terrifying experience imaginable. These

"locusts" are instruments of God's justice upon the Christ-rejecting inhabitants of earth. How foolishly trite for people to refer to hard times as "hell on earth". *They have no idea!* Yet these are instruments of God's mercy as well. For by means of this horrific judgment perhaps many thousands will be driven by their anguish to repentance and faith.

In God's presence is fullness of joy and at His right hand there are pleasures forevermore. But when Satan reigns unrestrained it is quite another story. That evil one happily brings man to eternal, unrelenting, inescapable, unbearable torment! Before God, arising with the sweet smoke of the incense are the prayers of His saints, calling for His kingdom of peace to come, prayers He will ultimately answer. But arising in the scorching, caustic smoke of hell, only Satan's sinister horde of tormenters.

"Choose you this day whom ye will serve"

Revelation Judgments

7 Seal Judgments (chapters 6 & 8:1-2)

- **1st – 4th** – Four Horsemen.
    - White – Antichrist arises (6:1-2).
    - Red – Peace taken away (6:3-4).
    - Black – Famine (6:5-6).
    - Pale – "Death" – ¼ dead (6:7-8).
- **5th** – Martyred souls under altar (6:9-11).
- **6th** – Great earthquake (6:12-17).
- **7th** – 7 trumpets prepared (8:1-6).

7 Trumpet Judgments (chapters 8-9 & 11:15-19)

- **1st** – Hail, fire, blood, 1/3 of trees and all grass burnt (8:7).
- **2nd** – Great flaming mount into sea, 1/3 sea blood, 1/3 sea creatures dead, & 1/3 ships destroyed (8:8-9).
- **3rd** – Great star, "Wormwood", falls. 1/3 of fresh water poisoned (8:10-11).
- **4th** – 1/3 of sun, moon, stars darkened (8:12).
- **5th** – Abyss opened, demonic *"locusts"* (9:1-

11).

- **6th** – Death angels released, war, 1/3 of people killed (9:13-19).
- **7th** – Great voices in heaven, lightnings, voices, thunderings, earthquakes, great hail (11:15-19).

7 Bowl Judgments (chapter 16)

- **1st** – Terrible sores (16:1-2).
- **2nd** – Sea as blood of a dead man, all sea creatures dead (16:3).
- **3rd** – Praise for God's fairness (16:4-7).
- **4th** – Scorching sun (16:8-9).
- **5th** – Darkness and tongue-gnawing pain (16:10-11).
- **6th** – Way from the east prepared for Armageddon (16:12-16).
- **7th** – Voices, thunders, lightnings, never so great an earthquake, cities fell, islands fled, mountains gone, great hail stones (16:17-21).

"Neither repented they
of their murders,
nor of their sorceries,
nor of their fornication,
nor of their thefts"

(Rev 9:21)

Class 9 – Revelation 9:13-10:11

Rev 9:13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,
Rev 9:14 Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.

9:13-19 – 6th Trumpet (2nd Woe)

Vs. 13 – With the sounding of the 6th trumpet John heard a voice from the golden altar before God, where the incense with the prayers of saints were offered up at the beginning of chapter 8. It is a reminder perhaps, that the judgments recorded in John's prophecy are in answer to the pleadings of God's saints for justice upon earth (6:10).

Vs. 14 – The voice instructed the 6th angel to release the four angels who were bound in the Euphrates River. Apparently these are not the four restrained angels of 7:1-3 with power to hurt the earth and sea. Those appear to be God's angel, where these now appear to be unholy angels. God's good angels are never described in the Bible as bound, whereas some among the fallen type are so described (Jude 6; Rev. 20:1-3).

Rev 9:15 And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.

Vs. 15 – This seems to be another release of demons for the fulfilling of God's intended judgments, as with the opening of the bottomless pit in the first half of this chapter.

"Which were prepared" for their hour of activity. Even as that great fish was prepared for the moment Jonah hit the water. In the same way these unholy servants will all chime in at precisely the determined hour, of the determined day, of the determined month, of the determined year, all marked out with precision by the great Designer in His divine plan, all running like clockwork! The very last thing Satan would like to think himself doing is to be serving God's plan. Yet how he has so continually raged against God throughout history in his most bitter hatred and utter rebel heart, only to find his efforts tucking neatly into God's programme at every turn. In his rage Satan stirred the world to crucify their Saviour, only to find it already prophesied, precisely as God had planned it from before the foundation of the earth, and exactly what man needed. These wicked angels, with heart to hate and haste to hurt, have been restrained by God

Rev 9:16 And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.

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until the precise moment He deems appropriate. God has both blessings and distressings under His control. Both good angels and evil He uses as vehicles of His purpose. And these are now designated to execute the great judgment of the 6th trumpet. Their function? To kill a third of the people of earth (repeated in vs. 18). The 1st woe produces an unholy host to *torment* the people of earth. This 2nd woe produces another to *kill* the people of earth.

Now remember that the 4th seal and horseman of 6:7-8 brought death to ¼ of the earth's population. Obviously a third of the remainder brings the total dead to fully half of earth's original population! Never since Noah's day has there been such vast loss of human life on earth. Jesus had said of this approaching time, *"except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved"* (Matt. 24:22). The horror of that era would bring death to the whole human race if those days were not confined within God's predefined limits and ended by Christ's 2nd coming.

Vs. 16 – Now we are introduced to the instruments through which these 4 angels will accomplish their grisly task. John saw a vast, mounted army of 200 million strong! In John's day, when it is estimated there would not have been more than 500 million people on earth, the tally of this army must have been a tremendous test of faith. Yet in our day it is all so very possible. Time magazine, over 6 decades ago (21st May, 1965), reported China's army alone at 200 million, using the very same figure John used. Moral of the story – If the fulfilment of God's promise seems impossible, just wait a bit.

There is no clear statement here as to where this invading army comes from. From east of the Euphrates seems to be implied. Described is a massive force of tremendous military power, which will result in the death of a third of the earth's population. Remember how Daniel as well spoke of great end-time military activities, in chapter 11 of his book of prophecy. In the closing days of Antichrist's reign *"tidings out of the east shall trouble him"*, Daniel wrote in 11:44 of his book. Then in the next verse he comes *"to his end"* without help. A 200 million strong threat would certainly be a bit troubling! We will see similarities with the later(?) development recorded in 16:12-16 (6th bowl judgment). Two separate events? Two phases of

Rev 9:17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.
Rev 9:18 By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.
Rev 9:19 For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.

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the same event?

Vs. 17-19 – Horses and riders described – Very little is said of the horsemen, only the appearance of their breastplates *"of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone"*, glowing and flashing with some shade of red, blue, or purple. There is greatest focus upon the horses though, so unlike horses of earth. Their heads are *"as the heads of lions"* and issue *"fire and smoke and brimstone"* from their mouths. This will be the means by which the people of earth are killed. Language of appearance? Actual horses? The best John could do in describing some sort of bullet-spewing personnel carriers? Another unearthly demonic host? Angazi! Descriptions do imply something beyond natural horses.

We certainly find pictured here a terrible destruction on a staggering scale. How the world

Rev 9:20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:
Rev 9:21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

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longs for peace, apparently gripping the *"man of sin"* in that day in the desperate hope of it. Only to be met with war and death and loss like the world has never seen. Only when the Prince of peace comes will we know peace. Only when the King of righteousness reigns will we know justice on this earth. Only in righteousness can there be true and lasting peace.

9:20-21 – Reaction Among Men

We might expect such a devastating, terrifying judgment as this to bring an impenitent world to its knees in immediate, complete repentance, as Jonah's storm at sea drove the sailors to cry out first to their own gods, and then at last to the true God. But alas, we see quite the opposite here! Even as the plagues upon Egypt only served to harden Pharaoh's heart. Compare also the result of the 6th seal earthquake in chapter 6, where men of earth recognize that God in His wrath is involved, but

they will not repent. Even so these only continue in their idolatry, murdering, thieving, whoring, and sorceries according to their own pleasure! These are only confirmed in their own self-interests. It is a further study on human nature here. Punishment in and of itself does not force a change of heart. One is moved to repentance by it, while another only becomes more fixed in sin. The only difference is in the hearts of men, bringing differing results or responses. If correction does not produce repentance then it will nurture the opposite in obstinacy, bitterness, and rebellion. Correction *will* have an effect. It serves as the point of a wedge, forcing hearts to movement one way or the other. In the context of the 10 plagues upon Egypt, which should have thoroughly convinced reason, we are told 17 times of the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, though never has a man faced a more convincing argument! In the same way the Jews plotted Christ's death immediately after He raised Lazarus from the dead before all (Jn. 11). Their response was so utterly unreasonable! What ought to convince man's reason, whether judgments or mercies, does not reach the proud, unreasonable God-hater. He is only more thoroughly hardened.

In the current age God is showing His goodness. He is slow to wrath in His *"longsuffering to usward".*

But in that coming age of *"the Lord's day"* His approach will be so very different. Then His way will be severity, wrath, and judgments unleashed, bringing terror and death upon unrepentant man. Mankind will then have had it both ways, and will be found God-rejecters whether in peace or in peril. The true fault will be displayed for all to see. The problem is not in God or in His approach, but in the nature of a rejecting heart. ***Without excuse!!***

Chapter 10 – The Messenger and the Book

This chapter begins the next parenthetical section (as chapter 7), running through to 11:14. We would naturally expect the 3rd woe to follow immediately after the 1st and 2nd. But again we find a pause here, a portion that does not advance the narrative. Do you see the pattern? There were 6 seal judgments in chapter 6, followed by the pause of chapter 7, containing two visions highlighting those redeemed out of the tribulation from among Jews and Gentiles. Then chapter 8 returned to the 7th seal, ushering in the 7 trumpet judgments. And in chapter 8-9 we have seen 6 trumpet judgments, now followed by another pause containing the two visions of chapters 10-11. Then 11:15 returns to the 7th trumpet, again ushering in the 7 bowl judgments.

Rev 10:1 And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire:

So a round of 6 judgments, followed by a lull, *an opportunity!* Then another round of 6, followed by another opportunity. Then at last the final flurry of judgments to the end. See again the grace in the storm my friend. Our God is the God of opportunity…for now.

10:1-7 – The Mighty Messenger

Vs. 1 – Another angel now enters the field of John's vision, and the scene he relates is a very dramatic one indeed. He saw a mighty messenger coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud, rainbow on his head, face like the sun, beaming with brilliance, feet like flaming columns of fire. There are many similarities here with the description of Christ in chapter 1. Some see this mighty messenger as Jesus coming to make announcement to earth. Comparable to *"the captain of the host of the LORD"* appearing to Joshua before the conquest of the Promised Land (Josh. 5), it is the Lord now bringing announcement before the final conquest of the whole earth. The last time we saw the Lord Jesus He had a book in His hand (chapter 5). The cloud

Rev 10:2 And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth,
Rev 10:3 And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.
Rev 10:4 And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.

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clothing is significant as well. Again, clouds often accompany God's presence, as we considered in chapter 1 (Acts 1:9; I Thess. 4:16-17). And clouds often mark Christ's appearance in this book (1:7; 14:14-16).

Vs. 2 – His feet upon land and sea, the two major aspects of earth, seems to imply a position of dominance over all the earth, laying claim to all, as Satan's domain crumbles.

Vs. 3 – In response to His great cry as if a lion roaring, the *"seven thunders"* clapped and rumbled. The whole scene is one to inspire wonder and trembling, as if a massive storm brewing.

Vs. 4 – These thunders are more than just inarticulate rumblings, for John understood them to say something. Perhaps as when the Father

spoke from heaven to Jesus, before that Jerusalem crowd who would soon crucify Him (Jn. 12:28-29). Jesus had prayed there, *"Father, glorify Thy name",* expressing His settled resolve that He was happy and willing for whatever would most glorify His Father, regardless of what became of Him. In response there came a voice from heaven saying, *"I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again".* Some of the people standing around said it thundered. Some suggested an angel had spoken. The dull ear hears only a meaningless rumble when the Father speaks. The dull eye sees the light, but does not perceive the meaning (Acts 9:7; Dan. 10:7-8). But John's ears were attuned to God's voice in the thunder. And as he was about to follow the command given in 1:11 & 19 to *"write the things which thou hast seen",* he was stopped by that heavenly voice. What the thunders uttered was not to be recorded. Why? Why would the Lord speak at all through the thunders if we cannot know it? Yet why should we think that whatever God says we have the right to hear? Obviously what was said was for John, alone! Though our God has revealed much to all men, He has things to communicate only to those individuals who love Him, things which are not for others to know (Jn. 14:21). He is the rewarder of them *that diligently seek Him.* The rest go unrewarded. There are things known and

Rev 10:5 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven,
Rev 10:6 And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer:

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understood by those who walk with Him, which they have from Him and can never fully communicate to others. As the Apostle Paul was *"caught up into paradise"* and heard *"unspeakable words, which it is not lawful* [possible] *for a man to utter"* (II Cor. 12:4). It was for Paul. This is what David meant by *"the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him"* (Ps. 25:14). This is why Jesus gave eternal truths in parables (Matt. 13:11-16), to shield the precious pearls of His truth from those who would only trample them under feet.

Vs. 5-7 – The dramatic introduction of this mighty messenger is the preparation appropriate for the momentous pronouncement He brings. With hand lifted up to heaven He solemnly vows by God the eternal Creator *"that there should be time no longer"*. The sense of *"time no longer"* here is that of time run out for earth. There would be *no further delay!* The end of opportunity was at hand, as vs. 7 further explains. When the 7th angel sounds that last

trumpet the bowl judgments will then be poured out in quick succession, and that tribulation era would come crashing to its spectacular end with the glorious return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth. When this mighty messenger makes this pronouncement it will be in the final stages and time will be short.

Notice again the unblushing declaration of God as Creator here. It is a prominent theme in this book;

- 4:11 – *"For Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created".*
- 14:7 – *"Worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters".*

Here is the simple answer to all evolutionary speculations, and part-way "Christian" concessions to it. How utterly foolish the manmade view of a universe created by random "chance" or through some imagined resident forces apart from God!

That there would be no more delay is in answer to the query of God's own throughout the ages;

- *"How long, O Lord?"* (6:10).
- *"Wilt Thou at this time restore again the*

Rev 10:7 But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

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kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6).

The day will indeed come when God finally says, "Now is the time!"

God's delays are always for man's good. They never imply God's inability to deal with the mess of man. They never imply His indifference. They never imply God weak of purpose or resolve. God's delays always have in view man's further opportunity to repent and believe. His delays, as His warnings, are all of grace!

Vs. 7 – *"The mystery of God should be finished, as He hath declared to His servants the prophets"* – He does not speak of hidden things but of *"declared"* truths, the grand direction in which God has been moving throughout the ages is there in the old Book. It has been there all along, the O.T. prophecies of the glorious return of Jesus Christ with the establishment of His earthly kingdom of peace and righteousness, and the eternal state to follow.

Rev 10:8 And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.
Rev 10:9 And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.

10:8-11 – The Little Book

Now look again at this mighty messenger. Notice there in his hand a little open book (vs. 2). John is now told to go take that book.

Vs. 9 – Upon obeying John was further commanded by the messenger to not only take the book but to eat it, with the promise that it would be both sweet in his mouth and bitter in his belly. Compare Ezekiel's experience in his call to ministry in Ezekiel 2-3. Comp Jeremiah 15:16-18.

To eat God words is to read and understand and willingly apply the commands and statements and promises contained in God's Book in our life. To eat God's words is biblical imagery for absorbing His words, and this always in preparation for living it and proclaiming it to others. It means thoroughly understanding so that the truths contained therein become our own, a part of us.

Rev 10:10 And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.
Rev 10:11 And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

"Bitter…sweet" – Speaks of God's message of judgment mingled with His message of mercy. Here is the effect of God's words in man. In one sense they bring joy;

- In the revelation of God's goodness, grace, and long-suffering.
- In His many precious promises.
- In His faithful fulfilment of past promises, assuring the same for those yet unfulfilled.
- In His blessed message of hope to believers.
- In His assurances of eventual justice, all wrongs put right.

"More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honey comb" (Ps. 19:10).

Yet in another sense God's words bring bitterness, for so many will not accept. With Isaiah we groan,

"Lord, who hath believed our report?" Therefore the bitter warning of judgment will most certainly fall. Again, God is faithful to keep His promises, as this book of Revelation so abundantly testifies.

What a dreadful and blessed position to be in as a preacher of God's Word! For he who bears the good news bears also the bad news to the condemned, rebellious people of earth. Someone must do it! One concerned for others will find greatest joy in God's work, mingled with great heaviness of heart. God's message and those who carry it are the savour of life unto life to those who will believe, and the savour of death unto death to those who will not (II Cor. 2:16). If it were not that God is sovereign the load would be unbearable! Paul rejoiced to be a messenger of Christ (I Tim. 1:12), yet he knew continual sorrow of heart for his Christ-rejecting people (Rom. 10:1). Jesus delighted to do His Father's will, yet *"Man of sorrows"* was His name. Bitter-sweet! How pleasant it is to proclaim good things. How bitterly distasteful to reveal divine judgments ready even now to be poured out on the world of wicked mankind! He who created heaven prepared also the Lake of Fire. He in whose presence is fullness of joy forevermore for the believer, decrees also for the unbeliever that the smoke of their torment will ascend forever and ever

with no rest day and night (14:11). Many a gutless, self-loving Christian wants only to proclaim the sweet. May we be willing for the self-sacrifice of faithfulness in bringing the whole counsel of God to man.

Be faithful to God's words, believer! Be a faithful bearer of God's bad news as well as the good. Contemptible false prophets and preachers throughout the centuries have always tended to shun the bad news, choosing rather, in their self-will, to carry only a message of peace and comfort. Unfaithful, selfish, cowardly shepherds!

Be faithful to your own soul, unbeliever! Do not foolishly deceive yourself away from faith in Jesus Christ at the peril of your own eternal welfare. Be wise to understand and believe God's warnings and assurances;

"He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (I Jn. 5:12).

"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (Jn. 3:3).

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith" (II Cor. 13:5).

Class 10 – Revelation 11

Rev 11:1 And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

Think Your Way Through

- Chapter 1 – Son (revealed)
- Chapter 2-3 – 7 Churches
- Chapter 4 – Door (opened to heaven)
- Chapter 5-6 – 6 Seals
- Chapter 7 – Heaven (2 groups of redeemed)
- Chapter 8-9 – 6 Trumpets
- Chapter 10 – Angel and Book (times up)

Chapter 11

In the first portion of this chapter we are still in the parenthesis begun with chapter 10. John apparently still stood before that mighty messenger who had come down from heaven.

11:1-2 – Temple Measured

John was now given a rod or reed of a type grown in

Rev 11:2 But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

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the Jordan Valley, similar to cane. It was a lightweight and tough reed commonly used as a measuring rod. And with this John was instructed to *"measure the temple of God"*, the altar, and the worshippers there. *"Tread under foot"* describes things desecrated and dominated. John's work was only to relate to the inner enclosure of the holy place. He was to *"leave out"* the outer court of the temple, for this was given over to the Gentiles to be trampled for a period of 42 months. It will still be *"the times of the Gentiles"* at that point (Lk. 21:24), for Gentiles will still have a hand on the control of Jerusalem until the moment of Christ's return.

What is the significance of this work of measuring? We see the same elsewhere. Compare;

- Zechariah 2 – Zechariah's 3rd vision, of a man measuring Jerusalem in anticipation of Christ's return.
- Ezekiel 40 – The temple of the future millennial kingdom is measured.
- Revelation 21:15-17 – The New Jerusalem is

measured.

Measuring perhaps reflects the ideas of ownership or taking possession, as a new owner surveying what he has acquired. As well, perhaps the idea of assurance of reality is expressed through actual physical measurement. See how there is an actual, measurable temple there in the coming tribulation period. Of course there is not a temple in Jerusalem today. But there will be during this 70th week of Daniel. And Israel will be sacrificing there, for we discover in Daniel 9:27 that all such sacrifices will be stopped at the mid-point of that final 7 of years before Christ's return. The last half of this 7 of years now comes into focus with the temple still *"tread under foot"* as these *"times of the Gentiles"* come to an end, when the kingdoms of the world's Gentile dominion are destroyed (Dan. 2 & 7), and Messiah's earthly kingdom is at last established.

"Forty and two months" – This is the first mention in Revelation of this time period of 3½ years, seen first in Daniel's prophecy (Dan. 7:25; 9:27 *"in the middle of the seven"*; 12:7). We will see this timing mentioned four more times in this book.

11:3-14 – Two Witnesses

John is now introduced to two very unusual

Rev 11:3 And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.
Rev 11:4 These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

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characters, whom the mighty messenger referred to as *"My two witnesses".*

Vs. 3-6 – Their work or ministry – These two will receive the ability to minister as prophets for 1260 days, in spite of great antagonism against them.

> 1260 days = 42 months (of 30 days each) = 3½ years = *"time and times and the dividing of time"* = half of Daniel's 70th seven of years

Clearly the period of their ministry points to either the 1st or 2nd half of the tribulation period. There are many ties to God's prophets in these two.

- Their designated term of ministry (3½ years) of course ties them to the prophet Daniel.
- Being dressed in sackcloth, an indication of mourning, their ministry will be as the prophet Ezekiel's and Jeremiah's, speaking lamentations and woe (vs. 3).
- There is association with the prophet Zechariah's 5th vision of the olive tree and

Rev 11:5 And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.

Rev 11:6 These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

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lampstands (vs. 4). The oil from the olive tree provides a continual supply of fuel for the lamp, describing these men raised up and supernaturally protected and empowered to be shining witnesses in their day through the Spirit's continual supply.

- After the manner of the prophet Elijah they will be empowered to destroy with fire all who attempt or even purpose (*"will"*) to hurt them before their time (vs. 5). And fire *"out of their mouth"!* Do not miss the repetition of this *"must"*. God anticipates the raised eyebrows, clearing of throats, and shuffling feet of the sceptics.

- As that first prophet, Moses, and as Elijah, they will have power over rain, elements, and disease.

These two will in fact be *untouchable* during the days granted to them to prophesy.

Who are these two men? Some say they will be Moses and Elijah, because of the similarity in their ministry abilities;

- Moses called down the ten plagues upon Egypt, turning water to blood.

- Elijah called down fire upon those with a will to hurt him (I Ki. 1) and at Carmel, and shut off rain for *"three years and six months"* (Lk. 4:25), a foreshadow of this same 3½-year period. There are other interesting parallels between King Ahab and Antichrist.

- Malachi 4:5 predicts Elijah's coming *"before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD".*

- Both Moses and Elijah are in some sense related to Christ's 2nd coming in Matthew 16:28ff. They were both there in that pre-view of *"the Son of Man coming in His kingdom"* on the Mt. of Transfiguration.

Others insist these *"two witnesses"* must be Enoch and Elijah;

- Since these are the only two men who never actually experienced physical death.

- And since Hebrews 9:27 applies the limit that

"it is appointed unto men <u>once</u> to die". Seems Moses could not return and die a second time.

Then there is a mixed bag of interpreters who suggest that these are not actually individuals, but are rather symbolic representations of;

- The Word of God, in the Old and New Testaments, as the combined witness of God's Word on earth.
- Israel and the church, the two earthly witnesses of God throughout history.
- Etc.

Yet it seems clear that these will be actual men, for they will be killed, their corpses left in the street and then raised again to life. We are just not given names. Because whom they serve and how they serve are the issues of interest to the Lord, not who they are. The Master matters, not the servant.

When will these events described here take place? During the 1st or 2nd half of that final seven of years? My vote is for the 1st half. For *"the beast"* rising from the bottomless pit will put them to death in his time of coming out (vs. 7). And the fact that they remain dead for precisely 3½ days (vs. 9 & 11) is another reminder that this is all the time left to

Rev 11:7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

Antichrist at that point, who will consider himself in ultimate control at that hour of "victory". But his days have been numbered by the only true Sovereign from of old. The focus of ministry for these two being Jerusalem, perhaps Antichrist will be prevented from presenting himself as supreme ruler by their powerful ministries. Their deaths then are perhaps the very point of Antichrist's ascendancy, the last obstacle to the pinnacle of world power he seeks. So it is likely that this marks the *midpoint* of the 7-year Tribulation, with the time remaining so greatly emphasized here in the immediate context (vs. 2-3, 9, 11).

As Elijah in the days of Ahab, so these in a day of even greater unbelief and apostasy will be a frustrating threat to the entire wicked world for 3½ years, with supernatural powers equalling the greatest ever given by the Lord to men. A righteous prophet is always a tormenting vexation to a wicked world and worldly believers. For they stand right where God meant for them to stand. *In the way!* In the gap.

Rev 11:8 And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.
Rev 11:9 And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.

Vs. 7-10 – Their death.

"When they shall have finished their testimony" – See how their end comes only according to the divine time table and no sooner. As with Samson, only when God's power is removed, the oil supply cut off, can any power from below get to them. When supernatural power is withdrawn they will be immediately killed.

"The beast" – This is God's title for *"that man of sin"* who is the Antichrist (chapter 13). This one will be so thoroughly empowered by Satan as no man ever before him.

Vs. 8-9 – Though not named, the venue is obviously Jerusalem. Why there? Because this is where God's, and therefore Satan's, attention is focused.

Their dead bodies will be left on the street for days, against all proper human decency! Perhaps there will be a healthy fear of even touching them after

Rev 11:10 And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.

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the fearful power of their ministry? How great the indignity, but not before God. The evil world's persecution may kill the body and handle with greatest disgrace, but that is all it can do. They can never touch the soul. *God's* attitude is ever the only real concern.

So significant will be the death of these troublesome witnesses, bringing such vast relief to the inhabitants of the whole earth, that all the world will look on during those days, gawking and gloating over their deaths. The literal statement here is that they out of *"the people and kindreds and tongues and nations",* "<u>are</u> <u>seeing</u> their corpses 3½ days".

Vs. 10 – The result is celebration on a worldwide scale, so great will be the joy over these two tormentors dead at last. Described here is a global party, with great merry-making and gift exchanging.

Now take a good look there at vs. 9. Anything strike you as strange? No, not in our day of TV's, satellites, sky news, and internet. But think about

the circumstance described here from the perspective of John's day, over 1,900 years ago. Can you hear the unbelieving critics of John's day? "Ha!" say they, "All 'they that dwell upon the earth' shall 'see their dead bodies?!' Within 3½ days!? What absolute rubbish! How far could a rider get on a good horse in 3½ days, man?! You could not get out of sight of the Jordan Valley on the very *best* camel within so few hours, let alone distant foreigners making the trek back to actually see! What kind of foolishness is this Book? And even if the whole world could somehow be informed, how on earth could they all be transported to Jerusalem, and find food and water and accommodation while there?!" Well of course they will not need to actually, physically go there in our modern digital age, where we can electronically visit the streets of any city on earth in the comfort of our own lounge.

Oh be careful little critic what you doubt!

Oh be careful little critic what you doubt!

For the Father up above,

Must not be thought too lightly of!

So be careful little critic what you doubt!

Rev 11:11 And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.
Rev 11:12 And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

Every age has considered man at his innovative limit. Again, the rule of thumb; If what God promises seems quite impossible, just wait a bit!

These two will be the last of the prophets of God to ever be silenced by death before the end comes. The faithless world may put to silence the *witnesses* to the truth, but they cannot silence the truth proclaimed, not one jot or tittle of it. God has revealed His will, and His will shall be done! His word *"shall not return void".*

Vs. 11-12 – Their resurrection & ascension – Party's over!

"Great fear fell upon them which saw" – Just imagine the stunning wave of astonishment sweeping through the gathered, high-spirited crowd (and quickly circling the globe) as these two symbols of Satan's victory, dead for days, suddenly stand to their feet! And then, even as the voice of God echoed

Rev 11:13 And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.
Rev 11:14 The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.

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through those Jerusalem streets in another day, so here, now crying "Come up here". And before that amazed, frustrated, terrified crowd, these two will ascend bodily to heaven in a cloud. Even as Jesus did from the Mt. of Olives. In this stunning event the Lord will send a shuddering warning around the world of who is Most High. God will honour His own in the sight of their enemies, frustrating the purposes of the wicked at the last (Ps. 23:5; 112:10). Compare the man in the torments of hell able to see Lazarus comforted in Abraham's bosom (Lk. 16).

Now if these two prophets could somehow be spiritualized (twisted) into representing the church, then we might find good cause here for believing in a mid-tribulation Rapture. But there is no fair indication that these two men are to be read that way.

Vs. 13-14 – In the same moment that these two are taken up a great earthquake will rock Jerusalem

Rev 11:15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

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with 7000 dead as a result. The timing will be too obvious, the supernatural too evident. Compare the earthquake at Christ's death, and again in response to the pleas of the martyred dead in chapter 6. God will trouble the earth over His troubled saints! And that those left alive and terrified *"gave glory to the God of heaven"* does not mean they will be saved. Only that they will recognize God's involvement to a degree.

God's ageless imperative is *payday someday*. He may not pay at the end of every day, but at the end of the day He pays! Do not allow the injustices of a perverted world to frustrate you, for God Himself will one day become the Frustrator in your behalf. As you in living for Him have been treated as if the bitterness of wormwood here, understand that the day comes when God will be serving up wormwood to your tormentors. For *"He shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed"* (Isa. 66:5). Be wise to wait *upon* Him as you wait *for* Him.

11:15-19 – The 7th Trumpet

God's revelation through John leaps forward now to His ultimate triumph, looking all the way through into the soon coming millennial kingdom.

Vs. 15 – Finally the 7th angel sounds, and John heard great voices in heaven. All proclaiming together. This is unlike previous instances where a single voice made announcement. This time there is a great symphony of voices exalting together in the triumph of Jesus Christ as Sovereign of earth. Here is hope for the whole of creation, groaning and travailing in pain together until now (Rom. 8:18-25), waiting, waiting, waiting for renewal, restitution, resolution, rectitude, righteousness. It will be so close at this point that the anticipation will be electric. Beyond and above all the chaos of the battle still raging on earth at that point, victory is already assured, the song and shouts of triumph already beginning to be heard above the wails from earth. Oh the longing for that day in the hearts of those touched by God, when visible dominion over all creation passes at last into the hands of *"our Lord, and of His Christ".* Oh the longing for the Lord to at last fulfil His many promises of His coming kingdom (Dan. 2:35, 44; 7:14, 26-27; Zech. 14:8ff). *"He shall reign forever and ever",* and never again will the earth be governed by man! This is the very thing God the Father promised His Son in Psalm

Rev 11:16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,
Rev 11:17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.
Rev 11:18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.

2:6-9, that His reign would be established, with all rebellion dashed to pieces.

Vs. 16-19 – With this heavenly proclamation John saw the 24 elders fall from their thrones upon their faces in worship and thanksgiving before God. See how to bow to the Lord in service is no dark bondage, but full of happiest scenes of praise and adoration. These have found true happiness in their clear recognition of who He is;

- The Almighty God of power who reigns over all.
- The Eternal One.
- The One who meets human wrath with divine wrath.

Rev 11:19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

- The One who is Judge.
- The One who is Rewarder of all, both small and great, who diligently seek Him. He forgets none. He misses no service. He has a book of remembrance (Mal. 3).
- The One who meets destroyers with destruction.

Vs. 19 – John then saw the heavenly temple of God opened, the most sacred things of God open to the gaze of men. This indicates God's willing exposure of His things to His saints. God Himself will dwell with men. Yet still there are clear indications of His continued judgment at the same time in the lightnings and voices and thunderings and earthquake and hail. To the one who believes and receives, *open house!* To the one who refuses faith, *searing judgment* poured out in fullest potency. Always both are together, God's holiness and His love. At the same moment the Lord was lifting a faithful Noah above the Flood, He was snuffing out a faithless world of rejecters. At the same time the

Lord was hauling reluctant yet believing Lot out of Sodom, He was hailing fire and brimstone on those godless cities. At the same time that He was bringing the judgment of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian captivity on wicked Judah and Jerusalem He was scattering the witness of Himself through the captive Jewish nation throughout Nebuchadnezzar's world, and He was transferring Daniel to the place of his greatest work and ministry. Blessing *and* cursing. Always both bitter and sweet in every work of God.

Yet the Lord leaves the choice with you as to which side you will choose.

Class 11 – Revelation 12

Rev 12:1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:
Rev 12:2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

Chapter 12

In this chapter we discover heavenly causes for earthly conflicts. We are introduced as well to several interesting characters. The 7th angel has sounded his trumpet (11:15), yet the final round of bowl judgments it introduces does not begin until chapter 16. So again we are in a portion that steps away from strict chronology, describing events and characters relating to this mid-point of the 7-year Tribulation. Allusions to Daniel's prophecies abound here.

12:1-2 – First Heavenly Sign

There appeared to John a *"great wonder"* or sign in heaven; a woman with the sun thrown around her like a garment, the moon under her feet, a crown of 12 stars on her head. She is encircled with celestial bodies, making her a central point of focus. She is pregnant as well and soon to deliver. In fact even

as John looks the woman cries with the labour pains upon her.

John tells us here that this vision of the woman was a sign. When we are told by John of things he sees, we must tend to read it normally, not looking to "interpret". But when he tells us that he saw a *"wonder"* or sign it begs interpretation, suggesting some meaning other than face value. Who or what could this woman represent? Clues;

- The son born to this woman in vs. 5 is to *"rule all nations with a rod of iron".* This is from Psalm 2:9, speaking of Israel's Messiah/King (Rev. 19:15). Compare Hebrews 1:5, where Psalm 2 is applied directly to Jesus Christ. This son is caught up to God's throne in what could only describe Christ's ascension (Acts 1). Some would like to see this child as representing the church, which would offer happy support for Amillennial doctrine. But the church is pictured in the Bible as the bride of Christ, not as the offspring of Israel (19:7-8; 22:17; II Cor. 11:2).

- The sun, moon, and stars remind us of Joseph's dream in Genesis 37:9-10. Jacob, who became "Israel", is represented in this dream by the sun, Rachel by the moon, and

the sons by the stars, that source out of which the Messiah or Seed of the woman would come.

Clearly this woman describes the nation of Israel, the source of Messiah's coming into the world as Saviour and Redeemer. The Catholic church of course sees Mary in this woman, mother of Jesus, with this scene picturing the crowned splendour of that queen of heaven now resplendent in glory. Where could we find support for such an exaltation of Mary elsewhere in the Bible? Signs alone cannot be the foundation of one's doctrine. The nation of Israel is the source or channel by which the Lord brought Jesus to the world, Mary only in a lesser degree as the actual human vehicle. This image is much bigger than gentle Mary, meek and mild.

Do not miss, my amillennial friend, how that Israel (the woman) does not disappear from the scene with the rise of the church. Rather she is preserved through to the end (vs. 6).

12:3-4 – Second Heavenly Sign

Rev 12:4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

Rev 12:5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

John then saw another sign in heaven; *"a great red dragon",* which vs. 9 clearly identifies as Satan. And the dragon had 7 crowned heads and 10 horns. Crowns and horns signify authority and power. Compare 13:1 & 17:3, 9-13. The ties with Daniel's prophecy are obvious. Compare Daniel 7: 7-9 & 23. By means of like symbolism connection is made here between Satan and the last world empire of Antichrist, that one to be replaced by Christ's earthly kingdom. Daniel never informed us that this final kingdom is somehow connected with Satan. Revelation now builds on the old prophecy, filling in the details. Thus;

- The woman = Israel.
- The dragon = Satan.
- The man-child = Jesus Christ.

Again, the colour red signifies sin or evil (Isa. 1:18; Rev. 17:3-5). God's colour coding is a clue as well

to the identity and true associations of Antichrist in his coming out, pictured in the red horse of the 2nd seal judgment (6:4-5).

"His tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven" – There are many different views of what this means. This is rather surprising in view of the clarity vs. 9 offers, where we see the same phrasing, "cast to the earth". It seems quite obvious that this is a reference to the host of angels who fell with Satan's fall in pride, becoming his host of demons. On Satan's fall, compare Isaiah 14:12, *"How art thou fallen from heaven O Lucifer",* and Luke 10:18.

Note Satan's position, poised and ready to devour the woman's child the moment it was born. Since the first prophecy of the Seed of the woman in Genesis 3:15 Satan has sought to kill or corrupt the seed;

- He killed Abel through Cain. Replaced by Seth.
- He corrupted much of the godly line through compromise in the pre-Flood days.
- He attempted to substitute Ishmael for Isaac through Abraham's carnal effort to help God keep His promise.

- He tried to turn the blessing from Jacob to Esau, seeking to counter God's words.
- He would have tried to kill Jacob through Esau had Jacob not been removed to a far country.
- He attempted to kill every Jewish male born in Egypt through Pharaoh's decree (Ex. 1).
- He tried to wipe out the Jews through Hamon in Esther's day.
- He made a try, through Herod, to destroy *"the one born king of the Jews"* in the Bethlehem massacre (Matt. 2).

As Satan sought to destroy the Son of God from the moment of His birth, so he seeks the destruction or corruption of *every* child of God from the moment he is born again.

On the Side

Herod was an Edomite, a descendant of Esau. From the days of Esau the Edomites were the enemies of Israel and his descendants, resulting in Herod's ready willingness to massacre Jewish babies. That bitter hatred for Israel in Esau's descendants can still be found in the Muslim race.

Rev 12:6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.
Rev 12:7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

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Israel is hated because Jacob usurped Esau's leadership, and then slipped away out of reach into a distant land. Avoiding the blow, he instead received a bride. Do you see the similarities here? Through His resurrection and ascension God's Son slipped out of Satan's reach into the safety of heaven, receiving the kingdom and dominance Satan thinks to be his right. And from there the Son will receive His bride in the removal of the church in the Rapture (I Thess. 4:13-18).

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Vs. 6 – The woman flees from Satan's wrath and will be protected from his effort to starve her out for a period of 1260 days, or 3½ years. Again, the time remaining is underscored (vs. 6, 14). And again marking this point in the chronology as the midpoint or turning point of the Tribulation period.

<u>12:7-13</u> – Satan Cast from Heaven
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Rev 12:8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven
Rev 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Vs. 7 – Compare this image of heavenly war with Daniel 12:1-2, where Michael stands up for his people, describing the same final days of Antichrist's (Satan's) reign.

Vs. 8-9 – Prior to the moment pictured here it seems Satan has some access to heaven. But at this point he, with his host, are finally shut out and confined to earth.

Vs. 9 – *"Devil"* (*diabolos*) means slander or slanderer, a word found 38 times in the N.T., 35 times as a title for the Devil and 3 times as an act;

- I Timothy 3:11 – Forbidden of the wives of spiritual leaders.
- Titus 2:3 – Forbidden of the older women.
- II Timothy 3:3 – In the list of last days unholy ways.

Slander is the voicing of criticisms against another,

either openly or by insinuation, speaking either that which is false, or even what is true but with a measure of hostile intent. Slander tends to colour, shade, or exaggerate reality based on a seed of truth. Compare the *"evil report"* of the spies, greatly exaggerating the obstacles in the Promised Land (Num. 13:27-33). Slander is a sin of the proud (III Jn. 10). In Psalm 15, another of those portions relating the ways of the godly, we read that God's man *"backbiteth not with his tongue"* (vs. 3). The Hebrew idiom there is literally to "go about with his tongue", spreading around harmful statements about another. God's book of wisdom names one who *"uttereth a slander"* as *"a fool"* in Proverbs 10:18, and then goes on to give clear instruction on how to handle a concern we might have with another in Proverbs 25:9. Compare;

- David's kingly resolve to *"cut off"* everyone who *"privily slandereth his neighbour"* in Psalm 101:5.

- The guiding principle of the upright in Proverbs 11:3. The word translated *"integrity"* there reflects an honest, sincere simplicity of mind. A fundamental innocence moved by no shred of evil purpose or malicious intent.

- God's judgment upon those who sin with their

mouth in Jeremiah 9:1-9.

The word *"satan"* means "adversary". Satan ever works in opposition to God and all that are His.

"Which deceiveth the whole world" – The action of the verb here is present and continuous. This does not speak of what Satan is attempting to do, but of what he *is* currently doing. His great work of the ages is a world fooled like Eve into believing;

- That they can ignore God's words and get away with it.
- That man can lift himself and make his own way to God or deity.
- That God is less than perfect and loving in His designs.
- That momentary pleasure is the end all and be all.

Satan is ever busy speaking essentially the same words of temptation as in Genesis 3. He fills our eyes and poisons our hearts with scenes of sex and violence and calls it entertainment. He consumes our time and thoughts with the useless drivel of sport under the same title. He makes wrong to seem right and calls it alternative lifestyle. He puts girls

Rev 12:10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

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and women in public, clothed essentially in their underwear, and calls it a swim costume or fashion. He sanctions the murder of millions of helpless unborn babes and calls it a woman's choice. He fills our land with criminals through a soft view on society's evils and calls it humanitarian. He bleeds the church of holy fervency and calls it relevancy. He sanctions sin and calls it human rights. He makes lust legitimate, calling it love and romance. He promotes the approval of pride and selfishness and calls it self-esteem. *We live in a thoroughly deceived world!* Satan, as a prowling lion, seeks to get the advantage of us, to get a toehold in our lives, to make inroads into our thinking, purposes, desires, and habits (II Cor. 2:11; I Pet. 5:8). He works as the lions work a herd, seeking to isolate one alone, away from the strength of the group (James 1:14). And then he approaches with the same old tried and trusted tactics of *"the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life"* (I John 2:16).

Vs. 10 – Satan ever seeks to accuse believers *"before*

Rev 12:11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

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our God day and night". As if a prosecuting attorney, he points to our imperfections, which are indeed many, more than we may care to admit. He of course sees our every deceptive manoeuvre, every sideways glance, every whispered oath. Satan simply cannot fathom imputed righteousness or a God of grace. Though our subtle sins may be secret on earth, they are open scandal in the spirit world. The evil one assumes these must surely disqualify us from hope of God's presence. And these he throws up in God's face as evidence that we do not belong to Him, and that He is wasting His grace on us. Compare Nathan's words from the Lord to David in II Samuel 12:14, *"by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme".* Though the angels of heaven rejoice with every soul saved and put right with God, the demons of hell rejoice with every saint put wrong with God! But here is where Jesus, our great Advocate and High Priest (ombudsman), steps forward in our behalf (I Jn. 2:1). He, in grace, as our defence attorney, continues in our behalf to plead the cause of the believer before the Father upon the merits of His own shed blood. With a

Rev 12:12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.
Rev 12:13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.

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priesthood after the order of Melchizedek, He never dies, never quits, *ever lives* to make intercession in our behalf (Heb. 7:25; Rom. 5:9-10). Our awareness of this truth counsels our heart against our ever returning to sin. And if Jesus Christ be for us who can fairly be against us (Rom. 8:31-39)).

Vs. 12 – This *"woe to the inhabiters of the earth"* indicates the reason for Satan's change of program at the mid-point of the tribulation through Antichrist. Because at this point he is cast from access to heaven and infused with utterly irrepressible rage, and now with only the limited field of earth within which to pour it out.

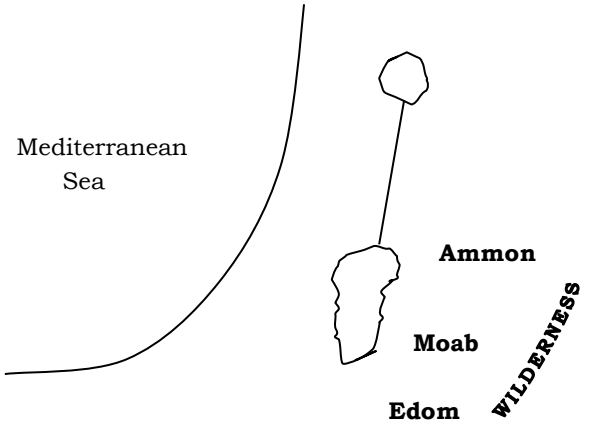
Vs. 13 – Unable to get to the God he hates, he turns his rage upon all that is called after God's name (Israel, believers) through the instrumentality of *"the man of sin"* (II Thess. 2:3).

12:14-17 – Israel Supernaturally Protected

Rev 12:14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.
Rev 12:15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.
Rev 12:16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

This again relates the mid-point of Daniel's final seven of years, with now the spiritual motivation behind the earthly treacheries given. Hearing and obeying Christ's warning and instruction for those of that day who see the *"abomination of desolation"* (Matt. 24:15-20), many of the Jewish people will find ability to effectively flee from Antichrist *"into the wilderness".* This ability and protection is another token of God's grace to an undeserving people.

Now I am reminded of those interesting words in Daniel's prophecy, at 11:41, speaking of the three countries of Edom, Moab, and Ammon, which somehow *"escape out of his hand"* during the days of Antichrist's reign of terror. Could these protected countries perhaps represent the *"wilderness",* that *"place prepared of God",* to which Israel flees, finding refuge and nourishment there for the remaining 3½ years of Antichrist's rule?



Egypt

Vs. 15-16 – Satan will move to stop Israel with *"water as a flood".* But the Lord will use the earth to swallow up the flood, even as He used the same to deal with the sons of Korah in the wilderness. Compare Daniel 9:26. Will this be literal water? Or the *"flood"* of an army, as the attacking Assyrians described in Isaiah 8:7? Angazi. Both Napoleon and Hitler when marching against Moscow lost to the snow. The earth or climate countered their offensive. Perhaps Antichrist's experience will be something of the same.

Vs. 17 – Compare the attitude and approach of

Rev 12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Antiochus Epiphanes against *"they that understand among the people"* in Daniel 11:32-35.

Class 12 – Revelation 13

In chapter 12 we were introduced to three characters;

- The woman = Israel.
- The great red dragon = Satan.
- The man child = Jesus Christ.

The dragon sought to devour the child even as the woman brought him to birth, but the child was caught up to the safety of heaven. The woman (Israel) then fled to the safety of the wilderness where she will be kept and nourished in a place prepared by God for 3½ years (cf. Matt. 24:15-22). This marks the mid-point of the 7-year tribulation. She will flee from Satan's effort to destroy her, because Satan's permit to access heaven will be revoked at that point, and he will be cast to earth, raging at all that is called by God's name, raging at that nation used of God to bring Messiah into the world and Satan's mortal wound through Him, raging *"because he knoweth that he hath but a short time"* (12:12). But by God's grace a remnant of Israel will be granted deliverance from his power.

In chapter13 we are now introduced to two more

Rev 13:1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

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important characters, both arising from earth, rather than related to heaven as in the chapter 12;

- The beast out of the sea – Antichrist rising to his brief day on the throne of world rule.
- The beast out of the earth – The "False Prophet", the unholy sidekick of the first.

We find in this chapter interesting insight into the nature of the tribulation era, with its single world government, united world economy, and miraculous things in evidence.

Chapter 13 – Satan's Two Servants

13:1-8 – Rise of the Beast

Vs. 1 – In his vision John stood on the shore looking out over the sea, out of which he saw a beast rise. This beast is described in a way much like Satan in 12:3, having a very similar form of heads and horns and crowns. It is again the prophecy of Daniel that offers some help in understanding. Daniel describes in chapter 7 of his book a vision

the Lord gave him of the earthly kingdoms of men through history from that time. These kingdoms are presented as various types of beasts. The last beast (kingdom) was described as *"dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly"*, and Daniel saw that it had ten horns (vs.7). He later explains that the ten horns represent ten kings, describing some type of confederation of ten nations or kings of which this final world kingdom of men will be comprised (see Rev. 17:12-14). And out of this confederation of ten kings in Daniel's vision there then arose a *"little horn"*, a ruler who began small but then ascended to prominence over all others. Daniel describes this *"little horn"* as characterised by a mouth speaking blasphemy and by persecution of believers (Dan. 7:25). As well, God's prophet gives there the duration of this one's hold on power, as *"a time and times and the dividing of time"*, a phrase meaning 1 + 2 + ½, equalling 3½ (years).

The fact that this beast of John's vision here in Revelation 13 is pictured with the same, ten heads and crowns, makes the connection with that ancient prophecy of Daniel. Surely this one is that *"little horn"*, now arising to his predicted role of world ruler and great blasphemer and persecutor of believers. As well, the similar form this one will share with Satan declares another very revealing

Rev 13:2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

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connection, displaying the evil one as the source of his power. This will be Satan's dark version of Messiah.
(Again, please see the Reading Companion to the Book of Daniel for more detailed coverage).

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On the Side

Interesting the question of why Satan's crowns are on his heads while the beast's crowns are on his horns. Perhaps the placement of Satan's crowns on his heads serves to reveal him as the true power behind the totality of man's earthly kingdoms throughout history.
That the crowns of the beast are on his horns perhaps shows him as supreme ruler only over that ten-nation confederacy of world rule during his brief day in the sun. Showing his rule as more a case of dominance over a coalition than the absolute rule of a despot.

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Vs. 2 – This beast combines a likeness to all of the creatures in Daniel's chapter 7 vision of world kingdoms;

- *"Like a leopard"*, as the Grecian Empire (Dan. 7:6).
- Feet like that of a bear, as the Medo-Persian Empire (Dan. 7:5).
- Mouth like a lion's, as the Babylonian Empire (Dan. 7:4).
- Empowered and enthroned by the dragon (Satan), the *"dreadful and terrible"* beast of the 4th world empire (Dan. 7:7-8).

Daniel also saw these creatures *"come up from the sea"*, which he interpreted as arising *"out of the earth"*, or out of the sea of humanity (7:17; Rev. 17:15). Pictured in this rising beast is a world ruler whose empire will combine aspects of all of the great empires of history from the days of Nebuchadnezzar and relating to the nation of Israel. In Nebuchadnezzar's parallel dream of human kingdoms in Daniel chapter 2 the image he saw was of an awesome statue of a man. *Behold the man!* Here will arise the pinnacle personage to which all of the glory of man shall ascend. And again, we understand by the similar form with which Satan is

described in 12:3 that Satan's influence will be intertwined with this king and kingdom like none ever before him. The Apostle Paul affirmed the same of this coming one, speaking of him *"whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders"* (II Thess. 2:9). Again, so much of the symbolism used here we have already been given the basis for understanding in the O.T. book of Daniel. The prophet Daniel further described this end-times ruler as one who;

- Will be different from all others (Dan. 7:24).
- Will arise in a 10-king confederacy, subduing three kings in his rise to power (Dan. 7:8, 24).
- *"Shall speak great words against the Most High"* in blasphemy (Dan. 7:25).
- *"Shall wear out the saints of the Most High"* in worldwide war against God's people (Dan. 7:21, 25).
- Shall *"think to change times and laws"* (Dan. 7:25).
- Will be given a free hand, but only for 3½ years (Dan. 7:25).
- Shall have his dominion taken away at the last *"to consume and to destroy it unto the end"* (Dan. 7:26). *"Yet he shall come to His*

Rev 13:3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.

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end and none shall help Him" (Dan. 11:45).

Compare Paul's added comment concerning the end of this one, *"whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming"* (II Thess. 2:8).

Vs. 3 – Here is an intriguing, mysterious, and vital aspect of the impressiveness of this one. The beast will receive a wound at some point after his rise to public prominence, a deadly wound, *"as it were wounded to death"*. Yet it seems it will only be "as if" he *"were wounded to death"*. He will not actually be killed, though it is going to appear so, for we read here that he will be *"healed"*, not resurrected. Yet this event will be so significant that it will cause all the world to wonder after this one. Perhaps the nature of this *"deadly wound"* will be such that it would normally have brought certain death. The healing will be distinctly supernatural, *"as it were"* a resurrection from death. The great significance of this event can be seen as well in the beast later repeatedly characterized by it (vs. 12, 14; 17:8).

Rev 13:4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?

Vs. 4 – The world will be utterly dazed with wonder and worship for this one. Their *"worship"* or ascribing of worth to the dragon, the beast, and his image is mentioned several times in this chapter. How insulting to God is the unseeing, unsaved world! The Lord of glory, the eternal Son of God, actually did die and rise from death. But there was no such wholesale wonder over Him or worship in heathen hearts! Only yawning indifference. Yet now this beast, this son of Satan, is healed from a wound that only *looks* like death, and the world is absolutely befuddled in wondering amazement! This of course because this one will arise from among men, being one of their own and full of the evil one, rather than coming down from heaven and full of the Spirit. God Himself, Creator of heaven and earth, writes a book and the world yawns, and time covers it with dust. Yet some godless author or "prophet" writes another novel and they cannot keep the shelves stocked. God gives us the glorious gospel, the grand story of redemption, in the *clear language* of the Bible text and the world is barely even stirred to cast a glance. Then they do

Rev 13:5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.
Rev 13:6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

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handsprings and cartwheels, filling their headlines over ridiculous computer-generated, cryptically coded, imagined messages supposedly *hidden* in the text. It makes no sense!

With no appeal in gold that is real,
They go all atwitter over worthless glitter!

Jesus explained it when He said, *"My sheep hear My voice and I know them and they follow Me…but ye believe not because ye are not of My sheep"* (Jn. 10).

The world loves its own (Jn. 15:19), and so when Satan, through his point-man, arises to power with impressive displays in those last days all superficial lip-service to God will be flung to the wind as men display their true nature and affinity, running after Antichrist in fawning wonder and worship. Satan's purpose has always been to receive the worship due only to the Lord (Isa. 14:14).

Vs. 5-6 – What we saw the hint of in vs. 1 is now affirmed here will all clarity. This one will be

characterized by blasphemy and self-exaltation, putting down the true God as he seeks to promote himself as god. As Daniel said of this one, *"he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods…he shall magnify himself above all"* (Dan. 11:36-37). And as the Apostle Paul added, *"who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called god, or that is worshipped"* (II Thess. 2). This *"man of sin"* will become like the Devil behind him, the great slanderer, talking down the only One truly worthy of praise.

"Power was given unto him to continue forty and two months" – Again and again this 3½-year timing is affirmed in God's prophecy, stated in various ways. And the giver of this day of his sway can only be God, both the Giver and the Limiter, thus declaring who is God in truth.

Vs. 7-8 – Antichrist will demand universal allegiance after the foreshadows we see in Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 3) and Ahab, attempting to rid the world of every last soul who will not worship

Rev 13:8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.
Rev 13:9 If any man have an ear, let him hear.
Rev 13:10 He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.
Rev 13:11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

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according to his demands. Satan's principle is absolute zero freedom of religion. He will give to Antichrist what he offered to Jesus in His temptation, *"all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them"* (Matt. 4:8-10).

All *"whose names are not written in the book of life"* – Compare 17:8 & 20:11-15. Those whose names are found written there will understand to not follow the voice of a stranger (Jn. 10:4-5).

13:9-10 – A Word of Courage

Here is a glimmer of hope for God's saints in the midst of the worst empire of evil the world will ever endure. God will indeed bring all things level. *"Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord".*

13:11-18 – Rise of Beast II

Rev 13:12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

"I beheld another beast" – Compare this 2nd character with the 1st. Similarities;

- Described by the same term, *"beast".*
- The word translated *"another"* in vs. 11 reflects another of the same kind.
- This one is also horned.
- He speaks as the dragon or Satan, showing a similar source of his words.
- He has all the power or authority of the 1st beast.

Differences;

- Rises from the earth rather than from the sea.
- Two horns rather than ten.
- Apparently only one head rather than seven.
- Resembled a lamb rather than aspects of Daniel's beasts of prey.
- Distinct from the other in that he ministers

"before" the 1st beast and directs world worship to him (vs. 12).

This unholy associate of Antichrist, who will be like him yet distinct, is referred to throughout the rest of Revelation as *"the false prophet"* (16:13; 19:20; 20:10). This title, combined with his resemblance to a lamb, seems to suggest some religious nature to his work. While the focus and function of the 1st beast revolve around political power and prominence, the function of this 2nd is specifically to direct world worship to the 1st beast, as some kind of servant of the exaltation of the 1st or minister of worship. This one seems to be like a dark version of the Holy Spirit in His role of seeking to glorify Jesus (Jn. 16:13-14). Note in the relation of these unholy characters to each other the comparisons with the Trinity of God;

- Satan's sinister role compares to God the Father's as the unseen source of all.
- The Beast holds a comparable role to God the Son, the *anti*christ in the place of the true Christ. He briefly becomes king of the kings of earth and the human representative of the supreme spiritual power behind him. Both Christ and Antichrist are struck down and raised again and become the focus of

Rev 13:13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,
Rev 13:14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

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exaltation and worship.

- The False Prophet is comparable to the Holy Spirit, lifting up or glorifying the first beast, directing all worshipful attention to that earthly representative.

Behold Satan's great counterfeit trinity and religion!

Vs. 13-15 – In leading all people of earth to worship the first beast, this 2nd will perform *"great wonders"*, a term never even used of Christ's miracles. He will perform wonders such as calling down fire from heaven to earth. Of course Elijah is well known for having done the same (II Ki. 1), but it is not a *"great"* wonder to the blind world until Satan's man does such.

Vs. 14 – He will cause the people of earth to *"make an image to the beast",* a figure or likeness or physical representation.

Rev 13:15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

Vs. 15 – The False Prophet will then be empowered to *"give life"* to that image, such that the image will actually be able to speak, unlike every dumb idol before it. Somehow this will become the means by which all who refuse to worship the image of the beast will be put to death. This remarkable image is so significant that it is mentioned several times further in this book (14:9-11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4).

Now the question arises how this abominably wicked one, this servant and director of worship to the greatest blasphemer of all time, could have such power to give life to this idol? The text says he gives life or breath to it, not just "as if it were" or the impression of it. This does not appear to be some computer-generated virtual reality thing, or some kind of profound mechanical or digital brilliance. That sort of thing has become old news even in our day. But this will be impressive enough to induce universal worship. The text says actual life or spirit will be given to this image, the very thing God has always made the point that an idol does not have

(Ps. 115 & 135). Satan is also a created being and does not possess this divine ability to give life. But it will be given to him! In the interesting phrase *"he had power"* (KJV), found both in vs. 14 & 15, the literal statement in the Greek behind the English is "it was given to him"! And what could be the source of this ability but God? But how could God empower Satan to empower this False Prophet to empower this image to live? How could God provide the means to lead the people of earth to worship the beast and his image? Please understand that the Lord has already informed us in II Thessalonians 2:9-12 that He will indeed allow this, giving as well in that portion the reasons why. Because the lost will stubbornly refuse to believe and receive the truth of the gospel therefore God will ultimately allow for them to be deceived unto their destruction. And He will allow this through the ability granted of *"all power and signs and lying wonders",* through the miraculous. What shall you do in the day God Himself rises up against you to lead you to destruction? Again, if God be for us, who can be against us? But *if God be against us, who can be for us?!* Who shall be able to stand when the great day of His wrath is come?

Thus this devilish duo will exercise a two-fold thrust in forcing the world to universal worship of the

Rev 13:16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:
Rev 13:17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

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beast. From a positive direction they will draw the world to worship through their truly impressive miraculous powers. And from a negative direction they will drive the world to universal worship, through the ability to sift the world's population, preserving alive only those who are willing to honour the beast, and rooting out and putting to death all those unwilling to bow.

Please understand that Satan uses the miraculous to attract to his cause too, and more so as we approach the last days. Supernatural manifestations alone do not ensure a work or ministry or event to be of God! *God's* Spirit does not contradict His words. It is the other spirits at work in churches who subtly direct the attention of people away from the word of truth to more interesting "revelations" and manifestations and dreams.

Vs. 16-18 – Rooting out the "rebels" – The effective means to be used in sifting the people of earth is

now given. Think about how the public library is rather selective about who borrows books. Through a card system, only those who are recognized and approved, only card-carrying members can remove books. In the same way Antichrist will essentially proclaim the world his own, with all the kingdoms and people and produce of it. And he will be selective as to who may access the goods of earth. He will require every individual of age to receive a mark of identification on his right hand or forehead. To receive that mark will offer the privilege of participating in buying and selling on earth, i.e. access to food or the right to not starve. However, in that day one will only be able to receive that mark by affirming allegiance to Antichrist! But to receive that mark in that era will mark one out for much more than just greater ease of existence. It will mark one for *God's judgment!* For every one so marked;

- Will not be among those with name written in the book of life (vs. 8).
- Will drink of God's undiluted wrath (14:9-10).
- Will be tormented without rest into the ages of the ages (14:10-11).
- Will be excluded from the Lord's presence in glory (15:1ff).

- Will be the objects of God's judgments on earth (16:1ff).

That mark in that day will be the deciding factor, involving a decision of the most incredible importance. To receive it and "live" will be the final, irrevocable choice for Satan and against the Saviour. To refuse will mean almost certain death, but to accept will mean certain *eternal* death! Every person on earth by this means will be forced to the decision whether to worship Antichrist or to suffer the penalty of death. Again, the decision to take that mark in that day, to side with Satan, will seal one's eternal destiny!

On the Side

Compare the difference in approach. God *draws* a soul through pleading, as the earnest cry of wisdom in the streets (Prov. 8), patiently encouraging our choice for what is true and right, quietly loving and sacrificing in man's behalf. God allows rejection for a time, giving a man freedom of choice, yet with clear promise and warning of where our choice will lead. By His goodness He leads to repentance.

Satan on the other hand *forces* a man's conscience at threat of death. When in power he allows *no*

Rev 13:18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

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freedom! He is a harsh, utterly impatient taskmaster, refusing all refusal. He is so insecure that he cannot handle the threat of rejection, and thus brutally forces all to acceptance. Every religion that uses such evangelism by force reveals itself as sourced in the evil one.

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By the way, do not get your knickers in a knot over credit cards, microchips, ATM's, bar codes, and such in our day. Concerns over this mark and Antichrist's regime relate only to the last half of the tribulation period, long after the church of all true believers in this current age has been removed from earth in the Rapture.

Vs. 18 – Please do not let yourself be drawn into wasting much time in tracking what the world is currently up to, seeking to understand the puzzle of this intriguing number or the identity of the Antichrist. There have been countless efforts down through the ages to interpret the meaning of 666. Many views are presented with such firmness of
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conviction it would seem there could be no reasonable doubt. Usually these efforts involve counting *"the number…of a man"* in the sense of assigning letters with their numerical value (in Hebrew, Greek, or Latin). Many thought Caesar Nero was the one. When his name is written in Hebrew the corresponding number values add up to 666. So solid was the conviction of some in this regard that one man wrote, "No valid objection can be found here to the Neronic explanation of the number". Others have suggested Caligula, FDR, Hitler, one or another of the Popes, Henry Kissinger, etc. Consider the following quote from F.F. Bruce's *Second Thoughts on the Dead Sea Scrolls*; "In our own day we have seen how earnest Bible students thought they recognized in Hitler or Stalin the embodiment of the Antichrist foretold in the New Testament. In the early nineteen-thirties a gentleman in England, who edited a short-lived periodical to give currency to his highly individual interpretations of the Bible, published copies of letters which he had written to Mussolini and Einstein, informing them that they were respectively the Beast and the False Prophet… (Einstein sent him a brief and courteous reply – which was duly published – to the effect that if the biblical writers could have foreseen the interpretations which would one day be put upon their words, they might

have thought twice before setting pen to paper!) And throughout the Christian era there have been serious people who believed, generation after generation, that their own days were the days of fulfilment, when history was to be wound up." Today some point to computers, or one particular super-computer, or even the practice of Sunday worship. With the help of Daniel's prophecy we know that Antichrist will be a man, but nobody knows who. And it is very likely that fullest understanding is only for that last day. Just as many of the prophecies of Christ could not be fully grasped until the time of His first coming. Besides, what difference does it really make if you get it right? What changes as to our mission?

Ponder Points

Consider some parallels between Ahab and Antichrist;

- Elijah stood in Ahab's way, as God's two witnesses for a time will be found in the way of Antichrist in his day (Rev. 11).
- Elijah found safety in flight to the wilderness, as the remnant of Israel will do in the 2nd half of the tribulation (Rev. 12; I Ki. 17).

- Elijah was supernaturally fed there, as Israel will be.

- He found refuge in the bordering country of Phoenecia, as Israel will find in Ammon, Moab, & Edom (Dan. 11:41).

- The time of Ahab's drought equals the days of Antichrist's dominance, 3½ years (Lk. 4:25).

- Elijah, like God's two witnesses, was untouchable in the days of his ministry, and then was caught up to heaven at the last, with the wicked never getting God's man.

- The real power of corrupting influence resides in the one behind the man on the throne (Jezebel, Satan, false prophet).

- Though in both situations it appears that all is lost, the remnant is still in evidence (I Ki. 19:10 & 18).

- The Lord allowed a lying spirit freedom to deceive through Ahab's lying "prophets", even as He will allow the "False Prophet" power to give life to the beast's image (I Ki. 22:19-23; Rev. 13:14-15).

- Antichrist, as Ahab, will make God's servants out to be the cause of earth's troubles in those days of God's relentless judgments upon

earth (I Ki. 18:17). And thus he will become great in the world's eyes when at last ridding the world of such "troublers".

- Antichrist's purpose will be homogeneous, worldwide worship, as in Nebuchadnezzar's day (Dan. 3).

- Elijah came before Ahab's fall, even as he will come before Antichrist's (Mal. 4:5).

God seems to foreshadow various aspects of Jesus Christ in the lives of the godly, even as He foreshadows aspects of Antichrist in ungodly men, such as Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus Epiphanes, Ahab, etc.

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Consider the steps of Satan's downward fall;

- From his exalted place as Lucifer, the light-bearer, that covering cherub created in a position of honour, beauty, and purity (Ez. 28).

- Cast down through his sin of pride, becoming Satan, the Serpent, the Dragon, the Devil, the father of lies (Isa. 14:12-14; Lk. 10:18).

- With Christ's death and resurrection Satan's head was bruised, his doom assured (Col.
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2:15).

- Cast from access to heaven altogether at the tribulation midpoint (Rev. 12).
- Bound at Christ's return 3½ years later and cast into the bottomless pit for 1000 years (Rev. 20:1-2).
- Cast eternally into the lake of fire after his release and deceiving of the nations at the end of the millennium (Rev. 20:10).

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It is the dream of many in our world today to see all religions of the earth united. Indeed there are great endeavours and strides being made in this very direction constantly;

- The charismatic movement leads to union around similar experiences, with a lessened interest in sound teaching.
- Catholics and Protestants are uniting, fostered by ecumenical evangelism.
- Main-line denominations and Promise-keepers and such causes tend to open their doors to every diversion and perversion.

The overwhelming mood of our times is toward inclusiveness and against exclusiveness. And those
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refusing to join this trend are increasingly viewed as oddball and anti-society and even a threat to safety. This dream of religious unity will finally come to realization in those last days, only to be found a religion that is utterly Satanic and blasphemous! Let the world and worldly church do as they please. May we ever be found separated unto God, rather than a great united mass of "mixed multitude"!

Class 13 – Revelation 14

In the last couple of chapters we have met some important players in God's vision of things to come. In chapter 12 we met Israel, Satan, and Christ, as Satan's enraged programme against God's people ascends at the last. In chapter 13 we were introduced to Satan's earthly instruments;

- Beast no. 1 – Antichrist.
- Beast no. 2 – False Prophet, Antichrist's chief public relations officer and minister of worship.

The activities of these two combine to display a Satanic world economic and religious system during the days of the coming tribulation period, Daniel's 70th seven of years determined upon Israel and Jerusalem. Now in chapter 14 we are given a glimpse of the ultimate triumph of the Lord Jesus Christ, the lead up to the grand climax beginning in chapter 15. Chapter 14 is a series of stunning pronouncements and visions assuring Christ's victory and the judgment of the wicked. As we examine the contents of this chapter think of the immeasurable encouragement its message will bring to believers living in that tribulation period. Imagine as well the powerful warning to the

Rev 14:1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

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unsaved of that day who are considering surrender to Antichrist's domain. Here is Jesus standing in composed triumph and those who are His standing with Him.

Chapter 14

14:1-5 – The Saviour and the Sealed

Vs. 1 – John saw the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, standing on the temple mount at Jerusalem, with the 144,000 we met in chapter 7, the 12,000 sealed servants of God from each tribe of Israel. Now we discover that the seal in their foreheads consisted of the Father's name. Even this seal Satan will counterfeit in the mark featuring so prominently in the verses just prior. The obvious question arising out of chapter 13 will be whether *all* will be forced to succumb to Antichrist's demands. As a discouraged Elijah in Ahab's day, many will be wondering in that coming day if they are the only one left, while keeping only just ahead of Antichrist's effort to kill them too. The answer given here is a definite NO! In chapter 7 we saw

these 144,000 at the beginning of that tribulation era. Now this vision seems to anticipate the end when Christ returns victorious, with a hopeful view of events so soon to come to pass at that point. There these sealed servants still are at the time of Christ's return, still intact, yet untouched by Satan's most rabid raging. In fact chapter 7 described the touched and untouched, those delivered *in* life, as Peter's miraculous release from prison (Acts 12), and those delivered *from* life, as James released from the same prison through death into the Lord's presence. Though there will be countless myriads martyred, those whom God seals He keeps safely through the most vehement of Satanic onslaughts this world will ever see. And these will not be the only saved survivors, as revealed in the judgment of the sheep in Matthew 25. Here these stand with Jesus, triumphant, untouched, singing still. Even so we who are believers in Jesus Christ are sealed as well *"with that Holy Spirit of promise"* (Eph. 1:13; 4:30). And the message here is obvious. What God *seals* He *keeps*, even through the very worst imaginable threat this old earth can muster! *"Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy"* (Jude 24).

Rev 14:2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:
Rev 14:3 And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.
Rev 14:4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.
Rev 14:5 And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

Vs. 2-3 – The song of the sealed. The scene and song here are reminiscent of chapter 5. Always there is singing before God's throne. It is ever a place for joy and worship in song. Even the Lord Himself will join in song to *"joy over thee with singing"* with all before Him in that day (Zeph. 3:17).

Vs. 4-5 – The service of the sealed.

"These…were not defiled with women…virgins" – Now one might get the impression here that to be married, and thus not a virgin, is to be defiled. But we must balance this with the Lord's assurance that *"marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled"* (Heb. 13:4). The main point is that these will be unstained by any moral impurity. Perhaps

the thought of I Corinthians 7:32-33 carries as well, that being unmarried they will not be encumbered with the cares that married life invariably brings, that their lives might be given wholly to the Lord. Those will be critical days. And these men will give up the pleasures of married life for the Lord's sake and work and ministry to others.

"These were redeemed from among men" – They will be purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ. Compare Ephesians 1:7; I Peter 1:18-19; Romans 3.

"The firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb" – The firstfruits were brought at the beginning of the harvest, as a token of thanks and in recognition that all came from God and belongs to Him. It is a similar concept to giving the tithe to the Lord. These men will represent the beginning of the great harvest of souls out of the tribulation, as we saw in chapter 7. In fact it seems these will be largely responsible for bringing in that tribulation harvest, because of the record of their sealing closely associated with the innumerable multitude saved out of all nations in chapter 7, and because of their further record here connected with the preaching of *"the everlasting gospel"*.

"No guile…without fault" – There will be no

Rev 14:6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,
Rev 14:7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

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conscious, intentional lie in the mouth of any of these. Now recall that we have just come from a shocking description of Satan's worldwide reign through the combination of Antichrist, his image, and the False Prophet. A reign characterized by the conscious, very intentional effort to deceive (13:13-14). With *"all…lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness"* is the way the Apostle Paul described the rule of this *"son of perdition"* in II Thessalonians 2:9-10. In a coming day characterized by unsurpassed lying and Satanic deception, such that *"if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect"* (Matt. 24:24), these true men will speak with true tongues (compare Levi of old in Malachi 2:5-7). Such men God will use to reach those willing to receive the love of the truth that they might be saved. Thus the all-too-common view that we might need to stretch the truth upon occasion in order to be most effective in the Lord's ministry is itself a lie.

14:6-13 – Series of Announcements

There now follows in John's vision a series of three angelic announcements.

Vs. 6-7 – The everlasting gospel. Things to note here;

- The three-fold *command* of the gospel;
    - *"Fear God"* – Allowing nothing that offends Him.
    - *"Give glory to Him"* – No thought of personal glory.
    - *"Worship Him"* – It is all about *His* worth.
- Note how the contemplation of creation stirs worship. No wonder Satan's most earnest, lying attack on the truth of beginnings.
- God's grace to plead with rejecting men right to the end.
- God uses an angelic messenger, a supernatural means, that every faithless rejecter of His truth might be utterly without excuse. Not only do the heavens declare the glory of the Creator, but an angel now declares the same from heaven.

Rev 14:8 And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

Vs. 8 – Babylon is fallen. This word is in anticipation of Babylon's destruction described in detail in chapter 18. The repetition here (*"is fallen, is fallen"*) is for emphasis. To what does this fallen *"Babylon"* refer?

- Political Rome or the revived empire of Rome, thus a reference to Antichrist's kingdom?
- A future empire centred at the actual ancient site of Babylon?
- Spiritual Babylon residing in Roman Catholicism?
- The spiritual system of idolatry originating in Babylon and incorporated into every false religion of earth?

Hard to say. The fall anticipated here takes place at the end of the tribulation (chapter 17-18), just before Christ's return.

Vs. 9-12 – Unmixed Wrath – There follows immediately a third angel bringing a most fearful

Rev 14:9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,
Rev 14:10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:
Rev 14:11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

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pronouncement of doom upon all worshippers of the beast, proclaiming with a loud voice as if to underscore the certainty of it. If any have worshipped the beast or his image, this displayed by the receiving of his mark in that day, then they will surely drink of the wrath of God as of unmixed wine (undiluted, full strength). This is an image of God's wrath not in the least tempered by His mercy or grace. The result is described in graphic detail;

- The *agony* of hell – Torment *"with fire and brimstone".* The same is said of the perishing man Jesus described in Luke 16, that *"in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments"* (vs. 23). In describing his experience to Abraham this man used another word in vs. 24, also translated "torment", which particularly expresses the intense pain and anguish

involved. Abraham did not diminish the intensity of this, but agreed that *"thou art tormented"* (vs. 25). And when hopefully requesting a messenger of warning to his yet living brothers in vs. 28, the man titled his eternal dwelling place *"this place of torment".* Torment is its very name and primary feature! Compare the phrase so common in Matthew's gospel, *"gnashing of teeth"*, describing the reaction to extreme pain in hell's torment. There can be no fair questioning of the actual, unimaginable agony of hell.

- The *eternality* of hell – *"For ever and ever"* in vs. 11 is literally "into the ages of the ages". Hell's torments are no momentary thing. No sudden and complete annihilation out of existence and sensibility. No Catholic purgatory, coming at last to a hoped for end. Compare Christ's repeated reference to that place of torment *"where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched"* (Mk. 9:43-49).

- The *constancy* of hell – While the redeemed find *"rest from their labours"* (vs. 13), those who perish will never again know even a moment's rest. Only unrelenting, continual pain and anguish of soul. No hope, no help, no horizon. No end, no annihilation. A one-

way track of horror, hatred, heartache, and hurt extending into the vast and ageless expanse of eternity!

- The *reality* of hell – Liberal scholars (*"fools and slow of heart to believe"*) are quick to mock a literal belief in hell. They attempt to explain such views away with their pseudo-intellectual double-speak. With broad brush of deceit they think to whitewash over such dark and difficult assurances from God. None can deny that such warnings as this are very difficult. But let's not be so foolish as such blind leaders of the blind who deny the obvious reading. For if the clear biblical doctrine of the eternal destruction of hell falls, then with the same fall heaven comes down to a mere myth as well. But worse, so falls the trustworthiness of the Lord Jesus Christ, for He spoke more about hell than all the other N.T. contributors combined (check your concordance). Jesus used the particular Greek word *gehenna*, translated *"hell"*, 10 of the 11 times it is found in the Bible. Almost every time it is used He who *is* truth voiced it in warning.

There can be no question that the doctrine of a *real hell* is clearly taught in the Bible! Hell and the

Rev 14:12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.
Rev 14:13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

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nature of it is as real as heaven, for heaven and hell are not spoken of in any differing fashion in God's Word. The answer with such difficult doctrines is not to deny, but to move forward dealing with reality *as reality*, allowing such truth to lead our hearts to the right and proper response. To attempt to bring temporary comfort to our hearts by explaining away God's truth is to play the fool. As the foolish family, united in their stubbornness, and quite determined to enjoy their planned picnic on the deserted beach, who refuse to believe the confirmed report of a massive tidal wave even now approaching the coast, their faces resolutely turned away from the horizon lest the sight of that impending disaster, like a hideous monster rising out of the sea, should spoil their momentary pleasure. How strange such blindness! To simply deny the promise of approaching realities, lest they spoil the present. Turning the eyes away, lest one should see and understand and consider being convinced of God's truth. Oh flee from the wrath to come my unsaved

Rev 14:14 And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

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friend! Flee to the only Saviour of mankind, who has promised to receive in grace *"whosoever cometh to Me".* "No, but *I* will not be *driven* to salvation by such scare tactics of dooms-day preaching", says Mr. & Mrs. Proud-heart. Consider how grand the "**I**" in such a statement. And who are you, oh great one, but a vessel? Of wrath perhaps? *"Fitted to destruction"*? (Rom. 9:22). And where will your imagined greatness be in that day of God's vengeance? What a hugely dangerous thing to trifle with proud denial, and with false religions, which dishonour Jesus Christ and contradict God's true words! For John's vision approaches the ultimate end of all such follies.

14:14-20 – Two Reapers

This again is a rather unpleasant portion. We begin to understand through our study of Revelation why so many preachers avoid this book. Perhaps it is not so much as we might think, because they do not understand it. Perhaps it is more because they *do* understand it, and do not prefer the bitter aspects of its message. We find now in the remaining verses

Rev 14:15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.
Rev 14:16 And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

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of chapter 14 two rounds of reapers and criers.

Vs. 14-16 – Reaper no. 1 – Here is a preview of the Lord Jesus Christ come to the final harvest, the day of which those men of earth spoke in Revelation 6, when *"the great day of His wrath is come"*. We know that this one *"upon the cloud"* is Jesus, because every other mention of clouds in Revelation seems to suggest Christ's presence or coming (1:7; 10:1; 11:12). As well, we are told that this One is *"like unto the Son of Man"*, and *"having on His head a golden crown"*, showing His right to rule. Compare 19:12. The Lord appears now with *"a sharp sickle"* in His hand. How often we see Jesus Christ wielding a sharp implement in this book. It is *"a sharp two-edged sword"* in 1:16, 2:12, 16 & 19:15. In all cases *sharp*, expressing the swift, effective, thorough, penetrating discernment and judgment of God. The scene here describes the time of final harvest at Christ's 2nd coming.

Vs. 15 – Another angel then appears from the

Rev 14:17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.
Rev 14:18 And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.

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heavenly temple bringing command from the throne to slash with that sickle and harvest the earth. In vs. 16 we find that Jesus does so. The terms used in this first round speak of a grain harvest, while the second round depicts a harvest of grapes. This first perhaps pictures the harvest of the saved of earth, after Christ's parable of wheat and tares. Jesus Himself will be the Harvester, yet through the work of His angels (Matt. 13:30, 39).

Vs. 17-20 – Reaper no. 2 – John then saw another angel come out of the heavenly temple, again carrying a sharp sickle.

Vs. 18 – Then another crier, coming from the heavenly altar. This one carried the same command as the first, to slash with the sickle and harvest, this time gathering the clusters of the ripe grapes of earth.

Vs. 19 – This done, the clusters of earth were then

Rev 14:19 And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.
Rev 14:20 And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

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cast into *"the great winepress of the wrath of God".* It is clearly a scene of judgment. Similar terminology is used in 19:15ff, describing the vast destruction of earth-dwellers at Christ's return, when again *"He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God".*

Vs. 20 – Look now to this incredibly graphic description of the treading of that great winepress of God's wrath. It will take place outside the city, answering to Jesus being taken out of the city to be crucified. The volume of output of blood is given, as nearly a 1½ metre deep flow for over 300 kilometres (Durban to Newcastle or nearly to the Swazi border). Pictured here is the destruction of human life on an unprecedented scale of those gathered against the Lord at His return. The spilled blood of a great mass of crushed humanity described as if the juice of grapes from a press. No width of the flow is given. Perhaps filling the Kidron Valley and beyond. The scene is so hard to imagine, so opposed to our

human sensitivities, yet this is not the only place where God warns in His Word of such a moment of coming judgment. Compare;

- Revelation 19:11-16 – Birds of earth called to the great supper of God, to feast upon the carcases of Antichrist's defeated host.

- Psalm 2 – God's Son appointed as King, smashing the unrepentant of earth as potter's vessels.

- Isaiah 63 – Same image of Jesus Christ returning to *"the day of vengeance",* His garments sprinkled and stained from treading the winepress *"in mine anger".*

- Isaiah 34:1-8 – The end-times image of *"the sword of the LORD…filled with blood"* as the Lord delivers *"all nations, and…their armies"* to the slaughter.

- Matthew 24:27-28 – With Christ's return the birds of prey gather upon the carcases.

- Ezekiel 39:17-20 – Beasts and birds invited to the Lord's great sacrifice.

- Joel 3 – All nations gathered for war to "*the valley of decision"* in *"the day of the LORD"*, with the same image of the sickle used to harvest, and the wine vat full of wickedness.

- Zechariah 14 – Graphic imagery of Armageddon.

When Jesus returns to Israel's salvation, to rescue her from the oppression of the beast through the armies of earth gathered around her, it will first be a return to the unsurpassed carnage of Armageddon. That will be God's *"day of vengeance",* while today is His day of grace. It is a day that comes quickly (Zeph. 1:14-18), when the Lord's patience with the nations will have come to an end.

Consider God's patience. When Jesus Christ rode that donkey into Jerusalem it was another example of God's incredible grace and patience. He had offered and offered and He was offering again. Jesus had repeatedly proven Himself the Christ or Messiah. Fulfilled prophecies supported His claims. And there in His entering was His final offer of salvation if they would have it/Him. The Jewish leaders responded with finality in putting Him to death, putting Him out of their misery! Yet even with that, when the believers were later empowered with the Holy Spirit in Acts 1, where did they begin their ministry? In *"Jerusalem, and in all Judea"!* Even after their Messiah's murder and resurrection God's efforts through the apostles were first to

Israel. Stephen spoke the truth to the Jewish leaders of Jerusalem directly and faithfully, and they stoned him to death (Acts 7). Paul went first to the Jewish synagogues and then to the Gentiles. Behold how He loves them! See how He strove with them and for them! See how long-suffering is our God for people, *"not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance".* But alas, Israel would not have Him. So at last the stubborn nation of Israel was crushed and dispersed around the world. See how the Lord now again follows the same pattern of patience with all unbelievers of earth. Yet He shall not always strive with men. His voice echoes even from the first chapters of the Bible, *"My Spirit shall not always strive with man"* (Gen. 6:3). There comes and end! There comes a too-late, a time when you really do not want to be there! He will not allow rebellious man to continue always in his unbelief. Believe Him for His promises. Believe Him in His warnings. Seek Him while He may be found!

"Before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD come upon you, before the day of the LORD's anger come upon you. Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought His judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD's anger" (Zeph. 2:2-3).

"And I saw another sign in heaven,
great and marvellous,
seven angels
having the seven last plagues;
for in them is filled up
the wrath of God"

(Revelation 15:1)

Class 14 – Revelation 15-16

Do you remember how this blessed book began with a promise of blessing to the readers, hearers, and keepers of it (1:3)? We have seen much of cursing, wrath, and woes, particularly in more recent portions; with breath-taking judgments poured out on earth, terrifying Satanic rule to come, and startlingly clear warning of the eternal, unrelenting agony of hell for Christ rejecters. We are left a bit dazed. The shock of such scenes is enough to drive many to a cowardly escape to figurative interpretation, even as a drunkard escapes from the pain of reality to his alcohol-induced delirium. But our integrity will not let us do that. Yet one might well ask, where is that promised blessing in all of this? In answer, consider how such vivid warnings tend to drive a believing soul to the open arms of the waiting, willing Saviour, that blessed place of eternal salvation freely given to all who believe. Compare the same in Joel 2:30-32. *"Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord"* (Ps. 40:3).

Another way that promised blessing comes to us through this book of Revelation is in the descriptive detail of heaven found within these pages like nowhere else in the Bible. The surpassing beauties. The songs of joyful praise. The splendour of God's

Rev 15:1 And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.
Rev 15:2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

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presence. Just look at this scene before us in the opening verses of chapter 15!

Chapter 15

Vs. 1 – This chapter is primarily a lining up for the final round of bowl judgments to be poured out in chapter 16, *"the seven last plagues"* in which are *"filled up the wrath of God".*

Vs. 2 – The Glassy Sea – John saw the redeemed standing upon *"a sea of glass mingled with fire".* This must surely be the same sea stretched before God's throne in chapter 4, described there as *"like unto crystal".* It is a crystalline pavement resembling a smooth, shimmering expanse of water. It is a stately picture of settled, unruffled peace, and vast in proportions. This is no lake, pond, pool, or puddle, but *"a sea"!* Clear as rock crystal, yet sparkling as if mingled with fire. This is no dull inactive pavement, but flashing and vibrant.

Rev 15:3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.

Ezekiel described his vision of the same *"as the colour of the terrible crystal"* (Ezek. 1:22). We are only talking about the floor folks! How beautiful the prospect! What a blessed window of grace in a day so characterized by judgment. Compare Nahum 1:6 and context. We who are safe in Jesus Christ will be there one day and will see it! We know that in that day our eyes will be to the Lord, for He will be our supreme point of focus and worship. Yet do not miss the astounding beauty of the place! The Lord in His grace has given this to us as well in preview. Why? For the believer, it fills us with hopeful anticipation, like kids at Christmas time. For the unbeliever, the Lord seeks to draw their hearts to refuge in Christ. Again, perhaps one would say in his pride, "I will not be *driven* to heaven through terror of hell's inferno!" Well, then allow the Lord to *draw* your heart to Him, through a vision of the delights He longs to freely give to you. Let His goodness lead you to repentance as it is meant to do.

Vs. 3 – The Glad Song – The redeemed there with *"the harps of God"* are singing the song of Moses and

Rev 15:4 Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.
Rev 15:5 And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:

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of the Lamb. Seems whenever we see the company of the redeemed in the Lord's presence there is a song of praise on their lips. How much do you love singing the Lord's songs? These appear particularly to be the martyred dead, put to death by Antichrist's domain (13:7), they having *"gotten the victory"* through their refusal to bow to that servant of Satan. They have come through the darkest day the earth has ever seen, the very worst furnace of trials ever known to man. And now they have found their home, with their hearts full of joy and praise and song. And so shall it ever be for them!

Vs. 3-4 – The Great Sovereign – All the theme of their song is the *"Lord God Almighty",* whose works are great and marvellous, whose ways are just and true, who is King over all, holy above all. Again, this name, *"Almighty"*, so common to this book of Revelation (9 of the 10 times found in the N.T.), speaks of He who is the All-Powerful One, and thus so easily victorious over the best Satan has to offer.

Rev 15:6 And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.
Rev 15:7 And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.
Rev 15:8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

Even in their death these who belong to the Almighty come off victorious still. Even as did their Lord Jesus Christ.

Vs. 4 – Note the searching question asked before the unbelieving world. It is literally "who should not possibly fear You, Lord?" This is taken from Jeremiah 10:7, where worship of the Lord is contrasted with the folly of idols.

Vs. 5-8 – Preparations for *"the seven last plagues".*

Chapter 16 – *"The Seven Last Plagues"*

One of the key words of this book of Revelation is *"wrath"* (16 times). Chapter 15 warned that the last round of judgments presented in this chapter are *"full of the wrath of God"* (15:1, 7). Even so here in

Rev 16:1 And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.
Rev 16:2 And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.

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vs. 1 the same is affirmed. These are indeed *"the vials of the wrath of God upon earth"*, the fullest expression of *"the fierceness of His wrath"* (vs. 19).

John heard a *"<u>great</u> voice"* out of the heavenly temple sending the 7 angels to their work. It is an indication of things to come, for this is a chapter of great things. Over 80 times the Greek word mega (great) is found in this book, with 11 of those occurrences in this chapter alone. The judgments poured out here are greater, more severe, more intense than all we have seen before, and coming now in a rapid-fire fashion. These 7 bowl judgments are God's dealing with a stubbornly Christ-rejecting, blasphemous world brought to a climax.

<u>16:2</u> – Bowl 1 – Grievous Sores

With the 1st angel pouring out his bowl there will come terrible sores upon every worshipper of the beast, particularly distressing, ulcerated, septic sores. It will be God's answer to Satan's merciless

Rev 16:3 And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.

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handling of righteous Job, with *"sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown".* So God now puts His own marks on those wearing Satan's mark. Compare the 6th plague upon Egypt (Ex. 9:9-11).

16:3 – Bowl 2 – Sea to Blood

The 2nd emptied bowl turns the sea *"as the blood of a dead man",* resulting in death to every living thing in the sea. We have no reason to read this as other than actual blood as of one dead. And all the oceans of earth are involved this time rather than only a portion, as in the 2nd trumpet judgment (8:8). He who created blood has no problem turning salt water to blood. Whatever the difference between warm blood flowing through the veins of one living and *"the blood of a dead man"* might be, this feature certainly adds a loathsome aspect. Can you even imagine the scene? Every single one of the multiplied billions of sea creatures dead and floating on a sea of blood! Due to the weight of that worldwide blanket of rotting flesh the sea is flat and still, as dead as its creatures and unaffected by the winds. There are no sea scavengers to consume the mess. All remains to simply decay. Can you

imagine the sight of it, the smell of it, the overwhelming, nauseating, heart-sickening impression upon all of the senses?! All of the extraordinary creatures of the sea *gone*, extinct in one shocking stroke! All of the glorious efforts of man related to the sea and the creatures of it, the great expeditions and explorations and film productions and campaigns, all come now to nothing! As mankind looks out over that unbelievable, stinking, sun-baked carnage stretching to the horizon from every shore of earth the stunning question perhaps at last begins to form in the heart of some, *"What have we done?!"* Our insides may wrench a bit with the imagery implied here, but why would the Lord record these things if He did not mean for us to *"look upon it and receive instruction"*? If anything, it may help the reader get his priorities right, or his head out of the sand. Compare the 1st plague God brought upon Egypt, with the Nile turned to blood, the fish dead, and the river stinking (Ex. 7:21). There it was one river in one country in one corner of one continent. But in that coming day all of the majestic seas of of earth will be involved!

16:4-7 – Bowl 3 – All Water to Blood

With the 3rd bowl *all* water of earth will be turned to blood, and man is left with only blood to drink.

Rev 16:4 And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.
Rev 16:5 And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.

Hideous but fair, is the point made by the heavenly cheerleaders in vs. 5-7. For those so thirsty for the blood of God's saints upon earth, in fact *drunken* with it in that day (17:6), God will give only blood for their thirst. Their punishment fits their crime. The unsaved of all time are seen as a unit here, and repaid in kind for the shed blood of martyrs, from that of righteous Abel to the last murdered saint of the coming tribulation period.

As we ponder the putrefying mess made of the earth's waters, contrast now that beautiful crystal sea upon which God's saints stand (15:2), and the *"living fountains of waters"* evermore theirs in His presence (7:17), and the *"pure river of water of life, clear as crystal"* flowing from the throne in the new Jerusalem (22:1). We see visually how God is able and willing both to *curse* those rejecting Him, and to *care* for those who receive! Look well at what becomes of Satan's followers. Choose carefully who will be your master my friend.

Rev 16:6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.
Rev 16:7 And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.

"The angel of the waters" – Apparently this is an angel with some responsibility over the waters of earth? Intriguing the variety of ministries we find assigned to angels in this book. Compare the angels with power to *"hurt the earth and the sea"* in 7:1-2.

Vs. 7 – When the angel proclaims the Lord true in His judgments he means that He is good for His words. The Lord does all that He says He will do. A man is a fool to doubt Him! When the Lord is proclaimed righteous in His judgments it means He is fair. His judgments take in all "*the secrets of men"* (Rom. 2:16), penetrating even to *"the thoughts and intents of the heart"* (Heb. 4:12). A man only fools himself who thinks he might in any way fool God. Every soul will receive exactly what he truly deserves.

Though some things are not clear in this book of prophecy, consider how obvious the following;

- That the Lord is full of wrath over the sin and

Rev 16:8 And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.
Rev 16:9 And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.

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rebellion of man is evident. These bowls are *full* of the wrath of Almighty God.

- That the Lord has perfect ability to execute His judgment is clear. "Not yet" does not mean never. Revelation's record brings the rumble of distant thunder to our conscious awareness now. Though the sun may still be shining, dark clouds gather in the distance and are on their way.

- That it is only because of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed. A man avoids falling to judgment at any and every moment purely because of God's patient grace. Only in Jesus Christ is there *"therefore now no condemnation".*

16:8-9 – Bowl 4 – Scorching Sun

The target of the 4th angel's bowl is the sun, resulting in an increase in the sun's intensity, such that people will be scorched by its *"great heat".*

Rev 16:10 And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,
Rev 16:11 And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

Vs. 9 – Men will know well enough the source of this to know where to direct their blasphemous hatred. As with Pharaoh in Egypt, God's judgments only serve to increase the hardness of some. Is it true that any man would certainly repent if only he could see the power and righteous judgment of God? The obvious answer here is *no*. Such evident displays of divine discipline can actually become the very means to greater hardening!

16:10-11 – Bowl 5 – Painful Darkness

The 5th bowl will be directed at the seat of Antichrist's domain, resulting in darkness and intense pain. Compare the 9th plague upon Egypt (Ex. 10:21-23).

Vs. 11 – Still the response is blasphemy rather than repentance. The word "repent" is found a dozen times in this book, but this is the last we see of it. Repentance is a theme permeating the whole of God's message to man. The O.T. ends on a note of

Rev 16:12 And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.

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man's turning. The same features so prominently in the preaching of Jesus and the apostles. And now the last time the word "repent" is ever used in the Bible it is only to record man's failure to do it! The Lord is good to be so patient with mankind, but there comes an end of His patience at last.

16:12-16 – Bowl 6 – Armageddon

Everybody knows about Armageddon, or thinks they do. It certainly has been a choice theme for the movie industry over the years. With the 6th bowl poured out the Euphrates River, the eastern border of the land God gave to Abraham (Gen. 15:16), will be dried up, opening the way for the kings of the east. We saw a glimpse of this earlier in the 6th trumpet judgment, where numbers were given (9:13-21). A massive 200 million strong mounted force is seen there, a vast confederacy of oriental kings and their armies, gathered to the final world war of *"the times of the Gentiles".* Countries to the east of Palestine contain about ½ of the world's population, with bitter hatred among many of them toward the Jewish nation already.

Rev 16:13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.
Rev 16:14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

Vs. 13-14 – John saw three frog-like demons come out of the mouth of the unholy trinity. Some folks attempt to identify these beings with individuals, but we are told they are demon spirits, and with power to work miracles. These will be sent out by the unholy trinity in that day to convince and gather the nations of earth to the final showdown. Compare again the lying spirit sent to Ahab's "prophets" (I Ki. 22). Compare in Antichrist's final military movements, in Daniel 11:40-45, the troubling *"tidings out of the east"* (vs. 44). This final battle seems to take place on many fronts;

- South of the Dead Sea in Bozrah of Edom (Isa. 63).
- Jerusalem (Zech. 14).
- The Valley of Jezreel and the Plain of Esdraelon near Mount Megiddo south of Galilee. The name "Armageddon" means Mount Megiddo (Rev. 16:16).

Rev 16:15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.
Rev 16:16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

This supernatural worldwide work of gathering the nations of earth to Israel to battle will result in the event described in chapter 14 in the grapes of earth harvested and trampled in the winepress of God's wrath. Satan, through his unholy host, will be thinking to work his own purposes against God and His people in that day, yet he will actually be accomplishing God's great purpose of gathering the harvest of the nations for their sudden, complete destruction at Christ's return. It is the Lord Himself doing the calling to this last great confrontation in Joel 3. The Lord's purpose in this event is obvious. He will be gathering the rejecting world of men for the slaughter. But what will be Satan's purpose here? He will be seeking to bring all the power of earth together *"against the LORD, and against His Anointed* [Messiah]" (see Psalm 2). Satan, having unified the whole world in that day under one man, "the beast", we might think this worldwide union would bring peace. Yet Daniel chapter 11 describes Antichrist in his very active final days. He will be on the move, running from one battlefront to another, apparently putting down rebellion as the

world rises to war. The details of this 6th bowl judgment now give the behind-the-scenes story. Satan himself through his demons will stir this, as Antichrist's kingdom begins to break up. The whole of it will be toward Satan's grand purpose to bring all the armies of earth together in anticipation of Christ's return. Satan will be busy mustering all he has to muster, the combined armies of earth. And this with the foolish, futile notion that a combined human/demonic host could actually defeat Jesus Christ or hinder His coming and kingdom! As the nations of earth gather against Israel their combined rage will turn in unison against Christ as the sign of His return shall blaze like lightning across the sky (Matt. 24:27). In only a moment all will be put to silence, as with the slash of a sickle!

Satan, the very worst of commanders, will use his followers like expendable pawns. A good military leader will ever use greatest care with the lives of his men. Yet see how Satan handles his troops, caring absolutely nothing for them. As worthless cannon fodder, he drives them by fear and pours them out like water. Look well at what becomes of Satan's followers. Again, choose your master carefully. The Lord loses not one of His own in the end, while Satan spends all toward his selfish, hopeless ends.

Rev 16:17 And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.
Rev 16:18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.

16:17-21 – Bowl 7 – Earthquake & Hail

We come now to the final judgment poured out upon the earth before Christ's return. The 7th bowl is poured into the air and God's voice immediately rings out from the heavenly temple in a clear, booming proclamation, *"It is done!"* The consummation of all things has come. The fullness of God's wrath poured out. The plots of Satan through his minions have come to nothing. Jesus in a similar way pronounced at the moment of His death, *"It is finished",* fixing man's opportunity for eternal blessing. Here in the same words are now fixed opportunity's end! There, it was the completion of the way of grace for those who receive. Here, it is the completion of the wrath of God for those who refuse.

Vs. 18 – As with the 7th seal judgment (8:5) and 7th trumpet judgment (11:19), so again now with this 7th bowl judgment there are voices and thunders and lightnings and an earthquake. But here the

Rev 16:19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.
Rev 16:20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

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earth is rocked like never before (double mega). As John Walvoord puts it, "the earth literally convulses as the times of the Gentiles come to an end". Like a dog shaking itself free of parasites. Compare Hebrews 12:25-29; Haggai 2:6-7; Isaiah 13:9-13; Joel 3:16.

Vs. 19-20 – The shocking results of the shaking;

- Every city of the world outside of Israel is reduced to rubble. Every impressive, stately metropolis squashed in a moment. Every monument of man's ingenuity flattened. We can well imagine, the run-away fires, all amenities cut off, looting, anarchy, exposure, destruction and loss of life on an awesome scale.

- Every island vanished into the crusted ocean of blood and gore. The term is literally "fled away". Compare Revelation 20:11.

- Every mountain flattened like Jericho's walls.

Rev 16:21 And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

Compare this great earthquake with the breaking of the 6th seal in chapter 6, where *"every mountain and island were moved out of their places"*. It was a warning of what was to come. There moved, here *re*moved! There the people of earth fled to *"the rocks of the mountains"* for refuge *"from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb"* (6:16). But where shall they hide now, with every island, city, and mountain no more?! All will be levelled, naked, and exposed in anticipation of God's righteous sentencing. As the faithful words of Amos to Israel, ***"Prepare to meet thy God"***.

Vs. 21 – *"Great hail out of heaven"* – To the greatest earthquake is added the greatest hailstorm of all time. Again, this will affect the entire earth. And again, the word mega or great is used twice in the description of it! Everything is on a colossal scale now (*"exceeding great"!*). Every stone of this amazing hailstorm is about 1 talent in weight, or 55-60 kgs. Heavier than a bag of Portland cement (about weight of your wife when you married her?). Obviously such hailstones would destroy everything

left standing, killing and injuring many.

Now the grave danger at such a point as this is to respond as scoffers have always responded throughout history, as Lot's children scoffed at warning of the imminent doom that took them (Gen. 19:14). God's message has always been the scoffer's joke. And throughout history there have always been lying preachers and prophets full of happy assurances that all will be just fine, confirming mockers in their laughter. Such false "Christians" are the worst danger to an inquiring soul. Compare the reaction recorded here in vs. 21. Now for the third time in this last series of judgments we are told of the blasphemous response of unrepentant man. When immediate, complete repentance should be the only reasonable response of little man, in the hardness of their hearts they will actually shake their clenched fists toward heaven. Like tiny ants squeaking their reproach at one dumping a bucket of gravel on them. Why can these not see what they are before their awesome Creator turned Tormentor? Man is in no position to utter reproach or to resist! When the Lord stands up in judgment, nothing stands before Him!

Is it not the same when little man demands his own way against God's will? When I choose the

pleasures of sin over the pleasure of God, is this not also a shake of the fist or at least a thumbing of the nose. Or when, like Cain, one demands to please the Lord his own way, rather than carefully, earnestly searching out the Lord's prescribed way to come to Him and please Him. There can be no denying that the Lord consistently points to only *one way* of salvation for man. Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes unto the Father, but by Me"* (Jn. 14:6).

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

"And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet (Jesus), *shall be destroyed"* (Acts 3:22-23).

"And upon her forehead

was a name written,

MYSTERY,
BABYLON THE GREAT,
THE MOTHER
OF HARLOTS
AND ABOMINATIONS
OF THE EARTH"

(Rev 17:5)

Class 15 – Revelation 17

As we come to this pivotal point in our study of this blessed book of Revelation the judgments of God have fallen in successive waves, the armies of earth are preparing for their final move, and all is poised in readiness for the return of Jesus Christ to earth. And now again we have a pause in the progression of events, in order to give us a close-up of one aspect of the judgments that have fallen. The destruction of "Babylon" now comes into the spotlight of intense consideration. The extensive coverage of it clearly marks this as a matter of greatest importance to God. Two chapters or nearly 10% of the book are devoted to a description of Babylon's fall. We have seen hints of the same before this in 14:8 & 16:19.

Babylon is mentioned nearly 300 times in the Bible. Most times it refers to a political power, centred in that city once situated between the rivers in modern day Iraq. Oftentimes Babylon speaks of a satanic religious system of false worship opposing the true worship of God. Both of these lines are now brought to annihilation in chapters 17 & 18, the false religious system here in chapter 17 and the commercial system in chapter 18.

Rev 17:1 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:
Rev 17:2 With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

Chapter 17

17:1-6 – Vision of the Great Whore

Vs. 1 – John is now invited to witness *"the judgment of the great whore".* The angel's descriptive imagery of her is rich with meaning. That she *"sitteth upon many waters"* is later explained (vs. 15) in the same way we have seen this symbol of waters used before (Dan. 7:3, 17). The waters represent the nations and people of earth. The position of this woman speaks of her corrupting influence over all people of earth. Clearly the picture of "Babylon" here is beyond just a city, but extends to the far-reaching effects of a universal system.

Vs. 2 – She is further described as one with whom the kings and inhabitants of earth have *"committed fornication"* or sexual immorality (19:2). They have even *"been made drunk with the wine of her fornication",* describing the mad, unreasoning

Rev 17:3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

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nature of their illicit involvement with her. Compare the same notion in a right sense of a man with his wife in Proverbs 5:19, *"be thou ravished* (intoxicated) *always with her love".*

Vs. 3 – John was taken in spirit to the wilderness where he himself saw this woman of whom the angel spoke. And the first point of notice was her position, again seated, now upon a *"scarlet coloured beast".* All this woman does is *sit*, upon the people of earth (vs. 1), upon this beast, and upon the mountains (vs. 9). The description given of this beast leaves no doubt that it is the same we saw in chapter 13;

- He is called the same, *"beast"* (13:1).
- *"Full of names of blasphemy"* (13:5-6). He is the fullness or epitome of one blasphemous.
- *"Seven heads".*
- *"Ten horns"* (13:1).

Yet his scarlet colour ties him to the *"great red dragon"* (Satan) of chapter 12. Associations are

Rev 17:4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

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obvious. Clearly this *"beast"* again refers to Antichrist, that great world ruler to come, the *"little horn"* of Daniel's prophecy, that one empowered and enthroned by Satan himself (13:2).

Vs. 4-6 – More on the whore;

- Her adorning (vs. 4);
    - Clothed in *"purple and scarlet".* Ornate beauty like royalty or ritualistic religion.
    - *"Decked with gold".* Literally she is gilded with it.
    - Precious stones and pearls.
    - It is an image of incredible wealth. Such outward frills could only show a vain desire to draw attention to man, displaying the absence of true spiritual values. The truth is highlighted that as true piety and purity decline, showy pomp increases proportionally. Mark it well, that where there is ostentation

there is spiritual prostitution. And herein displayed as well is the errant view that material possessions, things ornate, or having earthly splendour, are equivalent to God's blessing. Compare the situation in Laodicea (3:17). Note the sharp contrast with the simple godly adornment encouraged by God (I Tim. 1:9-10; I Pet. 3:1-6). Compare in Jesus One who could not have been more right in His earthly walk with God the Father, yet who was born in a stable among the poorest of people with the simplest of means and with nowhere even to lay His head. Compare Moses, who qualified for God's leadership only after he gave up the prestige, privilege, and possessions of Egypt (Heb. 11:24-26).

- Her cup (vs. 4);
    - Golden. Only the finest for this one.
    - *"Full of abominations".* A vile brew of things utterly detestable. This was the Jewish term for idols and idolatry.
    - *"Full of…filthiness of her fornication".* Sexual immorality is often used by God

to express the unfaithfulness of spiritual departure from Him to involvement with some other "god". This one drinks of the fullness of apostasy.

- Her name (vs. 5);
    - There is "MYSTERY" about her. Babylon is infamous as that nidus of false, mystery religion. From the first mention of man's revolt against God at Babel in Genesis 11 Babylon became a picture of man apart from God, united in cooperation toward self-advancement or exaltation. Compare the description of her sorceries and witchcraft in Isaiah 47:9-15. The centre for this school of false, pagan religion later shifted to Pergamos in Asia Minor and then on to Rome, resulting in many of their ancient pagan rites infiltrating more ritualistic churches. Her name expresses her as the very "MOTHER" or

fountainhead of spiritual infidelity upon earth. Babylon is indeed the source of all false religion. All idolatry is traceable back to what developed there. This was then spread throughout the earth with the dispersion from Babel through the confusion of the languages recorded in Genesis 11. Thus Babylon becomes a symbol in Scripture of departure from faithfulness to God's true worship, and to the blasphemy and spiritual pollution of idolatry in all of its various forms. Babylon describes the great system of counterfeit religion, with countless cultic pockets around the globe, each offering its phoney gods, all wearing the same mark of rebellion from the true God of the Bible. This is mostly seen in the form of obvious pagan religion, but is evident as well (and far more dangerous) in various forms of Christianity falsely so called (paganised "Christianity"), with the same basic tenets of ancient Babylonian religion onboard, often selling itself through its very intriguing obscurity, carrying a subtle, secretive,

Rev 17:6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

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seductive air. It encompasses *"the mystery of iniquity"* Paul spoke of as already and always at work in the world (I Thess. 2:7). Lawlessness and all things anti-Christian are working toward its final break-out into open, unbridled manifestation in the last days.

- Her condition (vs. 6);
    - *"Drunken with the blood of the saints, and…martyrs of Jesus".* Behold how she has the same heart as the beast she rides. As is the way of Antichrist, even so Satan's worldwide, multi-faceted false religious system will be as she always has been, the great persecutor of God's true religion on earth. One writer mentioned that "Sir Robert Anderson, of Scotland Yard fame, estimated that Rome [Catholicism] was guilty of the death of 50,000,000 Christians".

Rev 17:7 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.

In 19:1-3 heaven rings with alleluias over God's judgment of "*the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication",* and over the avenging of *"the blood of His servants at her hand".*

Now do not miss the relation of the woman to the beast. She is a separate entity from the beast, religious and political powers distinct from each other. And she is carried by him, riding him, casting the beast into a supportive, seemingly subservient role to the whore. Compare in vs. 18, *"which reigneth over".* But as we shall soon see, her apparent dominance is only that, *apparent*.

Vs. 6 – John *"wondered with great admiration"* as he beheld this woman. The splendours and spurious spiritualities of man can indeed be an impressive thing to behold, even as the intrigues of sin hold the power to stir such desperate interest in us. But when the meaning and motive of it is explained by God's messenger it is understood for the worthless, glittering tinsel it really is.

<u>17:7-18</u> – Interpretations

Rev 17:8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.
Rev 17:9 And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.

Vs. 8-14 – The beast interpreted.

Vs. 8 – *"The beast…was, and is not"* – Likely referring to the same we saw in chapter 13 (vs. 3, 12, 14). There will be some utterly astounding display in Antichrist, he appearing to rise from death, setting all the unsaved world to wonder and worship.

His rise *"out of the bottomless pit",* that dwelling place of Satan and his unholy host, further reveals the beast's intimate association and source of power in Satan. He will share his end with Satan in *"perdition"* as well (20:10).

Vs. 9-11 – *"The seven heads"* of the beast.

Vs. 9-10 – Again it is a challenge to the wise here, to sharpen the senses in seeking an understanding (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 13:9, 18). Clarity of insight in discerning the meaning of God's

Rev 17:10 And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.

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prophesies is kept on a higher shelf, requiring a careful search.

We are now told in vs. 9 & 10 that the seven heads of the beast represent *"seven mountains"*, and that *"there are seven kings"*, or perhaps "they are seven kings". It would seem that we are meant to understand a connection between these mountains and kings, that the seven mountains are in fact seven kings or kingdoms. Some points to support this connection;

- In Daniel 2:44 the Lord's coming kingdom, which will end all human kingdoms, is depicted as *"a great mountain"* filling *"the whole earth"* (vs. 35).

- In Jeremiah 51:25 the Lord refers to the kingdom of Babylon as a *"destroying mountain"*.

- The four *"kings"* of Daniel 7:17 are later referred to as four *"kingdoms"* (vs. 23), the kings obviously representing more than just individual rulers, but the kingdom they rule as well.

In the prophetic imagery here it seems we are meant to understand mountains as kings or rather kingdoms, and seven of them. These seven seem to represent a charting of the course of earthly empires through the centuries, yet only those ruling over Israel. Of the five fallen empires, three of them are given to us in Daniel's prophecy; Greece, Medo-Persia, and Babylon, ranging back to Nebuchadnezzar taking Judah in 606 B.C. As to the two fallen ones prior to these three there is uncertainty, perhaps Assyria and Egypt. All but Greece held Israel captive out of their land for a time. The angel told John concerning these kingdoms that *"one is",* which can only refer to Rome ruling over his people at the time of his writing, that power that put him on Patmos. Therefore the one *"not yet come"* would be Antichrist's world rule during the tribulation period, And we are repeatedly assured of just how short a *"space"* this one will continue.

That on these *"mountains"* or kingdoms of earth *"the woman sitteth"* again displays the pervading influence of false religion over all the kingdoms of earth since man was scattered from Babel. These are not "the seven hills of Rome", with the christianised paganism of Roman Catholicism nested there, as some tend to interpret here. These

Rev 17:11 And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

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are rather nations or kingdoms dominating over God's chosen people through the ages.

From a study of Daniel we learn of two aspects of the Roman Empire, described in Daniel 2 & 7;

- Daniel 2:34-35 – Beginning with legs of iron, then turning to feet of iron and clay.
- Dan. 7:7-8 – Beginning with focus on the ten-horned *"beast, dreadful and terrible",* then focus turning to *"another little horn"* rising to prominence.

These changes speak of the old empire of Rome somehow transforming into the final revived form of Antichrist's rule in the last days, with the parenthetic era of the current church age not mentioned in Daniel's prophecy.

Vs. 11 – There is a sense in which the beast or Antichrist, though out of the 7th empire of Rome, is the 8th, for he will become a world empire unto himself in the closing days of *"the times of the Gentiles".*

Rev 17:12 And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.
Rev 17:13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

Vs. 12-14 – *"The ten horns"* of the beast – Let's trace the concept of ten in the prophecies of Daniel and John;

- Toes at the end of Nebuchadnezzar's image (Dan. 2:33, 40-43).
- Horns at the end of the final world empire (Dan. 7:7-8). Interpreted there as kings (vs. 24), within which the final human king or *"little horn"* will rise to power.
- Horns on the dragon (Rev. 12:3).
- Horns on the beast (Rev. 13:1).

That this final world empire will be expressed in some confederation of ten nations is a point of greatest prominence in God's prophecy. A careful comparison of Daniel with this portion of Revelation 17 suggests that this ten-nation confederacy will be localized in the area of the old Roman Empire, and from this coalition the final world ruler will arise. These kings will have one mind, joining in alliance *"with the beast"*, even submitting to him (vs. 13).

Rev 17:14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.
Rev 17:15 And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

They will be Antichrist's peers, reigning at the same time (vs. 12). The extent of their reign will be brief (*"one hour"*), for their united power will be conquered with the beast in the return of Jesus Christ (vs. 14). Again, these kings and their involvement with the Antichrist are so significant that Daniel also spoke of them centuries before.

Vs. 14 – It has ever been a question of sides or allegiance, of *"they that are with"* the Lord as opposed to those aligning themselves with Satan. There are only ever two kinds of people, the same two camps of allegiance upon earth. The ultimate victory of the Lord's side has already been declared, for it is written. The question is whether you will believe it.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved" (Acts 16:31).

Vs. 15 – The waters interpreted – Antichrist's domain will be over all of the unsaved people of all

Rev 17:16 And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.
Rev 17:17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.
Rev 17:18 And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

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nations (13:7-8).

Vs. 16-18 – The whore's fall – We see now a surprising turn of events. These kings associated with Antichrist in the end, agreeing to *"give their kingdom unto the beast",* will do Antichrist's bidding in bringing an end to the great spiritual harlot (but in fact it is God's will they fulfil, vs. 17). So apostate religion rides the beast, his close associate in world rule, only to be swallowed up by the beast at the last! Why? Because that will be the point when the beast does not need her anymore! A thief needs his accomplices in robbing a bank. But after the job is done he has no further need or wish for any mates to share the takings? As the beast at last rises to world power at the middle of the tribulation period he shares his glory with nobody! He turns like a praying mantis to devour her mate. The apostate church of paganised religion, having fulfilled her corrupting purpose, is of no use to the beast

anymore. Led to believe she is leading things, as some great repository of spiritual wisdom, dispenser of God's grace and blessings, she is actually the one led by the nose as the sacrificial lamb to the slaughter.

N.B. how the wicked of the world think. Here is a practical reason why God commands His children to come out from among them and be separate (II Cor. 6). Though the unsaved may speak in such a caring and convincing way, their true desire is often to corrupt that which is pure, to use us for their own selfish purposes. Though you be gentle as a dove, oh be wise as a serpent as well my friend (Matt. 10:16). The unsaved of earth are lightning rods beckoning God's searing stroke, and saints have often gotten burned when living too close. King Jehoshaphat was nearly killed through too close an association with wicked Ahab. We must be ever so careful about our associations with the world and the worldly church. Even that which appears a gracious gift from the wicked can be a means of destruction. See here how the beast graciously carries the harlot, acts the servant toward her. But a joy ride to her own slaughter it will be! Even so the harlot of Proverbs "lovingly" offers her bed to the simple man. But he *"knoweth not that it is for his life"* (7:23). Even so King Ahab out of the kindness

of his heart offered his wicked daughter, Athaliah, in marriage to Jehoshaphat's son. But it was a marriage of confederacy with a wicked king and nation. She was like the gift of a thistle seed, bound to breed after her kind. And when given the opportunity she fully turned to her murderous purpose.

How very opposite are the wicked from our gracious God, who rejoices in giving that He might give the more (Eph. 2). He does not give because He needs to give, because He seeks some payment in return. He is the Almighty One. He needs nothing. He gives because He wants to. The wicked one on the other hand is gracious only because he *has* to be, only *as far* as he has to be, not because he *wants* to be. It is a necessity born out of his *not* being almighty. It is simply that he needs others to accomplish his ends. Wickedness takes and uses up, while God gives that He might give the more. Wickedness rejoices in using others, while God rejoices in blessing. The wicked are not committed to the best for others, and see others only in their value or use to them, only as cannon fodder to be spent for their ends. Wickedness could not care less for the well-being of others, while God could not care more. Wickedness sacrifices the other for himself, while God sacrifices Himself for the other. Praise God for

the difference! *Praise God I am His!* We become like Him when we spend our lives for others.

Perhaps there is a certain amusing irony to see the wicked prey on each other as here in Revelation 17. Though the world system of false religion ("mystery Babylon") gives every appearance of dominance early in the tribulation period, this will only be appearance, for she will only be used by the beast. Though he appears to be her vehicle, she is actually his means to supreme power and worship, and then she will be discarded with the beast's rise, taking all worship to him. The great religious system of Babylon at last and forever buried, and in its place, the forced worship of Antichrist (Dan. 11:36-38; Rev. 13:8)

We might ask why it is so hard to do right. One answer is because if it was an easy thing there would be no real personal cost in our sacrifice for the good of others. It was likely a hard thing for Boaz to not take advantage of Ruth in her midnight visit to his bed. But it was the right and honourable thing to do, an opportunity to show his genuine care for her, by sacrificing what he might wish to do for her honour. He lived what his great-grandson would one day write, *"neither will I offer…unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing"* (II

Sam. 24:24).

Vs. 18 – *"The woman…is that great city"* – The city of Babylon is now tied to the religious system arising there, leading to the focus of the next chapter.

Class 16 – Revelation 18

In chapter 17 we saw the red beast associated with *"the great whore",* Antichrist carrying and then killing godless, last-days religion. Again, harlotry or prostitution is often a biblical term for spiritual departure from the true religion of God (Ezek. 16; Hosea; Jer. 3). The coming Antichrist will carry the combined false religions of earth, sourced in Babylon, during that final coming era of tribulation before the return of Jesus Christ. The two powers, both political and religious, will be in alliance, but only for a time. For when the harlot of apostate religion is no longer convenient or useful to the beast he will turn and devour her, as we saw in Revelation 17:16-17. He will use her as he will use Israel. Chapter 18 continues the theme of Babylon's destruction, though difficult questions are stirred by this portion. While it seems clear that chapter 17 describes the fall of Babylon as a religious entity, what aspect of Babylon's fall does this chapter describe? While we find similarities here with chapter 17, there are important differences as well, which seem to separate the events of these twin chapters;

- The events of this new chapter are *"after these things"* (vs. 1).

- This chapter is now introduced by *"another angel".*

- Though the kings of earth willingly crush *"Mystery Babylon"* in 17:16, they mourn Babylon's end in 18:9.

- The great focus in this chapter on the merchants of earth enriched by her (vs. 3, 11-19) speaks more of a commercial entity.

- Though the harlot of chapter 17 is associated with political power she is not that power itself, which power seems to be the focus in this chapter.

Again, Babylon in the Bible seems to refer to both a universal false religious system and a world political power or empire. Key men in Babylon's development were;

- Nimrod – Founder of the city, kingdom, false religion, and rebellion for which the city is known (Gen. 10-11). The first mention of a *"kingdom"* of men in the Bible was centred at Babylon.

- Nebuchadnezzar – Who led the empire to the pinnacle of its power and pride, and who began *"the times of the Gentiles",* that era of world history when national Israel has not

held independent control over their Promised Land and capital city.

Yet to Babylon are traceable all of the gods of the nations around Israel and of the whole earth;

- Baal & Ashtoreth of the Phoenicians.
- Molech of the Ammonites.
- Dagan of the Philistines.
- The Egyptian, Greek, & Roman gods and goddesses.
- Ancient Persian Zoroastrianism, with all of its many nefarious off-shoots.

And beyond these ancient religions more modern forms have arisen as well, such as;

- Meditative trances of Reiki healing.
- Yoga and T.M. of eastern mysticism.
- Native American mysticism, the spirit of the eagle, and ancestor worship.
- The same worship of ancestral spirits among native Africans.
- The fairies and phantoms of the Celtic Druids.

- The supposed powers of the planets through the intrigues of astrology.
- The mother/child cult of Roman Catholicism, after the ancient Semiramis, the famous Queen of Heaven of the Babylonian cult.
- Lakshmi, "the mother of the universe", of Hindu Diwali fame was dropped from the same pagan mould.

On and on we could go, listing the godless religions of earth in all of their enchanting, mystical, ethereal, colourful attractiveness. All finding their source in "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" (17:5).

From her beginning Babylon was all about *rebellion*, from her founding father Nimrod, whose name means "rebel", right through to her final leader in the greatest rebel of all time in Antichrist. Compare the arrogant attitude of Kings Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar of Babylon as well, in contrast to that of Darius and Cyrus of the Medo-Persians. From the beginning Babylon was all about man's elevation of himself, the evil principle at the heart of every false religion. It is man building a "tower", working his own way to heaven. Man with the stated purpose,

"let us make us a name" (Gen. 11:4). Man making a name for himself, making his own way to deity, with no recognition of God as God and man as dependent. For from of old men *"did not like to retain God in their knowledge".* Natural man will always attempt to get along without his Creator.

Ironically they did indeed make a name for themselves there in Genesis 11, a name of *folly!* For Babel means "confusion". Later generations attempted to upgrade the city's image by insisting the name means Gate (bab) of God (El), but God has recorded the true meaning for all time in Genesis 11:9. Indeed all who would lift themselves up in pride against the Lord will come to a fool's end in shame and ruin. It is the lesson Babylon's greatest king learned well in Daniel 4. Only a fool fights against the Most High.

From the beginning Babylon was mankind uniting to strengthen himself, thinking their combined strength and unity could thwart God's purpose to scatter the people of earth. It was God's purpose that through man's separation He might separate out a people for Himself, a special nation through whom He would bring Messiah into the world. Babylon's rebellious unity was Satan's effort to deny God this vehicle of Messiah's delivery into the world.

Man united under a mighty human rebel will make the same blunder again at Armageddon, thinking their combined force can hinder Messiah's coming and kingdom.

From the beginning Babylon was all about great man and small God. Remember God's prophecy of earthly kingdoms in that great image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2, where Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon were the head of gold. But the king in the next chapter said no, the *whole* image will be gold. So arrogantly he would proclaim himself the sum and total of human kingdoms, in defiance of God's words. The *"mystery of iniquity"* (II Thess. 2:7), from Satan's first temptation, has always asserted that man can ascend and *"be as gods"*. Whereas the *"mystery of godliness"* (I Tim. 3:16) affirms that God must descend to become a man, implying that we are little and lost and helpless and undone, needing God's rescue. The first originates in man on earth, seeking to rise to God. The second originates in heaven, seeing that God must come down to man.

So it was to Babylon that God took His people Israel in captivity, to the source of the idolatry they were so determined to pursue in their rejection of Him, to the source of the rebellion so entrenched in the

Rev 18:1 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.
Rev 18:2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.
Rev 18:3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

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heart of even His own people.

Chapter 18

18:1-8 – Babylon's Fall

Vs. 2 – *"Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen"* – How common such a cry is echoed in God's Book, in greatest anticipation of the event here recorded. Again the doubling is for emphasis. We find the same *words* in Isaiah 21:9 & Revelation 14:8. We find the same *theme* in Isaiah 13:19; 14:4ff; Jeremiah 50 & 51. Note the common promise of Babylon *forever uninhabited* in Isaiah 13:20-22; Jeremiah 50:3, 13, 39; 51:29, 43, 62. Compare Isaiah 34:11-15 for the same combination of only demon and bird inhabitants.

Rev 18:4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.
Rev 18:5 For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.
Rev 18:6 Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.

Vs. 4 – Heavenly call to separation – Compare Jeremiah 50:4-9; 51:6; II Corinthians 6:17. As Lot was called out of Sodom, so the Lord calls His people out of Babylon, to avoid partaking of her sins as an accomplice in her evil, and to avoid her plagues, suffering with her for their too close association. Christians who go down to the world, as Samson's dallying with Delilah, are sure to be stripped of their spiritual power, and thus left without strength to lift the world up. Untouchable was Samson with the Spirit, a laughing stock without Him.

Vs. 5 – *"Her sins have reached unto heaven"* – Strike any familiar chords? The word translated *"reached"* here is literally "piled" or "welded together", as if bricks piled and mortared together one upon another. The allusion to the original purpose at Babel is obvious, to build *"a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven"* (Gen. 11:4). They finally made it! Not with actual bricks, but with the treasuring

Rev 18:7 How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.
Rev 18:8 Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

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up of their sins. Until the Lord at last "remembers" their iniquities to bring them up for review. Not that He ever forgets, but it is reckoning time at this point! Though the Lord delays His judgment for a time, permitting the build-up of sin, yet still His judgment is inescapable outside of refuge in Jesus Christ (Rom. 2:5).

Vs. 7 – The very image of ease and brimming with confidence. But it is only wishful thinking, for she will come to *"torment and sorrow"* by the same measure with which she has lived in comfort and self-exaltation. Compare Isaiah 47:7-9.

Vs. 8 – *"In one day"* – Sudden destruction. Compare in I Thessalonians 5:3, assured confidence before *"sudden destruction cometh".* How characteristic this is of Babylon's history;

- There came a day under Nimrod when the city was suddenly broken up by the confusion of

their language (Gen. 11).

- There came a moment when Nebuchadnezzar was suddenly humbled, *"while the word was in the king's mouth"* (Dan. 4:31). Fortunately he lifted his *"eyes unto heaven"* at last and was restored to his senses and rule.

- There came a day when Belshazzar was so arrogantly abusing the Lord, and *"in that night"* the ancient power of Babylon was crushed (Dan. 5).

Even so the proud fool, thoughtless of God, says *"many years"* I have of *"much goods laid up"* (Lk. 12:16-20). But alas, *"this night"* his soul is required of him. Material possessions are not wrong in themselves. But when they minister to our pride and become our hope and cause us to forget God, our love of them becomes the root of all evil. Compare in Proverbs 29:1, *"He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy"*;

- *"Often reproved"* – And ignoring these reproofs.

- *"Suddenly destroyed"* – When at last Babylon's judgment comes, it comes with greatest emphasis on greatest suddenness

Rev 18:9 And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning,
Rev 18:10 Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.
Rev 18:11 And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more:

(18:8, 10, 17, 19).

- *"Without remedy"* – Count how many times the phrase *"no more"* in vs. 21-23. Note all coming to stunning silence in vs. 22-23.

Consider how the Lord has spoken and will not forget. This *"great Babylon"* will most certainly come up *"in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath"* (16:19). Of the unrepentant wicked the Lord keeps careful track. And they will indeed drink to the dregs the cup *"of the fierceness of His wrath".* Yet in contrast there is blessed forgiveness and forgetfulness for those who believe in Jesus Christ.

18:9-20 – Mourning Babylon's Fall

Vs. 9-10 – *"The kings of the earth"* mourn.

Rev 18:12 The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble,
Rev 18:13 And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men.
Rev 18:14 And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.
Rev 18:15 The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,

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Vs. 11-16 – *"The merchants of the earth"* mourn.

Vs. 11 – Note that their mourning is not for the city or people involved, but only that *"no man buyeth their merchandise any more".* Only that their means of wealth is gone. Their concern is purely selfish. It is the difference of serving self through the lives of others, rather than serving others through our lives.

Vs. 14 – Note their dashed hopes only in the material things of earth and their complete disregard for the God who gave it all. It is a picture of man stripped of every earthly prop, revealing the root rot of a dependence running no deeper than mere outward treasures and pleasures. Such

Rev 18:16 And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!
Rev 18:17 For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off,
Rev 18:18 And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city!
Rev 18:19 And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.
Rev 18:20 Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.
Rev 18:21 And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.

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shallow-rooted trees blow over in big storms. Compare vs. 19.

Vs. 17-19 – *"All the company in ships"* mourn.

<u>18:20-24</u> – The Finality of Her Fall.

Vs. 20 – *"God hath avenged you on her"* – Heaven's martyrs can at last rejoice in justice done on the enemy of God and saints.

Vs. 21 – *"A great millstone"* – A picture of finality!

Rev 18:22 And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee;
Rev 18:23 And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.
Rev 18:24 And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

Like a great weight forever removed from earth. Compare the like symbolism of Jeremiah 51:61-64.

Vs. 23 – Consider how the same absence of any candle or lamp is said of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 22:5 as well, but there for very different reasons than here.

Consider the contrast in no more the happy sounds of bride and bridegroom here, while the *"blessed"* gathering to the Lord of His redeemed is all about *"the Marriage Supper of the Lamb",* which is coming right up in the next chapter (19:9). There all are bidden to *"be glad and rejoice"* (19:7).

Ponder Points

Do we have reference here to a literal city? Or is this rather some concept of a universal political/ commercial entity? Is this speaking of the entire succession of human empires, all combining to form the impressive statue of Nebuchadnezzar's dream? That statue was the image of a man, the ultimate of human exaltation, yet it described the summation of God-rejecting human empires crushed upon Christ's return (Dan. 2:44; Matt. 21:44). Yet note that several times the word "city" is used in this portion (17:18; 18:10 & 18). And God's prophecy speaks of Babylon as forever uninhabited by people, only by demons and birds, as if an actual location. And very tangible terms of material wealth are used in describing the end of its commerce in vs. 12-15. Actual sounds and sights and events are to be *"no more"* in vs. 22-23. All seems to suggest an actual location, together with the larger image of a universal system of human rule. Could this refer to an actual rebuilt Babylon between the rivers?

Consider the history of Babylon, the city;

- Begun by Nimrod, *"the beginning of his kingdom was Babel"* (Gen. 10). "Babel" in Hebrew is "Babylon" in Greek.

- Rose to the height of its power under Nebuchadnezzar.
- Fell to the Medo-Persian Empire in 539 B.C.
- Her famous wall was partially destroyed in 514 B.C. while crushing a revolt there. Still inhabited 25 years after defeat.
- Wall and temples were destroyed in 478 B.C.
- The city was completely razed by Alexander of Greece in 330 B.C., though still partially inhabited following this two centuries later.
- With time the ruins became the hide-out of outlaws, bringing the need for further demolitions to discourage this.
- Was nearly uninhabited by the end of the 1st century A.D.
- Finally its location was nearly forgotten altogether.

Babylon continued in some measure for centuries after its initial downfall, only gradually becoming completely uninhabited. The demise of the original city can be described more by slow fade than sudden fall. Yet God's prophecies describe her sudden, catastrophic, permanent destruction, associated with final judgments, the city site never

to be inhabited again. *"At the noise of the taking of Babylon the earth is moved…Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed…for every purpose shall be performed against Babylon, to make the land of Babylon a desolation without an inhabitant"* (Jer. 50:46; 51:8 & 29).

It does not seem that this sudden fall has happened yet. Are we to look for an actual rebuilt city on the old site and then a final fall? It would seem so, because the nature of the way God fulfils His prophecies leads to such a conclusion. I am expecting to see the city rebuilt, even as we look for a temple to be rebuilt in Jerusalem. And further, look for the Euphrates to perhaps be made navigable by ocean-going ships, thus making Babylon accessible to *"all the company in ships, and sailors"*. Will global warming provide this? Perhaps transforming the Euphrates from river to harbour? Look for moral decadence to slowly suck most of the western nations down the tubes, apart from the coming ten-nation confederacy around old Rome. Consider how the Arab nations still hold the jugular vein of oil in their hand. Islam united would put old Babylon right at the centre of it, which could so quickly and easily become a most powerful commercial centre, with all the world flowing to it. Impossible? Patience my brother. Just wait a bit.

"And I saw heaven opened,
and behold a white horse;
and He that sat upon him
was called Faithful and True,
and in righteousness
He doth judge and make war"

(Revelation 19:11)

Class 17 – Revelation 19

Rev 19:1 And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:

We have been wading through the accounts of God's judgments, and the going has indeed been long and heavy. But from the opening of this chapter the change is distinct. From here on out it is mostly all rejoicing and victory. The judgments upon earth have ended, leaving a smoking, stinking mess, with all eyes now on heaven in trembling anticipation of what is to come, of *He who* is to come.

Chapter 19 – Christ's Coming

19:1-6 – Alleluia Chorus

Vs. 1 – *"After these things"* – After the complete and final fall of Babylon in all of its forms, both religious and political, and after the completion of God's judgments poured out upon earth, it was then that John heard a great noise of a mighty multitude in heaven shouting *"Alleluia"!* (hälăl = praise, and jä or yä a shortened form of Jehovah, meaning in Hebrew, "praise the Lord"). Four times we find this

Rev 19:2 For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.
Rev 19:3 And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.
Rev 19:4 And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.

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exultant word in the first six verses here. In fact, four times the word is found in all of the N.T., and all of them right here in celebration of God's judgments completed and Christ's appearance imminent. The heavenly celebration begins and ends with *alleluia!* (vs. 1 & 6). If ever there is a time in all of earth's history fit for praise it will be at this point.

Vs. 1-3 – Note that the basis of God glorified and honoured is the righteous nature of His severe judgments upon men. The cry of God's martyrs (6:10) will finally be answered at that point.

Vs. 4 – The 24 elders and 4 beasts join in the happy praise. As we have seen before, when the shouting of glory begins the jubilation ascends as others join in, rising here to greatest crescendo! Even as the Psalms rise in alleluias out the end of the book, ascending finally to *"let every thing that hath breath*

Rev 19:5 And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.
Rev 19:6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

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praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD [Heb. halleluiah]".

Vs. 5-6 – Another voice from the throne calls all to join in praise of God. And in response the heavenly multitude speak again. Now the overwhelming power of their combined voice is beyond John's ability to describe in a simple word. It is like a vast throng of people speaking in unison he says, and yet at the same time it is like the thunderous roaring of a massive force of water, and still yet it is like a rolling boom of continuous thunder. All contributing to a symphony of momentous power and volume and combined exuberance of this joint expression of praise to God. While the unredeemed below are united in rage, imagining *"a vain thing against the LORD",* the redeemed above are united in praise, shouting *"alleluia"* to the Lord. Both throngs are where they want to be.

Rev 19:7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.
Rev 19:8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

After the pattern of Jehoshaphat going to battle in II Chronicles 20:21, the singing begins even before the battle. The outcome is as good as history through faith in the sure promise of God.

19:7-10 – *"Marriage Supper of the Lamb"*

Vs. 7-8 – The great heavenly multitude now make announcement of the marriage supper of the Lamb. Jesus Christ is that Lamb, the Groom, and the church is described in the N.T. as the bride of Christ (II Cor. 11:2). She is called *"His wife"* here. Thus it appears the marriage union has already taken place, with the wedding supper or feast now announced. The Lord will come for the church after the pattern of a traditional Jewish marriage, involving three phases;

- Betrothal – The legal union of the couple. A picture of the fixed, forever relation of believers with Jesus Christ from the moment of their salvation, but without the togetherness. In this present age God is

Rev 19:9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

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completing the bride as souls are saved and added to the church.

- Procession – On the wedding night the bridegroom goes to the house of the bride to receive her to himself and lead her to his father's house. This pictures the Rapture of the church, when Jesus comes to take to Himself all true believers of this current age.

- Wedding feast – Usually at the house of the groom's father. This perhaps begins with Christ's return to His Millennial kingdom.

Vs. 9 – *"And he said unto me . . ."* – We are not told who speaks here, though as we see in vs. 10 it is obviously not God. This seems to be an angel, perhaps the same one instructing John to write elsewhere in this book (14:13). This one proclaims the blessedness of those given entrance to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Every true believer in Jesus Christ will be there. How very potent God's warnings of exclusion from that happy place. Compare;

Rev 19:10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

- Matthew 22:1-14 – Christ's parable of a king's wedding feast for his son. *"Cast him* [the one unprepared] *into outer darkness"* where there is *"weeping and gnashing of teeth".*

- Matthew 25:1-13 – Five foolish virgins excluded. *"They that were ready went in with Him to the marriage: and the door was shut"!*

Vs. 10 – John is perhaps so overwhelmed with the nature of the revelations that he fell at this messenger's feet in worship. And the angel immediately reacted with *"See thou do it not"*. Literally something like "Beware! No!" Compare 22:8-9. Now remember when John fell in a similar way before Jesus Christ in chapter 1 (vs. 17). John was not forbidden there as here. Why? Because Jesus, as God, accepts the worship of men. Indeed when God *"bringeth in the first begotten into the world, He saith, 'And let all the angels of God worship Him'…But unto the Son He saith, 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever'"* (Heb. 1:6, 8).

Rev 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

Consider the believer's growing blessedness;

- One is blessed to find salvation in Christ.
- It is a blessed life to live for Christ.
- Yet still it is *"far better"* to die *"and to be with Christ"* (Phil. 1:23).
- And then, when all believers are at last brought into fullest fellowship in the Father's house it is all *alleluias!!*

19:11-16 – Christ's Return

Vs. 11 – At last it was given to John to see that crowning event of all events. He saw heaven opened and Jesus Christ returning to earth upon a white horse, the fulfilment of *reams* of divine prophesies! Here are a few among hundreds we could list;

Ps. 2:6-9; 24:7-10; Isa. 9:6-7; Jer. 23:5-6; Dan. 2:44-45; 7:13-14; Zech. 12:9-10; 14:1-9; Matt. 24:29-31; 25:31; Lk. 21:25-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:10-11; I Thess. 2:19, 3:13, 5:23; II Thess. 1:7-10, 2:8; Jude 14-15; Rev. 1:7, 2:25, 3:3, 16:15, 22:7, 12, 20.

Many portions express His *glory* in His coming;

- Matthew 16:27 – *"For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father".*
- Matthew 24:30 – *"The Son of Man coming…with power and great glory".*
- Matthew 25:31 – *"The Son of Man shall come in His glory".*

Some portions confirm Christ's *personal identity*;

- Acts 1:10-11 – *"<u>This</u> <u>same</u> <u>Jesus</u> shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go".*
- I Thessalonians 4:16 – *"<u>The</u> <u>Lord</u> <u>Himself</u> shall descend from heaven".*

His physical *visibility* in His coming is expressed;

- Matthew 24:30 – *"Then shall all the tribes of the earth…see the Son of man coming in the clouds".*
- Revelation 1:7 – *"Every eye shall see Him".*

Here is the great event of God's entire programme for man, as literal and actual as Christ's first coming. *This is really going to happen folks!!* Question – Can anyone fairly claim to believe the Bible and at the same time disbelieve the actual,

Rev 19:12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.
Rev 19:13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.
Rev 19:14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

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literal, physical, visible 2nd coming of Jesus Christ?

Vs. 11 – *"A white horse"* – This perhaps after the Roman practice of military generals returning victorious from battle. Such victors would enter the city of Rome on a white horse, a sign of triumph. But see how Jesus comes *to* the great final battle on a white charger, for His victory is a foregone conclusion! It is already recorded in the Book.

Note the *names* of Jesus in His coming;

- *"Faithful and true"* (vs. 11) – Expressing His character.
- *"The Word of God"* (vs. 13) – Expressing His function.
- *"King of kings and Lord of lords"* (vs. 16) – Expressing His pre-eminence. *"Who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords"* (I Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14).

Rev 19:15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

Rev 19:16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

Note the *expressive pictures* of Jesus Christ;

- He comes as the righteous *"Judge to make war"* (vs. 11). In contrast to His first coming to seek and to save the lost, not breaking even a bruised reed.

- He comes with *"eyes…as a flame of fire"* (vs. 12). Again, as in 1:14, expressing penetrating awareness and piercing judgment. As the refiner's fire (Mal. 3) consuming all dross.

- He comes crowned with many crowns (vs. 12). His supreme, unquestioned right to reign.

- He comes with His *"vesture dipped in blood"* (vs. 13). If His blood, then His sacrifice for the redeemed is suggested. More likely it will be the blood of His enemies, expressing His consuming judgment in His return. Compare again that blood-spattered image of Him in Isaiah 63, striding from His wine-press work in Bozrah.

- He comes with His following *"armies…clothed in fine linen, white and clean"* (vs. 14). Christ's bride, the church, is described in similar terms in vs. 8.

- He comes with a sword *"out of His mouth"* (vs. 15), with which to *"smite the nations",* all gathered at Armageddon. With the sword of His word, He who spoke creation into existence only needs to speak and the armies of earth melt away in a moment. Compare 1:16, 2:12 &16.

- This is the One who will rule or shepherd the earth with a *"rod of iron"* (2:27; Ps. 2:9).

- He comes to tread *"the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God"* (vs. 15). This again is the same image we saw in 14:19:20.

So the Lord will at last return in victory and blessing, yet in terrible judgment. Every move of God always involves His love and joy in blessing, as well as His judgment. Again, the same Flood that destroyed the corrupt world of Noah's day also lifted Noah and family, transporting them to a renewed world, purged of the influences of wicked mankind. Our Lord in fact returns to two suppers, the supper of blessing in *"the marriage supper of the Lamb"* and

Rev 19:17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;

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the supper of cursing in *"the supper of the great God"*, or "the great supper of God". He comes *"to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe"* (II Thess. 1:10), yet He comes with sickle in hand to fill the winepress of the fierceness of His almighty wrath, *"in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (II Thess. 1:8). All we who have found life in Him *"were but dead men before my lord the king; yet didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table"* (II Sam. 19:28). And what of you of reader? Where will your soul be in that great day?

19:17-21 – Earthly Opponents Crushed

The Lord returns to the great final war, which will already be raging around Palestine, and house-to-house in the city of Jerusalem (Zech. 14:2). The armies of earth will have been drawn together by the combined influence of Satan, Antichrist, the False Prophet, and demons (16:12-16). Yet all those gathered in opposition to the Lord will come to their end in a moment upon Christ's return.

Vs. 17 – An angel calls all birds of prey to gather upon the dead bodies resulting from the destruction of the vast armies of earth. This call to God's *"supper"* has a bit of a sardonic flavour, reminiscent of the Lord's derision in Psalm 2 as He looks upon little man so given to his aggressive rage *"against the LORD, and against His Anointed".* Previews of this supper are well-rooted in God's ancient prophecies as well (Ezek. 39:17-20; Zeph. 1:7; Matt. 24:28; Luke 17:37).

This "supper" marks a point of such supreme sadness. It has been the Lord's grace throughout the ages to willingly invite fallen man into communion with Himself. The experience of Saul's grandson Mephibosheth illustrates this (II Sam. 9:7ff). Being a son of Jonathan who was dead, Mephibosheth was a likely heir to the throne of Israel. But David was the Lord's appointed and anointed king. Under normal circumstances this would mean threat upon Mephibosheth's life, he being a danger to David's rule, a potential gathering point of the populace. This is why Mephibosheth was in hiding, until revealed by Saul's old servant Ziba. But the surprise was that David was not looking to curse Saul's house but to bless. Instead of the expected death, David gave Mephibosheth the joy and honour of ever after eating with David at his

own table. Mephibosheth becomes a picture of us. Rather than the eternal death we are so worthy of at the King's hand, we have been granted the grace of a place of honour and privilege, eating always at my King's own table. From goner to grace! From utterly "undone" to utterly uncondemned! Compare in Psalm 23, *"Thou* [even the LORD Himself!] *hast prepared a table before me".* With the words of the Shulamite in Song of Solomon we marvel that the King of kings Himself *"brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love*"!! (Song of Sol. 2:4). I, as God's own child, will eat at His table because He *wants* me, even *me!* Yet, as with Mephibosheth, my greatest good fortune really comes of my relation to the one the Father loves, because I stand with Jesus and He with me, rather than a product of my own lovability. That the most lordly of all would love the most lowly of all! That the most holy would love the most unholy! That *He* would be knocking at *my* door (3:20)! *Oh the unspeakable grace of God!!*

BUT the great and stunning wonder and sadness of it is that *not all who are bidden will come!* As those in Christ's parable (Lk. 14:16-24), some who were invited to the feast were so foolishly distracted by their things. And so God must set another table! Even now through the scope of God's prophecy we

can see that table being spread as well. From of old comes the Lord's warning of His ultimate judgment upon rejecters in scattering their remains upon the land as animal dung (Deut. 28:26; Jer. 7:32-34; 15:1-4; 16:4; 19:7; 25:30-33; 34:17-20; Ezek. 39:17-20). Quite common indeed is God's prophetic threat that He would *"give your bodies for meat to the birds and the beasts".* This the Lord did in a measure with wicked King Ahab (I Ki. 22:37-38), and more completely with Jezebel, the evil force behind that godless king (II Ki. 9:30-37). This is what Jesus meant as well when in the context of His return He said *"for wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles* [or vultures] *be gathered together"* (Matt. 24:28). Oh my, does that not play havoc with our humanitarian sensitivities! God turns proud man to manure! Could anybody wish this upon son or daughter, father or mother, relative or friend? Do you sense urgency arising in your heart toward the unsaved? Do you see the pleading, persuasive tone such a vision might add to your witness?

"Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision" (Joel 3:14).

Vs. 18 – Notice how God is status-blind. From kings to slaves to horses, all consumed together at the Great Supper of God. His judgment will be the great

Rev 19:18 That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.
Rev 19:19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

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equalizer (6:15-17). There will be no escaping of the lofty generals in their air-conditioned offices of the outcome of their foolish decisions while the soldiers on the ground are consumed. No unfair punishment of pawns, while the big boys behind it all go free. In vs. 18 the armies are dealt with. In vs. 20-21 the kings, False Prophet, Antichrist, and all others are handled appropriately as well. And then finally in 20:1-3 Satan himself is cast to the bottomless pit.

Vs. 19-20 – This is indeed *"the battle of that great day of God Almighty"* mentioned in 16:14. Daniel 11 seems to indicate that this battle comes together in its original impetus as nation against nation, in-fighting that will develop between various segments of the beast's final world empire. But then, as Jesus Christ appears in power and glory, these gathered armies will know the reason for their presence there, will forget their differences, and will join in united rage against Christ their common enemy.

Rev 19:20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

The verb *"gathered together"* is passive. John saw them all "having been led together", pointing to Satan's purpose and push behind this whole confab. Though many and varied will be the reasons in the hearts of the men involved, Satan's single, subtle purpose behind all is stated here, *"to make war against Him that sat on the horse".*

N.B. what is oddly missing in this greatest battle of all earthly battles. We see nothing of the usual account of the clash, marshalling and movements of troop, the shifting tides of the progression of battle. Why? Because there will be no progression of battle! The account turns quite simply from *confrontation* to *clean-up*, from vs.19 to vs. 20. It will be over as quickly as Jesus appears! Beast and False Prophet are *"cast alive into the lake of fire",* not even passing through death. Appropriately these two appear to be the first inhabitants of this fearful place of final judgment. The unsaved dead of all ages are presently in hell's torments (Lk. 16). But the lake of fire appears to be a different place,

Rev 19:21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

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separate also from the bottomless pit, as we see in this context. Jesus suggests in Matthew 25:41 that this place of eternal fire was prepared especially for *"the devil and his angels".* At the final judgment all of the lost will be eternally condemned to this fiery lake (20:11-15). And note in 20:10 that when Satan at last joins them after 1000 years, *"the beast and the false prophet are"* still there. Thus they will not have been annihilated.

Vs. 21 – *"The remnant"* or the rest, the entire army of the wicked, will be together removed, the entire force completely snuffed out, not prevailing in any slightest way against the Lord. It will be the total defeat of man at the very height of his Satan-infused power.

Let it be known to all that this same inspired Bible of God, that speaks so extensively of the wonderful grace of our loving God, of salvation available to all, and of a Saviour who so graciously died in the place of sinners, this same inspired Bible speaks with equal clarity of the certainty of judgment upon all

who reject or ignore God's grace. This same word of God declares so plainly that those who spurn the God of mercy will know His judgment without mercy. The same event of greatest hope and celebration for the saved, the return of Jesus Christ to earth, is that event of greatest terror for the unsaved! How foolish those who rest on portions of God's Word speaking of God's love to the neglect of portions dealing with His righteous judgment. Both aspects are equally inspired and divinely interwoven together. They must be taken together if we would know the true God of the Bible. This present church age is the age of grace, an age of suspended judgment. The tribulation period to come, while continuing to reveal God's grace, will be as notable for His judgment and wrath poured out as this day is for His grace and patience. In that day all mankind will no longer question God's resolve to bring every evil work into judgment, to bring His wrath upon those who spurn His grace. His grace is matchless. His good gifts are incomparable in blessedness. Yet His righteous judgments are matchless in their horror as well, incomparable in their most supreme dreadfulness! How happy to be in Christ, leaning on the everlasting arms. How blessed to be in His hand, to know He is *for* me and thus who can be against me? How fearful to fall into those same hands of the living God, *outside of*

Christ, to know in that moment that none can shield from God's searing righteous wrath (Heb. 10:31).

Ponder Points

Consider things "white" in Revelation (the word "white" found 18 times);

1:14 – Christ's **hair** white like wool, as snow

2:17 – White **stone** to overcomers at Pergamos

3:4 – *"A few"* worthy at Sardis to walk with Christ *"in white"* (**clothes**)

3:5 – Sardis overcomers **clothed** in white

3:18 – Laodiceans bidden to buy white **clothes**

4:4 – 24 elders **clothed** in white

6:11 – White **robes** given to martyrs under altar

7:9, 13 – Countless throng *"arrayed in white **robes**"*

7:14 – Made **robes** *"white in the blood of the Lamb"*

14:14 – Christ the Reaper on white **cloud**

15:6 – Angels with bowls **clothed** in *"pure and white linen"*

19:8 – Bride given to *"be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white…the righteousness of saints"* (**clothes**)

19:11, 14 – Christ and host on white **horses**

20:11 – Great white **throne**

Hair, stone, robes, cloud, horses, throne

Those *clothed* in white;

- Those worthy at Sardis (3:4)
- Overcomers at Sardis (3:5)
- 24 elders (4:4)
- Martyrs under the altar (6:11)
- Innumerable multitude (7:13-14)
- Angels with bowl judgments (15:6)
- Bride of Christ (19:8)

"And whosoever
was not found written
in the book of life
was cast into
the lake of fire"

(Revelation 20:15)

Class 18 – Revelation 20

Rev 20:1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.
Rev 20:2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,
Rev 20:3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

In chapter 19 we saw Christ's return to the earth, where His first order of business will be the battle of Armageddon. In this chapter we see His earthly kingdom established.

Chapter 20

20:1-3 – Satan Bound

Notice how this chapter begins with the word *"and"*. How significant this insignificant word becomes in this context. This little word *"and"* is found 34 times in 19:11-21, and another 34 in chapter 20. The Lord is obviously expressing progression or sequence through these many connecting words. It is the way we would relate a running consecutive

narrative, such as;

"I rode my bike to the shop *and* I ran over a snake *and* it flipped around *and* bit my tire *and* I got a puncture *and* that is why I forgot to buy bread!"

Each event naturally follows the previous. Have a good look at the verse beginnings in chapters 19-20. Most verses begin with *"and".* We simply have no valid reason to believe that the events of chapter 20 should not logically follow the events of chapter 19. The simplicity of normal language usage makes it clear. Can there be any doubt that we are resisting the clear and simple words of God to see it otherwise? Upon His return to the earth the Lord will deal appropriately with that great world leader, Antichrist, his False Prophet, and the kings of the earth and their armies. *And* then Satan himself, the one behind much of the mess to which Christ will return, will be completely removed from all earthly influence for 1000 years (it is implied that the demons will also be included). *"And"* then following the obvious order of events related here, Jesus Christ will reign for *"a thousand years".* So of course Satan is not currently bound as some insist (I Pet. 5:8). This only takes place after Jesus returns to Armageddon. Seems to me it is quite simple to understand, unless a man is determined to make it otherwise. It is this simple approach to reading the

Bible, and more particularly this portion, that makes us "premillennial", believing that Jesus Christ will return "pre" or before His "millennial" or 1000-year reign. Compare other portions, expressing the same idea of Christ's return followed by His kingdom;

- In Psalm 2 the sequence is the same; the angry nations are gathered in rage against the Lord, followed by the Lord troubling them in His angry response, followed by His King/Son set up on Zion and inheriting the earth.

- In Daniel 2:44-45 the Rock (Christ) from heaven comes and crushes the kingdoms of earth and then fills the earth with the "mountain" of Christ's kingdom.

- Daniel 7 describes the *"Son of Man"* given *"dominion, and glory, and a kingdom"* involving *"all people, nations, and languages"*, and this after man's rule is *"destroyed, and given to the burning flame".*

- Zechariah 14:1-9 shows Christ's return to Armageddon, followed by clear description of the bright changes when *"the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day."*

<u>20:4-6</u> – 1000-Year Reign

Rev 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

John now contrasts those who will be resurrected before His kingdom with those who will not be. It appears all who are resurrected at that point will have some part in ruling.

Vs. 4 – John saw thrones and individuals seated on them, individuals to whom responsibility to judge was given. He further clarifies that these are those who stood for Christ on earth, and thus were beheaded during the tribulation. The Greek word used here for how these will be killed is an interesting technical point. *Pelekus* in the Greek means "axe". A "pelican" gets its name from its axe-shaped bill. The word used here is the verb form, *pelekidzo*, to axe or to cut off the head with an axe. A glimpse into the nasty execution methods of Antichrist's regime.

These having been killed in this way during the great tribulation are not the only ones who will be resurrected in that day, nor are they the only ones

Rev 20:5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.
Rev 20:6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

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who will reign during Christ's Millennial Kingdom. But the Lord separates them out for personal promise and encouragement. Why? Because part of the purpose of this book is to stir to courage those who will actually see those indescribable days fulfilled…*on them!* And so the Lord graciously writes to strengthen them with hope. He never neglects to encourage those who dare to stand true for Him. Would you remain true to Christ if you knew it would mean the axe? If it would mean the same for the children of your love as well? And that you might have to watch them be so handled? How easy it will be in that day to rationalize one's way out of this by some devious reasoning.

The promise is here that these courageous souls will be made alive (raised) and will reign with Christ 1000 years, with others who will be raised to reign at that time as vs. 6 indicates. All the redeemed who have died, both before and during the tribulation period, will be involved in this *"first*

resurrection" and will not experience the *"second death".* And again, these all will be involved in ministering and ruling in some measure with Christ in His kingdom.

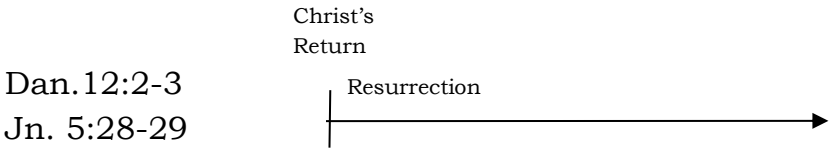
Now this will not be the *"first resurrection"* in the sense of the first *ever*, for of course *Jesus Christ* has already been raised from death. And then the *church saints* will be raised in the Rapture before the tribulation. And then the *two witnesses* in chapter 11 will be resurrected to life. The term here expresses the 1st resurrection to life before Christ's kingdom, as opposed to the 2nd resurrection to the 2nd death after Christ's kingdom (vs. 12-13). All the redeemed of all time will be raised before Christ's kingdom to enter into the joy and splendour of their Lord, while the souls of the unsaved dead remain in the torments of hell until after the 1000-year reign (vs. 5). They will then be resurrected and assigned to the 2nd death or lake of fire at the last.

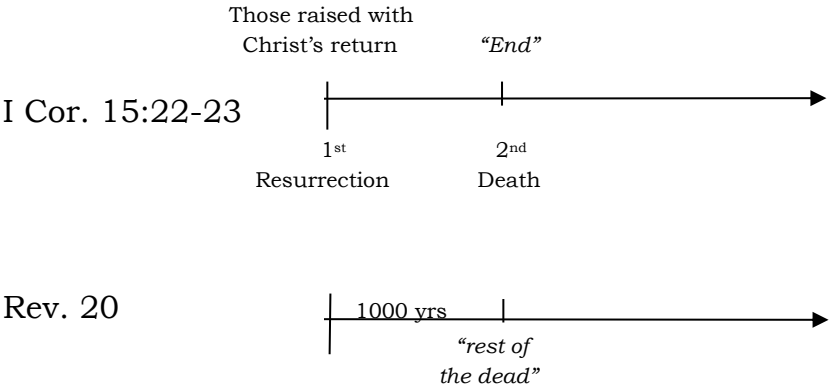
Folks go wrong on this matter of the resurrection at portions such as John 5:28-29 & Daniel 12:2-3. Such portions seem to indicate that there will be only one general resurrection of saved and lost to blessing and condemnation. It is never stated in these portions that both saved and lost are raised at the same time. And Revelation 20 now brings the

needed clarity, that there is in fact a millennium between the resurrection of the blessed and that of those condemned. In the same way O.T. prophecies seem to imply Christ's 1st coming and His kingdom fulfilled at the same time, thus the earnest expectation of the disciples (Acts 1:6). But the unrevealed mystery was that this current church age was to be slotted in between Christ's 1st coming and His return to His kingdom. Compare the resurrection stages in I Corinthians 15:22-23;

- Christ the firstfruits.
- Then *"those that are His at His coming"*. The 1st resurrection.
- Then *"the end"*. The 2nd resurrection to 2nd death.

Thus increasingly greater detail is given;





Woe to the one born once, but dying twice! Blessed the one born twice, but dying once! The first death is momentary, perhaps even painless. The second death is eternal, continual torments!

Now six times we find the time element of *"a thousand years"* in this portion, in every verse from vs. 2 to vs. 7. This is the only place in the Bible where the actual length of Christ's earthly kingdom is given. The belief arising from a normal reading of this portion, that 1000 years simply means 1000 years, is sometimes called "chiliasm", from Latin and Greek "chiliad" (kil ē′ ad), meaning 1000.

20:7-10 – Satan Released

Satan's release (with his demon host) at the end of the 1000-year reign of Christ on earth will bring about God's final lesson on the nature of sin. The

Rev 20:7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,
Rev 20:8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.
Rev 20:9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.
Rev 20:10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

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millennial era will be without Satan's influence upon earth, and with near perfect environment and swiftest justice on every budding of evil. It will be a time of little evil influence from outside of a man. Thus the only real source of evil will be in man himself, arising from his own sin nature. Yet with Satan's release, great will be the ground-swell of a following after Him from among those born within that millennial era. This unsaved multitude, though having lived in outward submission to Christ's righteous rule, will yet be without the transformation of regeneration within. And therefore Satan's release will draw them out to the expression of what and whose they really are. The Lord by this means will prove some things;

- That our environment and the devil are not

ultimately to blame for a man's choice for evil. Even under the most favourable circumstances and outward influences unsaved man falls in with evil when given opportunity. The *"desperately wicked"* nature of the human heart will be on display through this final rebellion.

- That environment, no matter how perfect, cannot change a soul. Every individual must experience the core transformation which only regeneration can provide. Clear will be the lesson then, that without God's gracious work in a soul, man in sin is incurably wicked and without hope. Indeed, *"ye <u>must</u> be born again"!* The Lord is right after all. The true salvation or regeneration of a soul is worlds apart from mere outward religious conformity.

- Satan's inveterate wickedness is impossible to reform.

- That God's eternal judgment upon the wicked is just.

It appears these choosing to follow Satan will quickly come together into an organized army. Details of how this could develop and human personalities involved are not given. The shocking

factor is the *vast number* (*"as the sand of the sea"*) choosing Satan over the Lord after having known Christ's perfect rule. As Satan's army again surrounds Jerusalem, the Lord will make quick and final work of their fiery destruction, with Satan finally and forever cast to eternal torment in the lake of fire.

Sin will come to its final end at this point as well. *"To make an end of sins…and to bring in everlasting righteousness"* was the way the angel described God's ultimate purpose to Daniel (Dan. 9:24). Every enemy will at last be put under the feet of Jesus, *"the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death"* (II Cor. 15:26).

The *"Gog and Magog"* mentioned in vs. 8 must not lead us to associate this battle with the one described in Ezekiel 38-39. The circumstances there differ from here. Gog and Magog properly refer to areas north of the Black and Caspian Seas. Satan's followers from this area will join a great human host from all the earth.

20:11-15 – Great White Throne

Coming now to the end of the Millennial Kingdom era, we are confronted with the final judgment of man.

Rev 20:11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.
Rev 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

Vs. 11 – John sees a great white throne and One sitting upon it. This One is of such surpassing majesty that earth and heaven flee from before Him (21:1). And together with earth and heaven will flee away man's every trite, belittling, foolish view of God. All will then understand Him as He really is, and every vestige of human tendency to represent the Lord and His things in cute little ways will be no more. All standing now before Him, naked and exposed, with no place to hide at opportunity's end!

Vs. 12 – The purpose of this great white throne judgment is to judge the dead. John is given a vision of this vast sea of humanity standing before the throne. We know from the context that these are the *unsaved* dead, those not raised in the first resurrection prior to the Millennium. The redeemed were raised there, church saints before the tribulation and all other saints at Christ's return to earth. Again, *all* dead believers will be resurrected before Christ's earthly kingdom. And all who are

not raised in that 1st resurrection will be raised at this point, to be assigned to the 2nd death. Either it is the 1st resurrection or the 2nd death for man. Thus the fact that these dead have not been raised before this is evidence that these are the unsaved having no eternal life. How solemn the scene before this throne! Consider some things in the hearts of every one of these before that throne;

- *Fear* before the righteous Creator.
- Clear awareness of the *rightness* of their being there.
- Seething *rage* at that One seated as Judge before them. Hatred of His holiness. Eyes wide with fear, yet narrowed with rage.
- Every pretence stripped away, all feigned ignorance or interest cast aside. No need for such charades anymore.

Not even the firmness of the fleeing earth will be under their feet then. Though they wish for opportunity to destroy their righteous Judge, all will be fully aware of the proven futility of all such efforts. They have had their day and made their attempt under Satan's leadership, and all such efforts have now come to this!

"Small and great" John saw standing there, coming from all walks of life, from every degree of human greatness. And *"standing",* John says. Not sitting or waiting idly, but standing, on the very verge of their final, eternal sentence! *How utterly ominous the occasion!* Indeed the most sombre moment in all of human existence!

Their judgment will be based on the things recorded *"in the books"*, and the books are now open before the Judge of all. One of those books is *"the book of life",* which we have before considered. This is the roll or record of those who are saved, having believed and received the free gift of eternal life. These will be found before this throne because their names are not found in this book! The book of life will confirm the fact that all who are there *should* be there. Is your name in that book? By God's grace mine is. Not because of the kind of person I am, but because of the only Saviour I have embraced.

Then there are books of works (vs. 12). Clearly these are God's record of the deeds of men. Compare His judgment of the sheep and goats based on their deeds in Matthew 25:31-46. If a soul refuses to find refuge in Jesus Christ, refusing to believe upon Him and the adequacy of His work on Calvary, then that one must be judged by his own

Rev 20:13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

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unrighteous works. And by these he must certainly be condemned, for all have fallen short. *"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness"* (Rom. 4:5). Nobody is saved by works, though all are judged by their works. All who are saved are saved by grace alone through faith alone. But our works are obviously important to God. For they are recorded by Him and are brought up in every scene of judgment, whether of saved or unsaved (II Cor. 15:10-11). His record of our works has to do with degrees of reward in heaven, and probably with degrees of punishment in hell as well. Thus men will be judged according to their works as recorded by God in His books of works. And at which resurrection this takes place, either 1st or 2nd, depends on whether one's name is in the other book, the book of life.

Vs. 13 – The resurrection of the unsaved dead is described here. As in the 1st resurrection so in this resurrection, physical bodies are raised and joined with souls. The resurrection of the dead from the

Rev 20:14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.
Rev 20:15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

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sea confirms that *all* the dead will be raised, regardless of the condition of their bodies. God has no problem reconstituting disintegrated bodies, even though consumed and scattered by scavenger activity. There are those who frown upon cremation, and highlight burial as the only appropriate way to deal with dead believers. But perhaps we need not worry about making too much work for God at the resurrection. Burial does not succeed in keeping all body materials in one place either.

Though we are not specifically told, the indication is that there are no saved at this final resurrection and judgment. There is nothing said about reward, only punishment here. This will incorporate all the unsaved dead of all ages, including those punished with death during the Millennium, and at the end of it in Satan's final revolt.

"Every man" – Though dealt with as a group, the Lord deals with every man individually, both in rewards and punishments. He never loses sight of

the individual.

Vs. 14-15 – *"Death and hell were cast..."* – In other words, all the dead reserved in Hades will be cast into the lake of fire at this point. And so both the wicked and the righteous will finally, permanently be assigned to their respective eternal destinies.

Again, what is the basis of this judgment? Their name is *"not found written in the book of life"!* Greatest emphasis here on these books (5 times), in this day when God-rejecting man will finally be brought to book. And do these come to such a fearful, final state because God wished it to be so? No, He is *"not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (II Pet. 3:9). His offer of grace is available to all. Man will receive God's righteous judgment in the 2nd death because he spurned God's gracious gift of eternal life. And this due to a love of sin and hatred of God's righteousness. Therefore all who go to their grave unrepentant will *"have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death"* (21:8).

"Whosoever" – It makes no difference who, whether small or great, for the Lord is no respecter of persons. The *"whosoever believeth"* (Jn. 3:16) and

"whosoever shall call" (Rom. 10:13) of God's grace, holds for God's judgment as well.

Again, this lake is not a place of annihilation, but of eternal torments. The real difficulty folks have with the clarity of Bible teaching on this score has more to do with *accepting* or *believing* what God said than with understanding it. Folks have few struggles understanding or alternative interpretations with the doctrine of heaven, because it is an easy one to believe and proclaim. God's righteousness is unchanging and His justice inflexible, demanding judgment when His grace is rejected.

Oh warn the lost with all clarity and earnestness believer! Tell them of both the goodness and severity of God, with repetitive urgency, with sacrifice to self, at all cost, before it is too late! Endure the shame and scorning and laughing sure to be poured on you. Never was it any different for God's prophets of old.

Ponder Points

Consider some other beliefs concerning Revelation 20 and the millennium;

Postmillennial Belief

- Christ will return at the end (post) of 1000 years.
- Somewhat literal in that this view tends to see the 1000 years as something of an actual 1000-year period.
- This era is anticipated as a golden age when the gospel will at last arise to final triumph, extending to the ends of the earth in influence toward the end of this present age.
- This final glorious era on earth will at last usher in Christ's return.
- It is a rather optimistic perspective that Christ will be made to arise, through the preaching of the gospel, to reign spiritually on earth through the work of His church and spread of the gospel.
- This view was popular at the turn of the last century, took a nasty knock during the world war decades, but has been regaining popularity in more recent years.
- Modern reconstructionism is just refried postmillennialism.

Answers to Postmillennialism

- II Thessalonians 2 relates a decidedly *pessimistic* perspective of apostasy, followed by Antichrist, followed by Christ's return.
- Revelation 19-20 show Christ's return followed in sequence by His 1000-year kingdom, not visa versa.
- The events of Revelation 20 do not appear any more spiritual or less physical and tangible than those of Revelation 19.
- Daniel 2 & 7 describe the actual, earthly, political kingdoms of men suddenly replaced by Christ's.
- There is not the slightest hint in Daniel that the 5th kingdom is any different in tangible, political nature than the 1st four.

Amillennial Belief

- Deny any actual, specific 1000-year period of Christ reigning.
- The 1000 years of Revelation 20 is understood in a non-literal sense, as referring simply to an unspecified, long period of time.
- This view sees Christ's reign only as a

spiritual one in the hearts of believers.

- Amillennialist Abraham Kuyper states that "in Revelation the idea 'thousand' is never taken literally".
    - Though the term "thousand" does not stand on its own anywhere else in Revelation, where is the clear indication that "thousand" is not to be read literally when combined with numbers? 144,000 from Israel (chapter 7)? 12,000 from each tribe? 7000 killed by earthquake in Jerusalem (chapter 11)?
    - And why would we feel led to read *"a thousand two hundred and threescore days"* (1260 days) as something other than 42 months = 3½ years?

Answers to Amillennialism

- The six-count mention of 1000 years in Revelation 20 could scarcely be more underscored, and thus quite conclusive.
- Do we have sufficient reason to read this otherwise?

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Question – How long will Christ reign?

Answer – Forever.

- *"And of His kingdom there shall be no end"* (Isa. 9:7).
- *"And it shall stand forever"* (Dan. 2:44).
- Many other Bible portions express the same.

Question – Does Jesus reign for 1000 years or forever?

Do you see how one might be led to see 1000 years as other than literal? What appears to be an eternal reign in all other kingdom prophecies is limited to 1000 years only here in Revelation 20. So what is the answer? *"A thousand years"* or forever?

Answer – Yes! Both!

While other prophesies relate the forever nature of the Lord's reign after the destruction of human kingdoms, I Corinthians 15:22-23 separates Christ's return from *"the end",* and Revelation 20 then specifies the time from Christ's return to *"the end"* as *"a thousand years".* This period of Christ's reign on earth will be but the prelude to the Lord's eternal reign in the new heavens and earth. The reason for the 1000-year aspect of Christ's reign is
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to allow for some important things that must happen;

- He will subdue all enemies (I Cor. 15:25).
- He will at last swallow up death, man's greatest enemy (I Cor. 15:26, 54; Rev. 20:14; 21:4; Isa. 25:8-9).
- He will fulfil His prophetic promises to the nation of Israel.
- He will display the depth of sin through Satan's release at the end.
- He will show man's desperate need of God's regenerating work.

Only when the Lord Jesus Christ has finished His earth works through His kingdom will His earthly reign be complete. And then what? Is the rule of earth handed back over to proud human domain? *Never again!* Christ will co-rule with the Father ever after, when the kingdom aspects of His reign are complete. *"And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all"* (I Cor. 15:28).

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Have you noticed how little the Lord has to say about the *nature* of Christ's earthly kingdom here in Revelation 20? We find here little more than the fact of it, the length of it, and who is involved. Why? Because the nature of Christ's kingdom is so fully described in the rest of the Bible. Dwight Pentecost once stated, "A larger body of prophetic Scripture is devoted to the subject of the millennium, developing its character and conditions, than any other one subject". How does the Bible describe that coming kingdom of Jesus Christ?

- It will be a kingdom of *peace.* No war, insecurity, crime, killing, or disunity. All united in peace under Christ's firm rule (Isa. 2:4; 9:7; 11:6-9; 65:25; 66:12; Ezek. 28:26; 34:25; Micah 4:3).

- It will be a kingdom of *joy.* The fullness of joy in Christ's presence (Isa. 12:3; 25:8-9; 29:19; 35:10; 51:11; 61:7, 10; Jer. 31:12-14).

- It will be a kingdom of *glory.* Jesus Christ will be fully manifested in His glory. Christ's transfiguration was a glimpse of *"the Son of Man coming in His kingdom",* when *"His face did shine as the sun"* and His clothes were *"white and glistening" "as light" "so as no fuller on earth can white them"* (Matt. 17:2; Mk. 9:3; Lk. 9:29; Ps. 24:7-10; Isa. 24:23;

35:2; 40:5; 60:1ff).

- It will be a kingdom of *righteousness/holiness* (Isa. 11:4-5; Zech. 14:20-21).

- *Full knowledge* of the Lord will pervade. This through the indwelling Spirit in believers (Isa. 2:3; 11:9; 29:24; 59:21; Hab. 2:14).

- The *curse will be removed*. The earth will receive again the abundantly fruitful productivity it lost through man's sin (Isa. 30:23-25; 35:1-2, 7; Ezek. 36:35; Hos. 2:21-22; Amos 9:13).

- All *sickness and deformity will be removed*, for the Master Healer who so displayed Himself in His first coming will be on the throne. Apparently no death as well, except perhaps as judgment upon wilful, unrepentant sin (Isa. 29:18; 35:5-6; Jer. 30:17).

- It will be a world of *happy labour*, not of idleness. Folks will be prosperously involved in administration, agriculture, manufacturing, etc., with sword and spear beaten to ploughshare and pruning hook for labour (Isa. 65:21-22 Amos 9:13).

- Earth's *population will greatly increase*. It seems those who die and thus are raised with

glorified bodies will not be involved in reproduction, but not so those living and entering the Millennial Kingdom with their natural bodies. These are the sheep judged worthy to *"inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"* (Matt. 25:31-40). These will bring children into the world during that golden age without a single hindrance to population growth. But these children will be born in the kingdom with only a single birth, having just as much need to be born again as folks in our current age. Though all who enter the kingdom at the outset will be saved, yet all born in the kingdom will arrive unsaved, and in need of new birth. But saved or no, all will have to live in outward conformity to Christ's righteous kingdom rule. Perfect though their environment be, and convincing though their external lifestyle may be, yet still innumerable will be the rebellious host of unsaved arising after Satan upon His release against the gracious and glorious King of kings.

Class 19 – Revelation 21

Rev 21:1 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.

Chapter 21

21:1-8 – All Things New

As we enter into this 21st chapter of Revelation the key word confronting us is *"new"* – new heaven, earth, and Jerusalem, indeed *"all things new"* (vs. 5).

Vs. 1 – *"A new heaven and a new earth"* – Introduced here is a truly incredible event, taking place after the final judgment of all the wicked at the Great White Throne. Our present atmosphere and earth will pass away, *"the elements"* melted *"with fervent heat"* the Apostle Peter tells us in II Peter 3:10, to be replaced by *"all things new"*. This is no renovation of the old, but a re-creation.

On the Side

How far does this term *"heaven"* go, this that will

pass away and be replaced? Does it include the entire universe? Sun, moon, stars, and galaxies? This would seem to be the case, as there will be no sun and moon in the new heavens (vs. 23; Isa. 60:19-20), and no night there (vs. 25; 22:5), and thus no need of stars from the perspective of the new earth.

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This new creation of heaven and earth should be no surprise to us. God spoke of this change long ago, in fact using these very words *"new heavens"* and *"new earth"*. Isaiah came out the end of his book of prophecy speaking of it (Isa. 65:17-18; 66:22). Compare Psalm 102:25-26; Isaiah 34:4; Matthew 24:35; II Peter 3:13; Hebrews 1:10-12. It is interesting how little we really have in the Bible about the characteristics of the new heaven and earth. Not much more than the few features given here. What do we know more, of landmarks, colours, or shapes? Of vegetation we know only of the tree of life (22:2-3).

Will vegetation be green on that earth? Will the new earth be round? Rotating? How sharp the contrast of this general lack of information on the new heaven and earth compared to the detailed descriptions of the *"new Jerusalem"*, that glorious
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Rev 21:2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
Rev 21:3 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.

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city, with glorious foundations, *"whose Builder and Maker is God"*.

"And there was no more sea" – The vast majority of our present earth is covered by the oceans (about 70%), but the re-created earth will have no seas.

Vs. 2 – Upon his first sight of *"the holy city, new Jerusalem"* John compared it to the beauty of a bride dressed and prepared for her wedding. He will speak much more of this city. But following this initial glimpse his attention was drawn by *"a great voice out of heaven"*.

Vs. 3 – This is the last of some 20 times a great or loud voice is mentioned in Revelation, this one making the greatest of announcements. Compare Isaiah 25:8ff; Revelation 7:17.

"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men" – *"Tabernacle"* speaks of a dwelling place. Note the

emphasis on *"with"* here (3 times). Praise God for that precious little word! It will characterize that day when we will more closely and tangibly be *"His people",* and He our God. Can we even begin to grasp how utterly profound these words? Oh for a mind clear and attentive to fully understand the whole of it, and a tongue adequate to the task of explaining the wonder of it! Throughout man's pilgrimage on this earth it is God who has sought out man's communion and fellowship. And this while man has largely rejected or ignored God's overtures, after making himself the offending party through his sin. God has always been the active pursuer of us. He has been the One sacrificing to make the way. And though God has sought man's presence throughout the ages, of necessity this has always been from a distance, always veiled or shielded. In the old economy the tabernacle and temple were the place set apart for God's dwelling among men. A set-apart tent or building. A set-apart priesthood ministering there. Only those men, and only when they were properly sanctified, and only once a year could they enter the most holy place. Always through veil and cloud of incense. God's points of contact with common man were all brass, describing a basic brazenness in His attitude toward man. God's most tangible presence was when Jesus walked the earth as Emmanuel or "God

with us", so that Jesus could affirm, *"he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father"* (Jn. 14:9). Yet even in Jesus, God's glory was veiled, for Jesus *"took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men"* (Phil. 1:7). There was only one glimpse of Him in His glory, and that only for an isolated few on the Mt. of Transfiguration. Now in this current age there is a sense in which God's presence has come even closer to man through the Spirit's permanent indwelling presence within every believer. Yet still there is a measure of the intangible, untouchable, invisible. Why? Why always the distance, the veils and clouds, the untouchables and intangibles in God's dealing with man? Because of sin my friend! And suddenly I am overwhelmed with the unspeakable tragedy of sin! For it is by our sin that man lost God's closeness from the first in Genesis 3. Yet how equally overwhelming is God's grace! So vile to Him was man's sin that He must cringed away, yet still He sought us, loved us, sacrificed for us! The centuries were required to undo what we have done. Yet it has always been God's purpose to undo it, for those who would have Him. And here now finally, with *"all things new",* sin, sinners, and Satan *are no more!* Wickedness, the wicked, and the wicked one eternally put away at that point. And God through His work of grace will at last be free to dwell *"with*

Rev 21:4 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.

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men", we utterly untarnished by sin then! Here is the grand fruition of His purpose of the ages! No tabernacles, but His very presence among men. Tangible, touchable, visible. A new and profound intimacy with God like never before. Though I have done to Him, against Him, yet still this is where He patiently labours in His grace throughout the ages to bring me! *How unutterably good He is!!* No wonder there is so little focus on the new geography there, folks! *Who cares!?* God's dwelling will be *"with men"!!* Nothing else will matter. Like the simple epitaph on the simple grave-marker in the simple little country graveyard I once saw. Two words engraved there, quietly speaking such incredible volumes. "With Him". That is all. *That is everything!*

Vs. 4 – No more tears, death, sorrow, crying, or pain. Five words stricken from heavenly vocabulary in that day. While vs. 3 is what *shall* be, vs. 4 is what shall *not* be. We will know God's personal tender care in His very presence in that coming day. And in His presence is fullness of joy, and at His right

Rev 21:5 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.
Rev 21:6 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.

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hand an eternity of pleasures. Our pleasures then will not be in the sensual or material so much. Our pleasure will be in His pleasure and presence, and in happy service under His smile. As the Lord's words to Abraham in Genesis 15:1, *"**I** am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward"*. So it will be. Unfortunately the response of many of us is that of Abraham's there, "Lord, what will you give me, seeing I go childless (moneyless, wifeless, hubbyless, houseless, etc.). But in that day we will fully know the meaning of David's words, *"the Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want"* (Ps. 23:1).

And why would God purpose this for man? Why would He pursue us, want our presence, wish to delight in us there? Because of our worth? No! Only because of His gracious goodness. Because that is who He is. Because it is His nature to say, *"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely"* (Hos. 14:4). This is the heart of that One we will know through eternity!

Rev 21:7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.
Rev 21:8 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.

"Behold what manner of love the Father has given unto us that we should be called the sons of God" (I Jn. 3).

Vs. 7-8 – *"He that overcometh"* – Again, an overcomer is not one who makes his life pleasing enough to God to earn salvation. Rather an overcomer is a true believer (I Jn. 5:4-5), one who has overcome sin's condemnation and power through his simple faith in Jesus Christ. We are more than conquerors only *"through Him that loved us"* (Rom. 8:37). Vs. 8 presents the contrast in those characterized by sin rather than by a hatred and forsaking of it, those who have never found deliverance from sin's power in Christ and through the indwelling Spirit. All such will have met their eternal end at the Great White Throne Judgment. Note the same contrast in vs. 27. Our good works are never the ground of eternal salvation, though they can be *evidence* of salvation, or lack of it. One truly saved may fall into sin, but he can no more

Rev 21:9 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.
Rev 21:10 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,

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freely practice sin than a butterfly would comfortably transport himself by crawling. Portions such as I John 3:6-10 show the distinct leaning in the saved soul, and make it clear that true believers do not/cannot continue in sin without both their conscience and their Father dealing with them. "Christians" who continue to have no regard for things sacred to God are likely living a lie. Compare I Corinthians 6:9-11.

21:9-27 – The New Jerusalem

Now begins the greatest abundance of detail on the beauty of that city where God will dwell with men.

Vs. 9-10 – Again it was one of the angels who poured out one of the 7 last plagues who now came and called John to see *"the bride, the Lamb's wife".* As John was called in 17:1 to see *"the great whore"*, which *"is that great city"* of Babylon, so now he is called away to view *"the Lamb's wife"* which is *"that*

Rev 21:11 Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;

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great city, the holy Jerusalem". That this New Jerusalem is described as the Lamb's bride seems to indicate that this city will especially be the dwelling place of the church. It was to the early leaders of the church that Jesus said, *"I go to prepare a place for you",* and this is that place. From the lofty vantage point of a high mountain John was able to see it in all of its splendour, *"descending out of heaven from God".* Compare the same movement in vs. 2. Here is the city Abraham looked for, an actual, literal city, prophetically seen now by John. And what John saw so far excelled any earthly experience of beauty it is as if his vocabulary just could not even cope. Under inspiration of God John attempts to describe a sight beyond comparison for earthly magnificence.

Vs. 11 – *"Having the glory of God"* – It will be ablaze with brilliant light, as Christ on the Mt. of Transfiguration. The impression of the whole is as a great dazzling jewel, as jasper, but crystal. It is the same precious stone John had the impression of when he saw the One sitting on that heavenly throne in chapter 4 (vs. 3). He says it was *"<u>like</u> a*

Rev 21:12 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:

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jasper stone", yet earthly jasper is not crystal or clear like a diamond. Jasper comes in a variety of colours (blues, greens, brass, etc.). It is a stone very costly to man, yet used liberally in the construction of this city. And of course gold will be put under foot in that place of splendour! Imagine the brilliant light of "the glory of God" (vs. 23) flashing through this indescribably beautiful crystal city!

All light there comes from God. The materials of the city merely diffuse the radiance of God's presence there. Even so the believer does not generate the light of Christ, but merely reflects or diffuses the glory and beauty of Christ through a godly life. May we never blur, block, or blaspheme the beam of His radiance through us.

Vs. 12 – Appropriately vs. 12 now begins a series of things in twelves;

- 12 gates on the walls.
- 12 angelic guards at the gates.
- 12 names of Israel's tribes on the gates.

Rev 21:13 On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.
Rev 21:14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

- 12 foundations of the wall (vs. 14).
- 12 names of apostles in the foundations. How many apostles are there? Do not let modern apostolics mess up your count my friend.
- 12 thousand furlongs the measure of the city (vs. 16).
- 12 x 12 or 144 cubits the wall height (vs. 17).
- 12 gates are 12 pearls (vs. 21).
- 12 fruits of tree of life (22:2).

John begins in vs. 12 to describe individual aspects of the city. The *"great and high"* wall symbolizes the exclusion of all that is unworthy, the inclusion of all made worthy, and the protection of all finding entrance there. This wall is a reminder that only those who receive God's offer of redemption may enter, and that many will be excluded.

Vs. 13 – The twelve gates facing to the four points of

Rev 21:15 And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.
Rev 21:16 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.

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the compass imply freedom of mobility for those dwelling within. This will not be a prison, for the gates will never be shut (vs. 25). God's leadership is secure. He does not need to hold His followers captive, as the approach of other religions who force their following through threat of death.

The tribes of Israel are named on the gates and the apostles named in the foundations, implying perhaps a distinction maintained between Israel and the church even then. Yet all true believers of all time will find their eternal home there.

Vs. 15-17 – Measurements. Upon measuring the city with the golden reed it was found to be 12,000 furlongs, equally in length, width, and height. A furlong is an old measure equal to a bit more than 200 metres. Thus 12,000 furlongs = about 2,400 kilometres. Thus it will be a city of nearly 6 million square kilometres! This is no dinky dorp, but equalling about half the size of Canada or USA or

Rev 21:17 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.
Rev 21:18 And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.
Rev 21:19 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;
Rev 21:20 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.

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about 4½ times the size of South Africa. John says the *height* will be 2,400 kms as well. This does not refer to the height of the walls, but to the height of the city, of the buildings perhaps. The wall height is given in vs. 17 at 144 cubits or about 65 metres. We are just not told what rises up 2,400 kms high.

Vs. 18-21 – Building materials. The wall is composed of jasper and the buildings of pure gold. Yet again, as the jasper, so the gold is of a transparency *"like unto clear glass"*. Light is such a primary aspect of this city that all materials consist of light-diffusing qualities lest any light be hindered. Nothing opaque. Even the streets will be of the same (vs. 21).

Vs. 19-20 – Even the foundations are a thing of

Rev 21:21 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.

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beauty. Each of the twelve foundations are given to a different precious stone;

Amethyst – Violet transparent quartz
Hyacinth – Dark blue verging to black
Chrysoprase – Translucent golden yellow
Topaz – Greenish yellow
Beryl – Glassy pale green
Chrysolite – Golden coloured
Sardius – Flesh coloured
Sardonyx – Flesh red and white
Emerald – Transparent light green
Chalcedony – Translucent milky or grayish quartz
Sapphire – Clear blue
Jasper – Diverse colours (purple, blue, green, brass)

Precise colours are uncertain. The point is that even the foundations will glisten with the sparkling brightness of God's glory, the brilliant light of the city playing upon their multicoloured beauty as well. The Lord did not have to make it pretty. But in His grace even this He has given to us, with a preview to stir our hope and lift our hearts.

Vs. 21 – Here are those famous gates of pearl, each gate formed of one entire pearl! The gates of entrance are a very prominent feature as one enters. Yet does it not seem odd that such a prominent feature of this city would be made of pearl? In all of the description of this magnificent city purity and pure materials with the clarity of crystal are highlighted. Yet pearl is actually never pure. As we know, the formation of pearl is around the *impurity* of a foreign particle or parasite. Pearl comes of the nacreous secretions with which the oyster coats the *problem* of the unwanted bit of dirt thrusting itself in. It is the oyster's way of coping with the entrance of something foreign, offensive, out of place there. The beauty of a pearl represents a problem covered, beautified, even made precious. A pearl is a problem turned precious. Where would be the pearl without the initial bit of dirt?

Consider the comparisons and understand how appropriate that these gates be made of pearl. The glistening beauty of God's plan of redemption showcases the radiant splendour of His matchless love. But where would be the opportunity for God to really display His grace without the black backdrop of human sin? Our story with God is like the pearl. It is man's greatest problem turned precious, tragedy turned triumph. God took the

mess of man's sin and made it the impetus to display His abounding wisdom and grace. Redemption is God's way of handling the entrance of sin into His pristine creation, so foreign, offensive, and out of place there. How appropriate then that pearl becomes the gate, the point of entry into God's presence and place of blessing! Each of those pearly gates indicates the beauty of God's grace, never displayed so evidently than in His response to sin, never having so full an opportunity for display than when sin entered the world.

Vs. 22-27 – Things present and missing in New Jerusalem.

Vs. 22 – John saw no temple in this glorious city to come, *"for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it".* All shadows of the old covenant will be dispelled in that place of splendour and light. The writer of Hebrews spoke of the earthly priesthood, temple, and sacrifices as *"the example and shadow of the heavenly things"* (Heb. 8:5). But in that coming day and place all shadows will be gone with the complete removal of sin, seeing no more through a glass darkly, but face to face. No

longer will men deal with the Lord through certain sanctified men, at certain sacred times, in certain sanctified ways, with separation of clouds and veils. For all will know the very presence of the Lord then. No more will be the ordinance of Communion, but drinking new with Jesus in the kingdom of His Father.

Note the things missing in that place;

- Temple (vs. 22).
- Sun and moon it would seem, since there will be no need of them (vs. 23).
- Darkness/night (vs. 25; 22:5). No sleep? A bit of a blow for those who love their slumber. Glorified bodies will need no rest it seems, as the angels. Our lives will ever be full of service and learning, joy and peace.
- Candle or lamp (22:5). Signifying every manmade form of light.
- Closed gates (vs. 25).
- Abominations, defilers, and liars (vs. 27).
- Curse (22:3).
- Doubt (22:6).

Rev 21:23 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.
Rev 21:24 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 honour into it.
Rev 21:25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.

Vs. 23 – *"The glory of God did lighten it and the Lamb is the lamp"* – How often we see God compared to light in the Bible. How prominent was this theme in Christ's revelation of Himself. He is *"the true Light"* (Jn. 1:9), and *"the light of the world"* (Jn. 8:12). All who follow Him *"shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life". "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all"* (I Jn. 1:5). So it is God's purpose for us now, as in that coming day, that we would *"walk in the light, as He is in the light",* confessing and forsaking our sin.

Vs. 24 – *"The nations"* – This may refer to people groups forming during Christ's earthly kingdom, and into the eternal state. Or it may refer to "Gentiles" as distinct from Jews. Apparently not all people will actually be living in the city. Again, perhaps this place will be reserved particularly for the church saints to dwell in? The point is that all shall walk in the light of that city, from those in honoured positions of leadership on down.

Rev 21:26 And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.
Rev 21:27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Vs. 27 – *"There shall in no wise enter"* – The term is strong, meaning "not possibly". There will be nothing unholy there. No one doing anything detestable or deceitful will be found there. The environment will be perfect, in contrast to the ages of man's earthly rule ravaged by human sin. And we shall enjoy this perfect situation throughout eternity. Eternal absolute moral purity, peace, and pleasure in the Lord's presence!

Breathtaking prospect!

Class 20 – Revelation 22

Rev 22:1 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

Chapter 22

22:1-5 – Focus on God's Presence

It is all about God and the Lamb in these first few verses; His throne, His servants, His service, His face, His name. It is a summary sketch of life in that glad day revolving around God.

Vs. 1 – The angel who was sent to give John a tour of the glorious New Jerusalem then took him to Main Street, the one leading up to *"the throne of God and of the Lamb"*. And there John was shown a *"pure river of water of life"* flowing from the throne, a stream as *"clear as crystal"*. How well that crystal river illustrates what has ever flowed from that blessed throne of God, all things pure, good, and beneficial. It is what David saw and spoke of millenia before when he said in Psalm 46, *"there is a river; the streams whereof shall make the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High"* (vs. 4).

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17).

We see such a contrast in what flows from the two cities featuring so prominently in the latter chapters of this book. From *Babylon*, the harlot of earth's kings, flows all things depraved and deceiving. From *Jerusalem*, bride of the King of kings, flows all things pure and right and refreshing. Compare Sinai contrasted with Jerusalem in Galatians 4, bondage contrasted with liberty.

Did you ever wonder what such pure water would taste like? Rather objectionable I suspect to many a modern tongue. Silence is strange to the ear of one living beside a busy airport. Pure country air smells odd to those accustomed to the stench of the city. Manna from heaven is unexciting to those with a taste for Egypt's cuisine. God's good gifts are boring to those who through carnal use have developed a taste for things earthly and sensual. Good music is dull to the one whose ears have become attuned to the thumping, chaotic din of the world's "music", so in keeping with the restless chaos in their troubled souls. Appropriate dress is fusty and stupid to the self-centred coward fixed on fashion. God's crystal pure things hold little

Rev 22:2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.
Rev 22:3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:

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interest for those given to the carnal things of this earth. They simply have no taste for it!

Vs. 2 – The tree of life will be there as well, growing among men again in a return to Eden. Apparently the river flows down the middle of that main street of gold, with these stately trees growing on either side of the river, producing both fruit and leaves for the benefit of man. How often the believer who is growing in his walk with God is compared to a fruitful tree flourishing beside a river (Ps. 1; Num. 24:5-7; Jer. 17:7-8).

Vs. 3 – *"There shall be no more curse"* – Every curse will be no more, for *sin* will be no more. God's curse began with sin's entrance into the world (Gen. 3), and ends with sin's removal.

As in vs. 1 the Lamb is still on the throne beside God the Father. Some have struggled with this thought in light of I Corinthians 15, where we see

Jesus handing all things over to the Father at the end of His earthly kingdom and submitting Himself to Him (vs. 24-28). There will indeed be a change at the end of the Millennium in the nature of Christ's rule. He will have completely accomplished His work of redemption at that time, having finally finished God's purposes prophesied by Daniel so long ago (9:24), to finish transgression, make an end of sins, make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness. Thus having made every enemy of God His footstool during His earthly kingdom (a very prominent biblical theme, Ps. 110:1; 8:6; I Cor. 15:25-27; Heb. 1:13; 2:8; 10:13; Phil. 3:21), having thoroughly sifted the hearts of men separating wheat from chaff to the last kernel, having brought every believing follower to His side in unhindered fellowship and removed every resolute rejecter, He shall at last present the restored race of man to the Father. And from that time, and into eternity, the Son will reign with the Father.

"His servants shall serve Him" – So shall the redeemed ever *"serve Him"*, and see His face, and wear His name. It has always been the joy and privilege of those whose hearts are right with God to serve, to spend and be spent for Him. To be a mere doorkeeper in the house of my God is enough if I

Rev 22:4 And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.
Rev 22:5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.
Rev 22:6 And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.

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may look upon His smiling face and hear from Him those words spoken to Daniel, *"O thou greatly beloved".* It will be enough for us to know without the least shade of uncertainty that we are forever right with Him, restored to Him, resting in His love, reserved exclusively for Him. Idleness is never right and good for a man. From the moment of man's creation God has given him work to do, and so throughout eternity ours will be happy labour under His eye and smile.

"His name shall be in their foreheads" – As we have seen previously, the Lord's name upon His own speaks of our belonging to Him (2:17; 3:12; 7:3 14:1). Those willing to bear His marks in this life (Gal. 6:17), and unwilling to wear the mark of the evil one (15:2), will wear the Lord's name, marked as His precious possession throughout eternity.

22:6-15 – Closing Words of the Angel

Vs. 6 – *"These sayings are faithful and true"* – God's angel confirms the truth and trustworthiness of all things spoken. The Lord constantly affirms the believability of His communication to man;

- *God* is confirmed as true, in distinction from all other gods which are false. As the martyrs under the altar cried in 6:10, *"How long O Lord, Holy and true…".*

- *Jesus Christ* is affirmed as true. In writing to the church of Philadelphia, Jesus is titled *"He that is true"* (3:7). He is true in the sense that He is the genuine Messiah, and He is true in the sense of a true Friend we can count on to think and work for our best. In writing to the church at Laodicea Jesus is titled *"the Amen, the faithful and true witness".* He is fair in His dealings, with unclouded vision. Jesus returns to judgment as the One called *"Faithful and True"* (19:11). A true friend does not flatter when reproof is fair and due. Jesus is true to carry out His threats, and true to return as He promised.

- *God's judgments* are proclaimed as true. When the harlot is at last destroyed heaven is shouting *"true and righteous are His*

judgments" (19:2).

- *God's <u>Words</u>* are repeatedly affirmed as true and reliable, especially in the context of the incredible promises of His blessing upon His saints. Because those promises are so good, doubt is anticipated. In 19:9 blessing is pronounced upon *"they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb".* Then the Lord follows with *"these are the true sayings of God"*. Believe it and make ready! In 21:5 the promise of God's eternal presence and of *"all things new"* is followed with the command to *"write: for these words are true and faithful",* as trustworthy as they are true. God knew how full of doubt is the faithless heart of man. "Write it John, these words can indeed be trusted!"

Even so here. With grand promises of the splendour of that city, where God and the Lamb are the temple, light, and King, where are the crystal river and tree of life, where we will joyfully serve and even reign under God's smile throughout eternity. Write it John! *"These sayings are faithful and true".* Believe it!

Now let me ask you a question. What would be the sense in affirming the truth and trustworthiness of

things impossible to understand? Many have proclaimed this book of Revelation quite beyond our ability to comprehend to any large degree. So wherein is the worth of such assurance of the *truth* of it if we are not expected to discern the *sense* of it? And how could we ever hope to find the meaning of such solemnly assured promises if we cannot just read and understand them simply? *It is true* He assures us. But true for whom if it is a book of unsolvable mysteries with no available key? Does this assurance of truthfulness not imply it understandable? The Lord would challenge us to work it out if understanding is where the struggle lies. But He assumes our understanding and challenges us instead to *believe it!* Believability is *not* assumed, for indeed this *is* where the struggle lies. And if the Lord expects us to understand but suspects some might battle to believe, then obviously the *simple* reading of such startling events is the interpretive approach He expects us to use. Its witness is faithful and true! It means just what it says! Now will you believe it? Will you believe *Him?* Refusal to believe is often expressed by inability to understand. Wilful ignorance! Just as a child's refusal to obey is often expressed as failure to hear or understand. Wilful deafness and density. Sure, there are difficult portions in this book. But on the whole it is quite clear if we read it simply.

Rev 22:7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

And blessed is he who *responds* as if he believes it (vs. 7), with an evident serenity in trials, urgency in witness, joy in daily experience, and assurance concerning the future.

Vs. 7 – *"Behold, I come quickly"* – The same assurance is found in the 7th verse of this last chapter as we saw in the 7th of the first chapter, that Jesus is coming. The book begins and ends on that same central theme. Literally, "I am coming quickly", as if He is already on the way. *"Quickly"* expresses the impending, imminent nature of Christ's coming. It is a prominent word as we come out the end of God's prophecy (vs. 6, 12, 20). And from the perspective of eternity how very soon it will be reality. The Apostle Paul in referring to the trials of the Christian life spoke of *"our light affliction, which is <u>but</u> <u>for</u> <u>a</u> <u>moment</u>"*. So brief this life will seem when looking back from the ages of the ages. Even in John's day these things were viewed with an any-moment expectancy. Compare vs. 10 & 1:3, where we are told *"the time is at hand"* or near.

Now obviously this imminent nearness does not

refer specifically to the new heavens, earth, and Jerusalem, for *"all things new"* will not follow until after Christ's 1000-year earthly reign (chapters 21-22 after chapter 20). And Christ's kingdom will only be established after His return to earth (chapter 20 after chapter 19). And His return will only come after the 7-year tribulation period. And this only after the Rapture of the church. So this whole movement or sequence of events (*"the day of the Lord"*) begins with the Rapture, that next, any-moment event on God's prophetic calendar, ushering in everything to follow as prophesied. And how very "quickly" these events will pass from prophecy to history!

Consider how this announcement here of blessing upon the keeper of *"the prophecy of this book"* is like that blessing promised as the book began (1:3). Here now the promise is underscored again to draw us in to labour toward both knowing and doing. And consider how the expectation of our keeping *"the sayings of the prophecy of this book"* again implies them quite understandable. How could the Lord expect us to keep what He did not expect us to understand? And again, how could He expect us to understand unless a simple interpretation according to the plain sense is the correct reading. 'Tis all rather plain to the honest seeker.

Rev 22:8 And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.
Rev 22:9 Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.
Rev 22:10 And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.

Vs. 8-9 – John is so overwhelmed by these incredible visions of glory that he again falls before this angel *"to worship"*. And again, as in 19:10, the angel made short, sharp work of stopping him! None lower than God are to be worshipped. Again the reminder that Jesus received such worship, showing Himself to be God the Son.

Vs. 10 – John is now commanded by the angel to not seal *"the sayings of the prophecy of this book"*, due to the shortness of the time. This answers to the angel's words to Daniel at the end of his prophecy (12:4, 9). There the book was left sealed, for it was not for him to fully understand at that time. Daniel's prophecy was for a later time. It would need the N.T., and especially this book of Revelation, to unlock the door of its meaning. How frustrating for Daniel to have several pieces of the prophetic picture and be left longing for more. But

God only meant for him to provide a portion of His prophetic blueprint, only a few of the puzzle pieces. Even so there is a small part of God's greater plan that He means for you and me to help fulfil. Nothing more, nothing less. What is your contribution to be? Since the writing of John's Revelation, with the fuller picture of prophecy brought by the N.T., we now have only a few pieces of the puzzle still missing. Essentially the whole picture stands revealed before us. No longer is it a sealed book now. "Leave it open John. For My people must fully understand what I hold in store for those who love Me, and for those who hate Me". But alas, rather than the heart of a John, who wept over some portion still sealed, our modern world yawns over the most complete picture of future things *ever available to man*, and runs after other prophets and prophecies instead! And blind "scholars" insist the prophecy of John's Revelation a purposely baffling enigma, an impenetrable puzzle. Yet the Lord expressly says He left it *unsealed!* Again, this is a book of *revelation*, not *suppression*, designed for *revealing*, not *concealing* God's truth! Man's problem is not understanding, but accepting what he understands from these pages.

Vs. 11 – This verse does not express God's wish or determination, but His resignation. The angel

Rev 22:11 He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

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mentioned the same to Daniel (Dan. 12:10), showing the two responses of men. If God's words of prophecy are rejected, there is nothing else He has to say. We have come to the end of the Book! Will they still choose wickedness? Let them remain so! Will they cling to their filthiness? Let them have it! *"That they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken"* (Isa. 28:13). We plead with men and reveal the truth and make it clear, as God has done. But if still rejected, what more can be done for the rejecter? Let him have his way and the fruits of it! We get the impression here of a fixing of their course. As a soul rejects the truth it seems there comes a point where acceptance becomes impossible. The *will-not* at some point clicks over to *cannot!* And there remains only the *"certain, fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour"* them. Compare Ezekiel 20:39; Romans 1:24-28. Every chuckling scorn at God's message, every stiff-armed rejection of the Spirit's conviction, every yawning disinterest in the truth, every stubborn refusal of repentance further fixes the way and sets the heart and cools

Rev 22:12 And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.
Rev 22:13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.
Rev 22:14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

God's earnest efforts to win and sears the conscience to insensibility. *We have come to the end of the Book, the end of words!!* Now what will you do with Jesus? Neutral you cannot remain!

Vs. 12 – The issuing of rewards (or not) begins with the church at the judgment seat of Christ after the Rapture (II Cor. 5:10). Again this judgment will be *"according to their works".* Compare I Corinthians 3:13-15.

22:16-21 – Closing Words of Jesus

Paul's epistles were often actually penned by a secretary as the apostle dictated under inspiration. And then at the end of the letter, Paul would sometimes take up the pen and sign off with a greeting in his own hand, thus confirming his authorship. Compare I Corinthians 16:21-24; Galatians 6:11-18; Colossians 4:18; II Thessalonians 3:17-18. As we come now to the

Rev 22:15 For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.
Rev 22:16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

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conclusion of Christ's message to His churches we seem to find the same here, for it is no longer "I, John", but "I, Jesus", as if Jesus Himself has now taken up the pen to write His concluding comments, confirming His authorship of the whole. He Himself sent the angel to testify these things to the churches through John, in essentially the same statement as in 1:1. So He begins and concludes with the same assurance. "I authored it. Rest assured that these are My words". They are words of the very highest authority!

By identifying Himself as *"the root and offspring of David"* Jesus appeals to the Jewish reader. Jesus is that great descendant from the royal stock of David, the very Messiah for whom they wait.

"The bright and morning star" – The *"morning star"* is actually a planet (Venus) visible in the eastern sky before sunrise, the herald of dawn. Jesus will return as the *"sun of righteousness"*, ushering in that eternal day when there shall be no night. We

Rev 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

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are still in darkness now, seeing through a glass darkly, though the night is far spent and the day at hand. The day has yet to dawn, but there in the eastern sky the herald of day can be seen, the brilliant Morning Star. For Jesus has come the first time, announced to the wise seers by a star, and we have seen His glory. And He has come to us through His written words, bringing *"faithful and true"* promise of His coming again. In Him we see the Morning Star pointing to the approaching dawn.

Vs. 17 – So the Lord Himself now takes up the pen to add His closing comments to all that has gone before in this Book of God. What might He say? What profound thing would He want to finally leave with us? Stern words of condemnation? Tender assurances of our worth, as some might expect? No. Just the familiar invitation to come to Him seen throughout the Bible. Come, take, receive, and that freely!

"The Spirit" or Holy Spirit is involved in this invitation, and has been from the start. In Christ's

absence during this age the Spirit has been that other Comforter standing close to the church. He could not stand closer than dwelling within! And the Spirit works mysteriously in the hearts of the unsaved as well, drawing, wooing, convincing the world of sin, righteousness, and coming judgment.

"The bride" or church has been involved as well, through the witness of God's own children on this earth. The church works outwardly as the Spirit works inwardly, proclaiming God's words. Both combine to bring God's gracious invitation to all who truly thirst for God among men. What God offers is offered *"freely",* for none can earn salvation.

Here is God's last tender invitation to man to receive Jesus Christ as Saviour before it is too late, before the day dawns and the day of grace is ended. Right to the end the Lord pleads, as with Judas Iscariot, whom Jesus gave opportunity to repent and receive right to the end. Through three years of close association and clear revelation of who He is the offer was there for Judas, until that fateful moment in the upper room. Christ's very last interaction with Judas there was to *give* him something as He looked lovingly into his distracted eyes. He handed Judas the piece of bread, describing His desire to give him so much more, *the very Bread of Life*, if

Rev 22:18 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:
Rev 22:19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

Judas would have Him. So that he might never hunger again. But alas, there was no receiving in the heart of Judas. And so finally the command, *"what thou doest do quickly!"* Go do it if you must! And Judas got up and left. And his course was fixed, his judgment confirmed, and it was not long in coming. And that man abides in the torments of hell to this day! To the end Jesus graciously invites. To the end of the book He pleads. Through the Spirit and the bride He beckons to *"him that is athrist"*. Come – take – receive – freely! If you are not saved and satisfied in Jesus, it is not because God has kept you from the springs of living water my friend!

Vs. 18-19 – We come now to the most solemn warning in all the Bible against tampering with the words of God. Compare Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:3-6. Compare God's warning and judgment upon King Jehoiakim in Jeremiah 36. If

the promised judgment certainly came upon that wicked king for cutting up and burning God's warning of trouble upon Jerusalem through Jeremiah, how much more certain and searing the doom of those who tamper with prophesies given by the Lord Jesus Himself, signed as it were in His own writing with such solemn warning as we find here. Compare Hebrews 2:1-3. There is great warning here to any who would dare to detract from or tamper with the words of Revelation. Great warning to any who would dare add to that which Jesus Himself has signed off (such as the so-called "last testament" of the Koran or the Book of Mormon). Great warning to those refusing to believe that these things will actually come to pass as written. Such wilful doubters may be displaying their evil heart of unbelief. And all who refuse faith in Jesus Christ shall surely have their part in *"the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone"* (21:8). Even to mess with the simple reading of these truths is to usurp the authority of Jesus Christ. It is ours to listen, receive, and believe, not to arrogantly explain away the obvious meaning. N.B. how it is all about how we have been told;

- *"I Jesus have sent My angel to testify unto you these things"* (vs. 16).

- *"For I testify unto every man"* (vs. 18).

Rev 22:20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.
Rev 22:21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

- *"He which testifieth these things"* (vs. 20).
- *"The Spirit and the bride"* are speaking as well (vs. 17).

You cannot say that you have not been told! The Lord Jesus Christ Himself jealously guards the words, announcing Himself as the witness of them.

The Lord does not speak of *loss* of salvation here, but of the *display* of salvation or lack of it. He assumes a true believer will not mess with this revelation of Jesus Christ. And He assumes an unbeliever displays himself by so tampering.

Vs. 20-21 – In this final testimony of Jesus and of God's book, we find again Christ's assurance of His soon return. In comparing vs. 7 & 12, here the word *"behold"* is replaced by *"surely",* expressing absolute affirmation, and then doubly confirmed with *"Amen",* meaning "truly". So the Lord's final announcement is of His imminent return, and this sandwiched between two words emphasizing the *absolute certainty* of it!

John responds for us all with His *"Even so, come, Lord Jesus".* "Let it be so!" "We wait for You!" "We look for your coming!" As the bride anxiously awaits the coming of her groom to receive her to himself, longing for the day when at last she will always be with that one she loves.

"It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God: we have waited for Him…we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation" (Isa. 25:9).

"Blessed are all they that wait for Him" (Isa. 30:18).

"The LORD is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him" (Lam. 3:25).

"Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD" (Ps. 27:14).