**THROUGH THE EYES OF JOHN**

**THE BOOK OF REVELATION**

**INTRODUCTION**

***Historical Background***

History books record that in A.D. 54-68, Nero began his reign of persecution. This reign of terror sparked a generation of emperors who sought to destroy the church. John, during the writing of the book of Revelation was imprisoned by the authority of Rome. He, like so many others, refused to worship the emperor, and continued teaching the doctrines of Christ.

In A.D. 284, Diocletian reformed the government of Rome. He divided the empire into four sections, two on the east, and two on the west. His hope was to have better control of the empire and make it easier for him to rule.

Constantine (A.D. 306-A.D. 337) moved the capital from Rome to Byzantium. He renamed the capital city, Constantinople. Constantine was also noted to be a man who wanted to keep peace in the empire. Therefore, he granted religious tolerance to Christians.

It was after the death of Theodosius I, that the Roman Empire permanently divided into east and west sections. She was no longer the ornament of the world. In fact, Rome lost her political importance. The west sank into anarchy, and Italy was ravaged by invaders. Finally, Rome would be taken by Alaric (A.D. 410), and by Gaiseric (A.D. 455), never to rise again.

***The Date of the Book***

There has been much discussion on when the book was written. There are those who believe the book was penned prior to the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70). They try to prove this by Revelation chapter eleven verse one. The writer is given a reed and asked to measure the temple. Since the structure is mentioned, they presume that it had to be still standing.

Prior to A.D. 70, Nero was emperor. He was arrogant and spiteful. He hated the Jews and Christians. This provokes many to believe that he is the anti-Christ mentioned in Revelation 13:18.

The problem I have with this date is embedded in the sacred message. It is obvious from the beginning that the author is writing figuratively. The symbols are not to be taken literally. To keep the integrity of the author’s methodology, one must seek the meaning behind the symbols given.

Vespasian (A.D. 69-79) has been identified by some historians to be the emperor during the time the book was written. Those who hold this thought try to base their interpretation on Revelation 17:9-11. In this passage, figurative language is used to identify the succession of the emperors.

The problem with numbering the emperors is that it does not hold true to the way the book was written. John writes the prophesy to conceal the message. The numbers are symbolic.

Theologians like Justin Martyr, who died under the rule of Aurelius (A.D. 166), proclaims that John the apostle wrote the book. Irenaeus, a student of Polycarp, insists that the book was written by John during the reign of Domitian. This faithful believer’s testimony, who lived from A.D. 120-190, should not be taken lightly. Polycarp was one of John’s disciples. He would had received firsthand knowledge concerning the contents and symbols of the vision.

It is within the contents of the book that offers the reader great insight. John, for example graphically describes a massive national destruction which s not bound to a specific locality. The seven churches of Asia, Gentile congregations, would have little concern about the destruction of Jerusalem.

Also, the signs for the destruction of Jerusalem were already given by Christ (Matt. 24). What would be the purpose for writing a long letter on the subject? Was the Lord’s prophesy during His earthly ministry incomplete?

The underline message of the book was not only to prepare the saints for the coming persecution but ensure them that the wicked would be punished. The souls underneath the altar are crying for vengeance. They were praying for the end of an empire that had crucified the Messiah and sought to destroy the church.

**METHODS OF INTERPRETATION**

1. **The Futurist Method**

A great number of religious people utilize the futurist method when interpreting the book of Revelation. This is the belief that the book concerns itself with the end of the world and the second coming of Christ.

A term that has been given to many who hold to this view is ***millenarian***. This simply means that they believe that when Jesus comes again and the righteous rise, an earthly kingdom will be established for a period of a thousand years. This type of interpretation has been the seed of many cults: Charles Russell, Jim Jones, and David Koresh, are just a few who have deceived many by their revelatory views on the book.

The futurist method is incorrect for two reasons. First, the kingdom had already been established. God was adding people to the kingdom on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:47). Second, the author would not write figuratively if the message was intended for the distant future.

John at the very beginning of the prophesy states that he was in the Kingdom (Rev. 1:9). John the Baptist preached the kingdom at hand, along with Jesus (Maat. 14:17’ Matt. 16:18, 19).

1. **The Historical Background Method**

This method of interpretation focuses on the historical setting at the time the book was written. In other words, most of the book would take place soon.

This method is the most practical. John declares that the prophecy would shortly come to pass. He was confined to a prison island. Whatever he penned would had been read by authorities. Any unbeliever would had seen this vision as the works of a madman.

We must remember the book was written during the age of the miraculous. We do not have that benefit today. This prophecy would had given the church hope in a time of despair.

**IN THE SPIRIT**

**(Revelations 1:1-20)**

***The Superscription (vs. 1-3)***

*The Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him, to shew his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John (Rev. 1:1****).* (1)**

The Greek word for *Revelation* is APOKALUPSIS (Ἀποκάλυψις). Vine’s defines the word as an “*uncovering*.” **(2)** It denotes something hidden that is about to be revealed. In this case, the apostle John is about to receive a vision.

Paul uses the term on several occasions throughout his epistles:

*But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and* ***revelation (***αποκαλυψεως ) *of the righteous judgment of God (Rom. 2:5).*

*Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the* ***revelation*** *(*αποκαλυψιν) *of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began (Rom. 16:25).*

*Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by* ***revelation (***αποκαλυψει)*, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine? (1 Cor. 14:6).*

*How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a* ***revelation (***αποκαλυψιν)*, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying (1 Cor. 14:26).*

*It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and* ***revelation****s (*αποκαλυψεις ) *of the Lord (2 Cor. 12:1).*

*And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the* ***revelation****s (*αποκαλυψεων)*, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure (2 Cor. 12:7).*

*For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the* ***revelation*** *(*αποκαλυψεως) *of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:12).*

*And I went up by* ***revelation (***αποκαλυψιν)*, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain (Gal. 2:2).*

*That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and* ***revelation (***αποκαλυψεως ) *in the knowledge of him (Eph. 1:17).*

*How that by* ***revelation*** *(*αποκαλυψιν) *he made known unto me the mystery; as I wrote afore in few word (Eph. 3:3).*

The book itself is written in figurative language. The use of similes, hyperboles, and exaggerations are carefully chosen by John to conceal the message from those who might view it as threatening. Who would John consider to be a threat to the writing and distribution of the letter? No doubt from the Roman officials who imprisoned John on the island of Patmos, and the Jewish fanatics who interpreted Christianity as a detriment to the Hebraic way of life.

By concealing the message in a cloud of hermeneutical theatrics imprints upon the reader that the revelation was 1) pertaining to events unfolded during John’s day and age, and 2) the contents were such that if the letter was found and analyzed, the Roman officials would simply think it was the writings of a lunatic.

“*The things that must shortly come to pass,”* is penned by John to show that these events were going to happen soon. This concept is further emphasized in verse three, as well as Revelation 22:6, 10. Remember that God is speaking to John in human terms. The wording is much like Matthew twenty-four when Jesus spoke about the fall of Jerusalem in present tense. In the Revelation prophecy, John often uses the present tense to warn the people of his day.

“*Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. 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. 1:2, 3).* John wants his audience to understand that the vision is from Christ. The testimony will be both a visual and verbal presentation.

The first beatitude is advanced by John. The reader is instructed to *“Read, hear, and keep”* the message. Seven times in the book of Revelation, John uses the word *blessed* (Rev. 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14).

***The Salutation (vs. 4-7)***

**“*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;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,and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. 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.”***

In verse four, John addresses the book to the *seven churches of Asia.* In the next two chapters, the seven churches will receive a personal address from Christ. It is apparent that John did not want the reader to conclude that there were only seven congregations in Asia. He is merely introducing the first significant number in the book, *seven.*

The number *seven* will be used over fifty times in the prophecy. It is the perfect number. It denotes “completeness,” and “perfection.” In this reference to the number, John unveils to the reader that the book is addressed to the church universal.

*“Him who is and was and who is to come,”* is the first title for God in the revelation. It focuses on the eternality of God the Father. Moses wrote, “*The* ***eternal*** *God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them”* (Deut. 33:27). It was also Habakkuk that proclaimed, “*Are You not from everlasting, O LORD, my God, my Holy One? We will not die You, O LORD, have appointed them to judge; And You, O Rock, have established them to correct”* (Hab. 1:12).

Next, John names the next person of the Godhead by the title, “*seven spirits.*” Since *seven* has been defined as *perfect,* the bearer of this designate is the *Holy Spirit.*

In verse five, John gives emphasis to the final member of the Godhead family, Christ. By describing Jesus as being the “*faithful witness,”* John signifies that the revelation given to him was true. The second title, “*First Begotten of the dead*,” alludes to the Lord’s resurrection. It was Paul who proclaimed that Christ was the “*first fruits of them that are asleep*” (1 Cor. 15:20). Without the resurrection there is no religion.

The emphasis on the Lord’s resurrection is not to say that he was the first resurrected. Included in the gospel stories are the young damsel of Mark five, and Lazarus of John eleven. When John the Baptist was in prison and questioned whether Jesus was truly the Christ, he sent two of his disciples to question Jesus. Matthew writes, “*Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see:The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them” (John 11:4, 5).* This title given to Christ was meant to place emphasis on the fact that Jesus was the only person to be resurrected never to die again.

***The Seal of Authority (vs. 8)***

John declares to the reader the great *seal* of authorization. It was typical in the Roman world that when a Roman official or Caesar himself waged war, enacted some law, or made certain demands; it would be written and sealed. This was the official’s signature.

In John’s vision, the Lord uses as His seal four titles that have similar meanings: (1) the *Alpha & Omega*, (2) the *Beginning and the ending*, (3) He *which is, which was, and which is to come*, and, (4) the *Almighty*. Each title signifies His Deity. Jesus Christ is God. He has always been and will always be God. Last, but not least, He is the All-Powerful God!

***The Lamb & the Servant (vs. 9-20)***

John begins the book of Revelation by declaring that he was in tribulation. His place of imprisonment was the island of Patmos. Albert Barnes describes the historic significance of this island.

It is some six or eight miles in length, and not more than a mile in breadth, being about fifteen miles in circumference. It is neither trees nor rivers, nor has it any land for cultivation, except some little nooks among the ledges of rocks. On approaching the island, the coast is high, and consists of a succession of capes, which for so many ports, some of which are excellent. The only one in use, however, is a deep bay, sheltered by high mountains on every side but one, where it is protected by a projecting cape. The town attached to this port is situated upon a high rocky mountain, rising immediately from the sea, and this, with the Scala below upon the shore, consisting of some ships and houses, forms the only inhabited sight of the island. **(3)**



The Island of Patmos

The island was for John a prison. He was banished here for preaching about Jesus. This is what the apostle terms as the *testimony of Jesus Christ*.

How blessed are we in this modern age to live in a country that allows religious freedom? For John and many of his brethren persecution was synonymous with being a Christian. We can only wonder what went through John’s mind as he gazed up at the stars from his prison home. His closest friends had met violent ends. Old and feeble, John receives a vision of hope and encouragement. The Messiah who loved him, comforted him, and continued to guide him would not forsake him. The apostles of love had earned the right to pen the last book of the Holy Bible.

It was *Sunday*, *the Lord’s Day*, when John heard the loud voice. John describes the loudness as a trumpet. The term “trumpet” is used throughout the book of Revelation, never to be taken literally.

In verse eleven, the voice instructs John to write the message down and send it to the *seven churches*. When John turns to see the person who was speaking, *seven golden lamp* stands are seen. Among the stands is Christ. They represent the church (vs. 20).

In this beautiful pictorial scene, Christ is wearing the robe of a King. His hairs being *white as snow* represent His purity. Whereas, His *eyes like a flame of fire*, refer to His ability to see within the hearts of men giving Him the right to judge them. His, *feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace*, signifies His right to not only cast judgment upon the wicked, but to carry through with their punishment. The reference to His voice in verse fifteen substantiates His authority. His message is to be heard.

The verbal presentation in verse sixteen concerning the *seven stars*, and the *sharp two-edged sword*, gives credence to the way God judges men. The *stars*, according to verse twenty, are the ministers who proclaim the gospel message. The *sword* represents the gospel (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12).

His *countenance* being spoken of in verse sixteen refers to His true self. Christ is the light. Man had only seen the physical manifestation of Christ. Now, John sees Christ as He truly is. John’s response to the vision is typical. He falls to his knees before the Lord showing humility and honor to the true King. Jesus responds by charging John to write the vision that will be distributed to the seven churches of Asia.

The summation of chapter one is given in verse twenty when the first symbols of the book are defined. The *seven stars* are the *seven angels* of the *seven churches*. The *seven candlesticks*, which have already been identified, are the *seven churches*.

The *seven angels* represent the ministers of the churches. They are the ones who are entrusted to be the messengers to the local congregations. The Father ordained that salvation would be given by His Son and preached through the mouths of men (Rom. 10:14). Heavenly angels, though they are messengers, were never meant to preach in pulpits or herald the message from door to door (Acts 10:5, 11:13, 14).

1. King James Version
2. W. E. Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, (McLean, Virginia: MacDonald Publishing Co., n.d.), p. 974.
3. Albert Barnes, *Note on the New Testament, Revelation*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1954), p. 47.

**CHAPTER TWO**

**THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA**

**(Revelation 2:1-3:22)**

***The Church at Ephesus* (Rev. 2:1-7)**

Ephesus is the first congregation named among the churches of Asia in the book of Revelation. In Acts chapter eighteen, Paul along with Priscilla and Aquilla, came to Ephesus. While in the great city of Asia Minor, Paul reasoned with the crowds in the synagogue. Before leaving the city, Paul informed the Christian couple to stay in Ephesus while he continued his travels.

While in Ephesus, the couple met Apollos who was preaching to the populace. Luke writes that Apollos was preaching “*accurately the things of the Lord*.” Howbeit, he only preached the baptism of John. After this brief introduction, Luke scribes that the Christian team corrected Apollos (Acts 18:24-28).

Concerning the historical background of Ephesus, Barnes offers some insight:

It was the capital of Ionia; was one of the twelve Ionian cities of Asia Minor in Mythic times, and was aid to have been founded by the Amazons. It was situated on the river Cayster, no far from the Icarian Sea, between Smyrna and Miletus. It was one of the most considerable cities of Asia Minor, and while, about the epoch when Christianity was introduced, other cities declined, Ephesus rose more and more… Under the Romans it was the capital not only of Ionia, but of the entire province of Asia. **(4)**



City of Ephesus

***The Identification*** (Rev. 21:1)

In each address to the seven churches, the Lord uses various titles in His introductions. This denotes His authority and the urgency of heeding to the message.

To the church of Ephesus, Jesus calls Himself, “*He that holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks*” (Rev. 2:1). The destinies of each of these churches are in His hands. He is the light of the churches. He is the one who is ever present to condemn or admonish them.

“*I know thy works, and thy labor, 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: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for My name’s sake hast labored, and hast not fainted*” (Rev. 2:2, 3). Jesus is always proud when He finds His disciples working and laboring in the fields. During His personal ministry, Jesus told His Apostles, *“Then saith he unto his disciples, The* ***harvest*** *truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few*” (Jn. 9:37). They were further praised because these workers stood firm against false doctrine, and through diligent preaching they gained patience through tribulation.

***The Condemnation***

*“Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love” (Rev. 2:4).* Such as sad commentary for a congregation that seemed to be so prosperous. False doctrine was being refuted, and the work of the church was being carried out. However, they lost, somewhere along the way, the most important ingredient that makes up the church---LOVE.

Could it be that this congregation was so involved in refuting false doctrine that they forgot about nurturing that attitude with charity? Were they so dedicated to winning the debate, that they lost the vision of winning souls?

***The Warning (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 its place, except ye repent” (Rev. 2:5).* This stern warning from Christ is petitioned with love for the Ephesian brethren. They are told to “*remember*,” “*repent*,” and “*do*.”

Failing to heed to Christ’s command would cause their candlestick to be removed. In other words, they would no longer be recognized as belonging to Christ. Those who believe in “*once saved always saved*” would have a difficult time teaching lessons on the seven churches of Asia.

***Further Commendation (Rev. 2:6)***

*But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.* Little is known of this particular group. We may be assured that their practices and teachings were hindrances to the spreading of the gospel. Whatever sinful acts they were involved in Jesus articulates to the Ephesian brethren that He also hates their deeds.

***The Command to Hear (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.”* Similar phrases are used in all the letters to the seven churches. The emphasis is on the inspiration of the message and the ability of the hearers to accept the message as the word of God.

*The tree of life* brings the reader back to the garden in Genesis. The first biblical reference to the tree is in Genesis chapter two and verse nine. After man’s fall, Cherubims were placed at the east of the garden to keep Adam from the tree of life (Gen. 3:24). This would be the last mention of the tree of life until now.

Though the book of Revelation mentions the *tree of life* it is not to be taken literally. Heaven is a “spiritual place.” The tree in the garden was something physical and placed within the midst of the garden of God to give life to the first man and woman. Its reference in the book of Revelation is simply to denote eternal life.

***The Church at Smyrna (Rev. 2:8-11)***

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Smyrna, which was termed the *Ornament of Asia*, was a beautiful city. It was an inland port and a great trading center. Its feet were at the sea, its body in the Hermus valley, and its head was upon Mt. Pago. The history of the city went back to 1000 B.C. when it was first settled as a Greek colony. In 600 B.C., the city was invaded by the Lydions, and utterly destroyed. Lysimachus rebuilt the city in 200 B.C. During the days of the Roman Empire, Smyrna was considered a *free city*, and faithful to Caesar. **(5)**

***The Identification (2:8)***

To the brethren at Smyrna, Jesus utilizes two titles. First, He calls Himself the “*First and the Last*.” This title was used previously in chapter one and verse seventeen. God said to Isaiah, “*Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God”* (Isa. 44:6). Hence this is a title that emphasizes the Divinity of both the Father and the Son.

Secondly, Jesus further identifies Himself as the One *who was dead and is alive again*. It becomes apparent in the early part of the revelation that Jesus wanted to stress no only His Deity, but also is humanity. As fleshly Jesus, he suffered and died like any other fleshly creature. His death upon the cross unveiled His human existence, whereas, His resurrection pointed to His Deity.

***The Commendation (2:9)***

Smyrna, along with Philadelphia, receives no condemnation. The beauty of this congregation was found in their ability to carry on the work of the church during intense persecution with limited finances. Though they were a poor congregation, financially speaking, they were spiritually rich.

The Lord identifies the cause of Smyrna’s persecution. The Jews who were trying to hold onto their traditions, and not accept Christianity, were hindering the preaching of the gospel.

***The Warning (vs. 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.”*

This verse implies that persecution was prevalent but had not advance to the point that people were being cast into prison, at least not in Smyrna. Jesus warns them to prepare for the harsh opposition that was going to take place shortly.

This persecution that was coming would last for *ten days*. It would be a serious injustice to the scriptures to believe those *ten days* were to be taken literally. We are all aware that the persecution of the saints lasted much longer. The revelation began by demanding that the reader view the symbols as being figurative. This allows us to interpret the number *ten* as representing a *short period of time*.

Jesus expounds upon the saints at Smyrna that this period of persecution would not last long. This is why they are encouraged to “*be thou faithfully unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*”

This does not negate the fact that this period of persecution could last a lifetime. Yet James says that are lives are merely a vapor, “*that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away*” (James 4:14).

***The Command to Hear (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.”*

The saints at Smyrna are encouraged to overcome. Christ makes known to them that physical suffering is only temporary. Death may come for those who proclaim Him as King, but they will not suffer eternal damnation as their persecutors will suffer. Jesus proclaimed during His earthly ministry, “*And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*” (Matt. 10:28).

The *second death* is synonymous with eternal damnation. “*Then* ***death*** *and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the* ***second******death*” (Rev. 20:14)**. “*But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the* ***second******death* (Rev. 21:8)**.”

***The Church at Pergamos (Rev. 2:12-17)***

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Pergamos, which is also called Pergamum, was but sixty miles northeast of Smyrna. After Alexander the Great’s death, his kingdom split. Pergamum became the capital of one of these small kingdoms that arose during that period.

Charles Pfeiffer offer insight on this beautiful city:

The great library at Pergamum is said to have contained 200,000 manuscripts. Legend suggests that Ptlolemy Philadelphus of Egypt, fearful lest his library at Alexandria be overshadowed, forbade the export of papyrus to Pergamum. Thereupon, we are told, the people of Pergamum developed parchment, termed in Greek, *pergamenos*. The author of the book of Revelation speaks of *Satan’s throne* at Pergamum (Rev. 2:13). This may have been the great altar of Zeus which stood nearly fifty feet high in a colonnaded enclosure on the lower terrace of the city. Its base was more than one hundred feet square. (**6)**

The great library at Pergamum brought in scholars from all over the world. It became one of the major learning centers throughout the Roman Empire.

***The Identification (2:12)***

Jesus addresses Himself as *He which hath the sharp sword with two edges*. The Hebrew writer proclaimed, “*For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*” (Heb. 4:12).

It is the word of God that judges the hearts of men. The same word that condemns also exhorts. *He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not* ***my******word****s, hath one that judgeth him: the* ***word*** *that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day (John 12:48).* In this particular book, the Roman world was about to come face-to-face with the judgment of God.

***The Commendation (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” (vs. 13).*

The Lord commends the Christians at Pergamos for not denying the faith. The city, being the center of emperor worship, had slaughtered thousands for refusing to bow before Caesar. Most noteworthy was Antipas. Though this is the only place in the New Testament, or in history books, mentioning this dedicated saint; what a wonderful honor to be listed among the faithful.

***Condemnation (vs. 14, 15)***

First, the Lord rebukes the congregation for allowing certain members to teach false doctrine. This doctrine is described as the *doctrine of Balaam.* The story of Balaam and Balak is recorded in the book of Numbers chapter twenty-three thru thirty-one. Here we read of Balaam instructing Balak (king of Moab) on how to curse the Israelites. This is the meaning of *casting a stumbling block.* The stumbling block created among the members at Pergamos was idolatry. *To eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication* were two items associated with pagan worship.

***The Warning (Rev. 2:16)***

*Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.* The saints at Pergamos are commanded to repent. If they refuse to refute the false doctrine being propagated, and discipline those who believed this heretical preaching, the Lord will destroy them by the sword. This is about the *sharp two-edged sword* previously mentioned.

***The Command to Hear (Rev. 2:17)***

If the saints will hear, and heed to His message, He will allow them to eat of the *hidden manna*. This alludes to the Israelites who were fed in the wilderness by God. Jesus stresses in the New Testament that He was that *manna* that fell from heaven (Jn. 6:33-35). Therefore, the manna is equated with eternal life.

John then speaks of the *white stone* with a *new name* written in it. The Roman courts used white and black stones for rendering a verdict in criminal cases. The *white stone* acquitted the accused, whereas, a *black stone* condemned.

The new name being written in the stone had a direct relationship to a prophecy delivered by Isaiah to the people of Israel (Isa. 6:2). It gives each saint an identity. It represents their endurance and faithfulness to God.

***The Church at Thyatira (Rev. 2:18-29)***

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Thyatira, like the other cities addressed in this revelation, was a popular city during the First and Second Centuries. Home Hailey writes:

Thyatira was a wealthy city, located in the northern part of Lydia, near the border of Mysia, on the Lycas River. The city was approximately forty miles southeast of Pergamum, about midway between the two once-royal cities of Pergamum and Sardis. The city had been in Roman hands since 190 B.C. and was included in the province of Asia. No acropolis adorned the city, for it lay in a valley and was surrounded by gentle sloping hills. The city had no temple to the emperor. The chief deity of the city was Tyrimnos, who was identified with the Greek sun god Apollo, and whose honor games were held at various intervals… as an important trade and manufacturing city. Thyatira was noted for its purple dye and dyed garments. **(7)**

This letter addressed to the brethren at Thyatira was the longest of the seven letters.

***Identification (Rev. 2:18)***

*“These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet are like fine brass.”*

Both these identifiers have been used previously. The title *Son of God* occurs only here in the book of Revelation. The title points to the Lord’s relationship with God the Father. This gives Him the right to judge the hearts of men. This is endorsed by *His eyes like unto a flame of fire*, and His *feet as fine brass*.

***The Commendation (vs. 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*.”

Thyatira was a working congregation. They had all the marks of a strong church. Works, charity, service, faith, patience, and continued growth were marks of strength for this congregation. They seemed to be the kind of congregation that would become the envy of others. However, they had a few problems.

***The Condemnation (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 to idols.”*

Jezebel was the daughter of Ethbaal, the king of the Sidonians, who led her husband to serve false gods (1 Kings 16:31). She was dishonored in the Holy Bible, and her sins were labeled as the *whoredoms and witchcrafts* of Jezebel (2 Kings 9:22).

The condemnation is aimed at idol worship. It was apparent that there was a woman who was termed a *prophetess* representing some type of pagan religion. It was typical during the Roman Era that priest and priestesses engaged in fornication ceremonies.

***The Warning (Rev. 2:21-23)***

*“And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not” (vs. 21).* Apparently the faithful rebuked this individual, as well as those who followed her, but to no avail. Paul instructed the saints at Galatia that they had a responsibility to restore the fallen (Gal. 6:1, 2). Sadly, the fallen refused to repent.

With neglect, comes consequences, and in this case, the Lord warns of the coming vengeance. Judgment is at the door. Tribulation and death had been pronounced against Rome. Thus, the plea to return to the faith before judgment is cast.

***Promise & Encouragement (Rev. 2:24-29)***

“*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. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: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. And I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”*

In verses twenty-four and twenty-five, Jesus encourages those who have not heeded to this false prophetess to remain faithful. He states that He will not lay any other burdens upon them. A similar statement is found in Acts 15:28, 29. The Savior pleads for them to keep on doing what they are doing. They are on course for heaven being an encouragement to others.

In verses twenty-six and twenty-seven, Christ references Psalm two and verse nine. Here the Saviour is viewed reigning on His throne in heaven and breaking the nations with a rod of iron. He tells the brethren at Thyatira that if they keep the faith, they will reign with Him (Eph. 2:6; Rev. 5:9, 10).

*“And I will give him the morning star”* (Rev. 2:28). Scholars differ on their interpretation of this symbol used by Christ. The *morning star*, which is something splendid, is given to each one that overcomes. It is a reward for faithfulness. It engulfs the mystery of eternal life. For all those who stand firm for the truth will shine like stars in the heavens.

The message to Thyatira ends with a command to *hear*. Universally, the Lord wants the church to hear and understand His words. These letters were not only written to encourage but to condemn; not, only to condemn but to serve as a warning for future generations.

***The Church at Sardis (Rev. 3:1-5)***

Albert Barnes, in his commentary written on the book of Revelation, offers some historical data:

Saris was the capital of the ancient kingdom of Lydia, one of the provinces of Asia Minor, and was situated at the foot of Mount Tmolus, in a fine plain watered by the river Pactolus, famous for its golden sands. It was the capital where the celebrated Croesus, proverbial for his wealth, reigned. It was taken by Cyrus (B.C. 548), when Croesus was king, and was at that time one of the most splendid and opulent cities of the East. It subsequently passed into the hands of the Romans, and under them sank rapidly in wealth and importance. In the time of Tiberias it was destroyed by an earthquake, but was rebuilt by order of the emperor. The inhabitants of Sardis bore an ill repute among the ancients for their voluptuous modes of life. **(8)**

The ridge of the mountain upon which Sardis was located was some 1,500 feet high. It was said to have had sheer walls on three sides. The city was known to be easily defendable as well as virtually impregnable.

***The Identification (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” (vs. 1).*

The *seven Spirits*, as was discussed previously, is the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised His apostles that after His departure He would send the *Comforter* that would guide them into all truth (Jn. 15:26).

The *seven stars*, representing the ministers of the gospel message, are in the providential care of Christ. It becomes obvious that Christ wishes the readers to understand the importance of the revelation. It was Peter who proclaimed, “*For prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*” (2 Pet. 1:21).

***The Condemnation (Rev. 3:1b, 2)***

*“I know thy works, that thou hast a name, that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.”*

The congregation in Sardis was near extinction. Even the works that they were engaged in were about ready to die.

***The Warning (vs. 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.”*

*Remember, hold fast,* and *repent* represent the cure for Sardis. The psalmist penned, *I* ***remember****ed God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed* (Psa. 77:3)*.* Paul informed young Timothy to “***Hold******fast*** *the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus*” (2 Tim. 1:13). The Bible uses the terms *remember* and *hold fast* in conjunction with the concept of repentance.

*“If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief” (Rev. 3:3).* Jesus second coming is often spoken as a thief making entrance at night (Matt. 24:43;1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10). The Christian is a watchman. He or she is always on guard waiting for the master’s return.

***The Commendation (Rev.* 3:4)**

Even in Sardis where the light was barely flickering, there were a few that had not *defiled their garments*. The illuminating presence of God upon the local autonomy is radiated in the lives of the faithful few.

“*And they shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy.”* White was symbolic of perfection. It is only achieved by man through Christ. We are Christ’s reflective image to others. In John’s first letter, he wrote, “*But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin*” (1 Jn. 1:7).

***Promises & Encouragement (Rev. 3:5, 6)***

*“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 before My Father, and before His angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirt saith unto the churches.”*

Three promises are given to the saints who keep the faith: (1) He or she will be clothed in perfection, (2) his or her name will be recorded in the heart of God, and (3) his or her name will be echoed through the corridors of heaven into the ears of God the Father, and His holy angels. With these blessings, Jesus commands that everyone that has ears *let him hear what the Spirit sayeth unto the churches*.

***The Church at Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7-13)***



The word *Philadelphia* is interpreted as the city of “brotherly love.” It was a walled city of the district of Lydia on the Cogamus River. It was founded around 140 B.C. by Attalus Philadelphos. The city still exists today in Turkey. It is called Allah Shehr. Within the city, and ancient church building still stands that dates to the Roman period. The city was destroyed by an earthquake in A.D. 17, and for years the area was plagued with earth tremors that forced repeated evacuations. (**9)**

***Identification (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.”***

The Lord is the one who is *holy* and *true*. Untouched by the evils of the world, Christ died on the cross sinless. Even Pilate proclaimed that he found “no fault in Him.” Yet equated with holiness must be truth.

***“He that hath the key of David,”*** was another identifiable marker that Jesus utilized in His address to the Philadelphians. This alludes to Isaiah 23:22 where it is penned concerning Eliakim. The emphasis here is on the Lord’s right to rule His Kingdom.

***“He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth”*** refers to the spiritual qualitative right that Christ’s holds. Our only access into the Kingdom is through Christ (Jn. 14:6). He is the attendant at the door who has to right to open or shut. Jesus orates to the saints that Rome may be able to lock the doors of the synagogues (being the place where many Christians assembled for worship), but she cannot open or close the gates of Kingdom.

***The Commendation (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.”***

The penetrating message of Revelation is that **God is in control**! God creates the door and predicates the fact that no man can open it or close it. He further emphasizes that He knows His children and encourages them to work diligently.

***“For thou hast a little strength,”*** is identified as their ability to keep the Word, and not deny Christ. The difficulty of living in a tumultuous and violent world was difficult. Christianity was a nuisance, and those who followed the Lord’s teachings were a threat to the security of Rome.

***The Problem (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. 9).***

The persecution that the Christians in Philadelphia were facing was coming from the Jews. Their petty accusations to Rome against this new founded religion caused many saints to suffer. Paul and Barnabas became so frustrated with Jews in Antioch that they proclaimed, “*It was necessary that the word of God should first been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles*” (Acts 13:46).

Jesus tells the saints are of the *synagogue of Satan*. Why? Because they are liars! During the Lord’s personal ministry, He exclaimed, “*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a* ***liar****, and the father of it”* (Jn. 8:44).

“***I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee,”*** are very comforting words to the persecuted saints. Paul tells the brethren at Philippi that at the name of Jesus “*every* ***knee*** *should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.*  *And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”* (Phil. 2:10, 11).

Yet the feet being presented here are the tormented souls that have kept the faith. The guilty do not bow in worship to the saints, but in recognition that Jesus loves them.

***The church at Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22)***

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Laodicea was located some forty-five miles from Philadelphia, and nearly one hundred miles from Ephesus. According to history, the city was founded by Antiochus II. He was a Seleucid king who lived between 261-246 B.C. He named the city after his wife, Laodice. The main religion of the city during the Roman era was that of *Men Karou*. He was identified as Zeus by the Hellenists. Located near the city was a school of medicine. It was famous throughout Rome for developing an eye medicine. In A.D. 60, the city was destroyed by an earthquake. Though Rome offered to rebuild the city, the people of the city refused. Thus, they rebuilt the city with their own resources. **(10)**

***The Identification (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” (vs. 14).***

The word ***amen*** comes from a Hebrew word which means “*to be firm*.” John uses it here as a title for Christ. It speaks of the Lord’s truthfulness. This is confirmed in the next verse when John writes, “***the faithful and true witness***.”

“*The beginning of the creation of God*” enforces the Lord’s identity as the Creator of all things (Col. 1:16). Nothing exists, or will ever exists, without His will. He is God.

***Condemnation (Rev. 3:15-17)***

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

One finds it extremely sad that this congregation receives no commendation. The Lord finding them to be neither ***cold nor hot*** underlines their lack of mobility. This was a congregation with little activity. Souls needed to be saved, the gospel needed to be spread; but they were content and satisfied just existing! Hence, the Lord was going to ***spew them*** out of His mouth.

What was the reason for this procrastination? “*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” (Rev. 3:16, 17).* It was Paul who proclaimed that the *love of money was the root of all evil* (1 Tim. 6:10). In this situation the brethren had allowed their possessions and money to blind them.

The most hideous existence is living in ignorance. Solomon wrote, “*I have seen* ***all*** *the works that are done under the sun; and, behold,* ***all******is******vanity*** *and vexation of spirit” (Eccl. 1:14).* These poor souls trusting in their riches, little did they know that they were about to suffer the consequences of their actions. They were *wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked*!

***The Cure (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.”***

***“Gold tried in fire,”*** is similar to Paul’s statement to the church at Corinth, “*Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is” (1 Cor. 3:13).* Peter also declared, “*That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:7).*

Gold tried in fire purifies. This is further emphasized by the ***white raiment***. The eye salve personifies the Lord’s cure for blindness. They were spiritually blinded by their love for worldly things. Now they are commanded to address the problem and turn back to God*. “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent” (Rev. 3:19).*

The proverbial writer exclaimed, *“For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth” (Prov. 3:12).* The Lord wants His children to know that He loves them. Even when they are at their worse, He encourages them to return.

***The Promise******(Rev. 3:20-22)***

***“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. 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. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”***

This passage is one of the most beautiful expressions in the entire Bible. Jesus is pictured as a visitor standing in front of a door knocking. The opening of the door is controlled not by Christ, but by the person on the other side. For the Lord to gain entrance, one should only have to turn the knob and open the door.

Some have taken this verse and taught that all one needs to be saved is let Jesus into your heart. “*Just get on your knees and pray for Jesus to save you*.” Let’s note that the recipients of the letter were the Laodicean Christians. They had already obeyed the gospel. Howbeit, the world had once again led them into a life of disobedience.

***Sitting with Christ (Rev. 3:21)***

***“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne.”*** Christ overcame the world through the cross. This same Messiah offers to the faithful the right to sit upon the thrones of victory. For those who believe that works have nothing to do with salvation, this verse proves otherwise. Thus, we should be asseverated that faith and works are necessary to indicates one’s loyalty to the King. ***“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (Jas. 2:26).***

1. Barnes, p. 60.

(5) Waddey, Class Notes.

(6) Charles Pfeiffer, *Baker’s Bible Atlas* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1961), p. 225.

(7) Home Hailey, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), p. 135.

(8) Barnes, p. 88.

(9) Waddey, Class Notes.

(10) Waddey, Class Notes.

**CHAPTER THREE**

**THE THRONE OF GOD**

**(Revelation 4:1-11)**

***The Voice (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 show thee things which must be hereafter.”***The phrase “*after these things”* introduces a new part of the message. This is the third door mentioned in the book of Revelation. The other two were found in the letters to the churches at Philadelphia and Laodicea (Rev. 3:8, 20). This door is opened for John to gain access to the throne of God.

**“*And the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me.”***The usage of the trumpet is simply a simile defining the guide’s voice. This would indicate that the person speaking was clear and precise.

The voice exclaims to John that he is about to see the future. It was in chapter one that God revealed to John that he would see things that *would shortly come to pass (Rev. 1:1).* One must note that John not only received the prophecy audibly but visually.

***“And immediately I was in the Spirit” (Rev. 4:2).*** Paul wrote, “*I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth) such a one caught up to the third heaven*” (2 Cor. 12:2). The apostle Paul had difficulty explaining his experience of seeing heaven. John assuredly tells the reader that there was a separation between his physical self and his spirit.

***“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” (Rev. 4:3).*** In seeing the throne, John uses a similitude to describe God. The ***jasper stone*** is representative of God’s *purity*. In Revelation 21:11, the ***jasper stone*** is said to have been a ***precious stone*** and ***clear as crystal***. The ***sardine stone*** was a precious emerald that was of the color red. Red is indicative of *justice* and *judgment*. The two stones together describe God as *pure* and *holy*, and worthy to *judge* His creation.

The “*rainbow round about the throne”* was as bright as an *emerald*. It identifies God as the *keeper of promises*! After the great flood, the rainbow was created. It was a sign of the covenant that God made with Noah. It was his promise that the earth would never be destroyed again by water (Gen. 9:8-17).

Ezekiel’s description of God is similar, “*As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake*” (Ezek. 1:28).

***The Twenty-Four Elders (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.”***

There should be no question concerning the identity of these twenty-four elders. The first twelve would represent the twelve tribes of Israel. The second would seat the twelve apostles (Matt. 19:28). One must not forget that the cross joined both the Old and New Testaments.

In this passage, those who sat upon the thrones are wearing white (the symbol of purity), and golden crowns (the symbol of victory). They remain silent but dignified before God. Later in verse ten, the twenty-four elders fall down before the Lord and worship Him. Man’s sole purpose on earth and in heaven is to pay Homage to the King.

***The Seven Lamps (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.”***

In Exodus 19:16-18, Moses records, *“And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightning’s, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God: and they stood at the nether part of the mount.”* Moses depiction of the event that transpired that day is comparable to John’s vision in Revelation four. The “***lightnings and thunderings and voices****”* personify the majesty and power of God.

The ***seven lamps*** have already been defined as the ***seven Spirits of God (The Holy Spirit)***. The torches are emblematic of the illuminating power of God’s word given to man by the Holy Spirit. *“For the prophecy came not in* ***old*** *time by the will* ***of*** *man: but holy* ***men******of*** *God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet. 1:21).*

***The Four Creatures (Rev. 4:6-8)***

***“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. 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. 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.”***

Separating John from God was the ***sea of glass***. Many view the ***sea of glass*** as standing for the transcendence of God. No doubt it denotes the separation between the Creator and the creature. It is not until the righteous receive their new names, white robes, and final entrance into heaven that the sea of glass is abolished.

Who are these four creatures? First the King James translation uses the word ***beasts***. This is inaccurate because these heavenly creatures are **not beasts** but living creatures. The four creatures are like the seraphim’s in Isaiah’s vision. In the book of Revelation, they are mentioned twenty times. Each time they are seen praising and worshiping God. They are also directly involved in God’s providential judgment against the wicked.

The appearances of the four creatures are representative of all of God’s creation. The lion suggests the untamed creatures. The ox represents the tamed. The man personifies God’s greatest creation. Lastly, the eagle defines those smaller animals that roam the sky and sea.

Because these creatures are closest to the throne, they share in His majestic qualities. The ***eyes around about and within*** enhances their ability to see all things externally and internally. They never rest because they are constantly at service to God.

***Worshiping God (Rev. 4:9-11)***

***“And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,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,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.”***

After the introduction of the twenty-four elders and the seraphim’s, the crowns are thrown before the throne. Honor and praise is offered by the prostrated subjects declaring, “***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.”***

Paul wrote concerning Christ, *“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him” (Col. 1:16).* John would later write in the book of Revelation, “*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” (Rev. 10:6).*

John makes it imperative that the reader understand the underline reason why God is to be worshiped! HE IS THE CREATOR! As the Creator, He has power over His creation. His destruction of the Roman Empire is based upon the premise that He has power over the clay (Isa. 64:8).

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**THE BOOK OF THE LAMB**

**(Revelation 5:1-4)**

***The Book***

***“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” (Rev. 5:1).***

In the book of Ezekiel, the great prophet viewed a book written ***within*** and ***without (Ezk. 2:9, 10)***. John sees a book that was written ***within*** and on the ***backside***. The similarities between the two visions point to a complete prophesy.

***Seven Seals (Rev. 5:1)***

The book has God’s seal. This is indicated by the number seven. If it is sealed by God, only God’s elect can open the scroll. Many of God’s revelations were given to the prophets of old. The early disciples were also privileged to receive personal messages from Jehovah. This revelation in the form of a scroll could only be opened by one person, Jesus Christ!

***The Question (Rev. 5:2-14)***

***“And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon” (Rev. 5:2-4).***

A powerful angel asks the question, “*Who is worthy to open the book; and to loose the seals thereof?”* Not one human soul was worthy to open the book. John is grieving over the reality of the situation. It was Paul who proclaimed, “*As it is written, There is* ***none******righteous****, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10).*

During despair, there is hope. *“And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof” (Rev. 5:5).* Among the Hebrews, the lion was the symbol of the tribe of Judah. The *root of David* identifies this Lion as being Christ (Heb. 7:14; 2 Sam. 7:11-14).

After the question is asked, and the answer is given audibly; John visually sees the Lord. *“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. 5:6).*

This Lion of Judah is seen as a Lamb. Just not any lamb, but a slain lamb. This is an animal with ***seven horns*** and ***seven eyes*** which are stated to be the ***seven Spirits***. In the ancient world, horns were a sign of power. The Lamb having ***seven*** horns signifies that Christ is all powerful (omnipotent). The ***seven*** eyes equate to the Messiah’s ability to see all things, and to know all things (Omniscient). The ***seven*** Spirits completes the definition of Christ being God. He is omnipresent.

During the ministry of Christ, He promised His disciples that He would be with them always, *even unto the end of the world (Matt. 28:20).* To fulfill His promise, the Lord sent the Holy Spirit. He guided the apostles *into all truth, and brought to their remembrance all things that Jesus had taught (Jn. 14:26).*

*“And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne” (Rev. 5:7).* The *sea of glass* is no barrier to the Son of Man. It is no small coincidence that the book is in God’s right hand. “*Therefore being by the* ***right******hand*** *of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear” (Acts 2:33).*

Once Christ has the book in His possession, the four beasts, and twenty-four elders are viewed bowing and praising Him. Each one of the elders had a harp and a golden vial clutched in their hands (Rev. 5:8). The reader should note that the ***golden vials*** represent the ***prayers of the saints*** (Rev. 5:9). If the vials are used figuratively, then it is necessary to take the ***harps*** figuratively! They simply represent praise!

***A New Song (Rev. 5:9, 10)***

***“ And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”***

We continue to sing praises to God for the sacrifice of Christ. “*For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the* ***sacrifice*** *of himself” (Heb. 9:26).* It is beyond words what the Messiah had accomplished for the salvation of all mankind. No song of praise, or bend of knee, can fully express the thankfulness that the penitent sinner has for the slain Lamb.

The phrase, “***we shall reign on earth***” does not imply that the Lord is going to build a physical kingdom upon this earth. It is not a premillennial proof text. Because of the Lamb’s sacrifice, He made it possible for the saints to be both ***priests*** and ***kings***. Jesus stated to Peter, “*I will give you the keys to the Kingdom, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loosed in heaven*” (Matt. 16:19). He would further exclaim, *“My* ***kingdom******is******not******of******this******world****: if* ***my******kingdom*** *were* ***of******this******world****, then would* ***my*** *servants fight, that I should* ***not*** *be delivered to the Jews: but now* ***is******my******kingdom******not*** *from hence” (Jn. 18:36).*

***Ten Thousand Times Ten Thousand and Thousands of Thousands (Rev. 5:11-14)***

***“And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. 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. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.”***

The singing that John heard was from an innumerable number of hosts. The number ***ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands*** is defining a great multitude. This ensemble of worshipers includes the angels, the four beasts around the throne, and the twenty-four elders.

**CHAPTER FIVE**

**THE FIRST SIX SEALS**

**(Rev. 6:1-7:17)**

***The First Seal & the White Horse (Rev. 6:1, 2).***

***“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. 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.”***

Keep in mind that John is receiving a vision concerning the fall of Rome. Secular history is always distorted, prejudicial, and often inaccurate. God’s description of events is pure. Who is the rider of the white horse?

When the first seal is broken, John hears a voice that says, “***Come and see***.” John can visibly see a rider on a white horse with a bow. The rider is given a crown.

We first note that the rider of the horse is not Christ. He is the one who has opened the seal releasing the rider. His main mission is to go forth “***conquering, and to conquer.***”

The color white is symbolic of ***purity***, but it can also be defined as ***victory***. The crown given to the rider is a victory crown (*stephanos*). In perspective, the horseman is a servant of the King. It was the psalmist who wrote, “*If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready” (Psa. 7:12).*

How did Christ conquer the world? Paul said, “*Nay, in all these things we are more than* ***conquer****ors through him that loved us” (Rom. 8:37).* The victory of the saints was not won by bloodshed or violence. Those early disciples pierced the hearts of men by the gospel. Luke writes, *“And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world* ***upside******down*** *are come hither also” (Acts 17:6).*

***The Second Seal and the Rider of the Red Horse (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.”***

This second horseman is riding a red horse. The rider of the white horse was given a crown; this rider is given a great sword. He is told to take this sword and eliminate peace on the earth. Jesus during His earthly ministry said that He came not to bring *peace* on the earth but a *sword* (Matt. 10:34). He further proclaimed, *“For I am come to set a man at* ***variance*** *against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law” (Matt. 10:35).*

Red is the symbol of conflict. The rider himself represents war. Not only in the physical sense, but spiritually speaking. The internal conflict within the Roman Empire was damaging. Their treatment of Christians, and others, who refused to pay homage to Caesar or the false gods, was hideous.

***The Third Seal and the Black Horse (Rev. 6:5, 6)***

***“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. 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.”***

When Christ opens the third seal, a rider on a **black horse** emerges. This horseman is holding a set of balances. In the midst of the four beasts, John hears a voice say, “*A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and wine*.”

If the rider of the white horse is defined as the gospel piercing the hearts of men; the rider of the red horse represents war; the black horse depicts famine. The answer is given when the prices of necessities skyrocket. The costs of *barley* and *wheat* increased because they became scarce. Whereas, items like *oil* and *wine* were plenteous.

In a real famine the oil and wine would have been affected. One must remember that it is God who is directing these events in the book of Revelation. Evidently, the oil and wine are costly items that would become worthless during a time of conflict and famine. Throughout history the necessities of life are always more valuable during turbulent times. Esau was even submissive to giving up his birthright for a bowl of soup when he returned home from the fields famished (Gen. 25:29-34).

***The Fourth Seal and the Pale Horse (Rev. 6:7, 8)***

***“And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. 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.”***

The rider of the pale horse is identified as death. John uses the four sore judgments quoted in Ezekiel when addressing the methods of destruction used by the horseman (Ezek. 5:16, 17; 14:21).

The rider of the pale horse sums up the past two riders and their missions. The *sword, hunger, and death* places emphasis on the sphere of Rome’s demise. You cannot escape the judgment of God nor His wrath.

The *beasts of the earth* would be part of the destructive forces used by the rider of the pale horse. David said to Goliath, *“This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild* ***beasts*** *of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel” (1 Sam. 17:46).*

What is depicted here is the slaughter of a great army. After the battle had been fought, the dead, as well as the wounded, are abandoned. There is no one left to nurse their wounds or bury the dead. Hence, the wild beasts devour their flesh. This display of horror is parallel to Ezekiel’s vision (Ezek. 5:17).

***The Fifth Seal (Rev. 6:9-11)***

***“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: 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? 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 fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.”***

The opening of the fifth seal underlines the reason why the four horsemen were sent. They were seeking revenge upon those who persecuted and killed God’s elect. These were martyred souls underneath the altar of God. They are defined as the ones who were **“*slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held*” (Rev. 6:9).**

Why underneath the altar? These spirits were in ***Paradise***, not heaven! According to the scriptures, the souls of the dead dwell in ***Hades***. ***Paradise***, also called ***Abraham’s bosom***, is the place where the righteous dwell until the final judgment (Lk. 16:22). On the other side of ***Hades*** is ***Tartarus.*** This is the temporary abode of the lost. Upon Christ return, those in ***Paradise*** will go to heaven with Jesus; and those in ***Tartarus*** will be cast into ***Gehennah***.

The righteous souls are given ***white robes***. They endured the trials of their faith and had won the victory. They are told to ***“rest yet for a little season.”*** In other words, *be patient a little longer*. God determines when it is time to act. At the time appointed, nations crumble before Him, and all of creation stands in awe of His majesty.

***The Sixth Seal (Rev. 6:12-17)***

***“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;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. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. 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; 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: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”***

***“There was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood”*** is like the picture painted by Isaiah concerning the fall of Babylon (Isa. 13:10-13). Jesus also uses the same descriptive events when He spoke of the fall of Jerusalem to His apostles (Matt. 24:29f). These physical anomalies are used to describe a judgment cast upon a people or nation.

“*The stars of the heavens fell unto earth*” (vs. 13), and the “*fig tree casting her untimely figs*,” are statements used to point to the fall of governments (Joel 2:10; Jer. 4:23, 24, Isa. 13:9, 10). The *mountains* and *islands* in verse fourteen figuratively speak of the different political offices in the empire of Rome.

There are those scholars who feel that John used these Old Testament symbols and then defined them differently. This writer feels this perspective is incorrect. John used familiar symbols. He wanted the churches to understand the meaning by using the context in which they were used. Though John’s vision is revelatory, it is accessed by the knowledge given to the churches through inspiration.

In the presentation of verses fifteen and sixteen, John views the wicked trying to flee from the wrath of God. Their natural instincts led to places they thought were safe (behind rocks and dens). The mountain and rocks may represent Rome’s national leaders. For whatever reason, people feel that there is safety hiding behind their leadership. In the empire of Rome, all trust was given to Caesar. Among the masses, he was god. How little did Rome realize the mighty power of Jehovah?

Before the fall of the Roman Empire, calculated invasions coupled with famine and pestilence would chisel away at her foundation. It took hundreds of years for the walls to crumble, and her inner political structure to be destroyed. Yet it was not the Goths or barbarians, the greed and selfishness, nor the internal decadence that would destroy her; it was God!

“***For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”*** This was not just a day of vengeance; it was a GREAT DAY OF VENGEANCE! Isaiah exclaimed, “*Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with* ***wrath*** *and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it” (Isa. 13:9).*

There will always be a day of reckoning. This is the day when God acts, and man answers for his disobedience. Paul wrote, “*But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the* ***judgment*** *seat of Christ” (Rom. 14:10).*

***The Seal of God (Rev. 7:1-8)***

***“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. 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, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. 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. 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. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. 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. 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.”***

Throughout the ages, God has always showed His concern for the righteous. In this scene, four angels are viewed standing at the four corners of the earth holding back the ***four winds***. These winds represent God’s destructive powers. The winds are not going to blow until He has sealed His elect.

The ***earth, sea,*** and ***trees*** have been interpreted several ways. First, there are those who feel that the earth signifies the *unbelievers*. The sea depicts society in turmoil. The trees represent the rich and powerful. However, men are usually guilty of reading more into the symbols than what is necessary. In this scene, the great winds will not harm any part of the world until the righteous have been sealed.

The ***seal of God upon their foreheads*** was not to be taken literally. God knows His people. These elects are equated to be one hundred and forty-four thousand. This is simply interpreted as “*a great number*.” Homer Hailey writes, “*No discernable reason is disclosed for the arrangement of the names as they appear in this list. Judah, through whom the Messiah came, is listed first; and Benjamin, the youngest of the twelve, is listed last. It is interesting to note that Ephraim and Dan are not listed, though Manasseh and Joseph are. Levi, who received no land inheritance, appears among the twelve, although his name does not appear in some of the Old Testament lists. (****11****)*

Why would John’s list differ from the Old Testament record? John had no intention of wanting the reader to take the list literally. This numbered people were not meant to represent the Jewish nation. Paul proclaimed, “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male or female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28).*

If John was not writing about the Jews, who was he addressing? The sealing was for the righteous living upon the earth. It would be a dishonor to the multitude of Gentile Christians to be excluded in this sealing.

***The Great Multitude (Rev. 7:9-12)***

***“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;And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. 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,Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.”***

To separate the 144,000 from the Great Multitude, it must be noted that those in white robes are those who died for the faith. The 144,000 are living upon the earth and are being sealed to protect them from the wrath of God that is about to be unleased upon Rome.

As the multitude assemble before the throne, the angels, four beasts, and the elders fall on their faces before God and offer praises to the King. They proclaim that all *blessings, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might* belong to Him.

***An Elder’s Response (Rev. 7:13-17)***

One of the elders asks John, ***“What are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they?”*** Without hesitation, John replies, “***Sir, thou knowest***.” John had no clue concerning the identity of the great multitude.

The elder replies, “*These are they which came out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb*” (Rev. 7:14). The multitudes were made up of the persecuted saints that had not denied the faith. They were from all *nations, kindred’s, people*, and *tongues*. The 144,000 were still going through the persecution. The great multitude had finished their fight and had received white robes being cleansed in the blood of Christ.

Standing in the presence of God, arrayed in white robes, was the greatest accomplishment of their lives. No longer will they suffer from the hands of men or be burned by the sun. Their thirst is now quenched by the *living fountains of waters*, which were provided for them by the Lamb (Christ). *No more tears* would they shed. They had watch their families butchered. Their children thrown to lions dressed up like sheep. Abuse, torment, and torture were inflicted upon them daily. All that sorrow and suffering had come to an end. Sadly, for Rome, the four winds were going to be released, and vengeance was about to be taken.

(11) Hailey, p. 205.

**CHAPTER VI**

**THE SEVENTH SEAL AND THE SEVEN TRUMPES**

**(Revelation 8:1-11:19)**

***The Seventh Seal (Rev. 8:1)***

***“And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.”***

So far, the destruction upon the Roman Empire was great, but not enough to cause her to fall. The seventh seal being opened would bring about her total demise.

The ***silence*** in heaven for ***half an hour*** reveals a melodramatic event unfolding in heaven. Zechariah said, “*Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation” (Zech. 2:13).* God is never pleased when He has to destroy His creation. The devastating events that were about to befall Rome would be forever recorded in the annals of history. In heaven, all who were present paused in silent meditation. God’s vengeance was about to be released. A funeral dirge was about to take place.

***The Seven Angels with Seven Trumpets (Rev. 8:2)***

***“And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.”***

In this next scene John sees seven angels standing before the throne of God. Each one is handed a trumpet in which he is to sound when commanded. These heavenly servants react only when instructed.

***Another Angel (Rev. 8:3-6)***

***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. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. 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. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.***

After the seven angels are given their trumpets, John views yet another angel standing before the altar carrying a golden censer. The censer is filled with incense and mingled with the prayers of the saints. At first glance one would presume that the angel was Christ since He is the mediator between God and man (John 14:6). However, this is not so! The angel merely assumes the place of the priest of the Old Covenant who burned the incense. The writer is trying to convey the fact that the prayers of the saints have been heard, and God is now responding. The angel taking the fire from the altar and casting it down to earth expresses God’s reaction and judgment against the oppressors. The symbolism means nothing more and nothing less.

***Thunders, voices, lightning’s, and earthquakes*** are qualifiers concerning God’s majesty. The saints were praying for vengeance upon those who persecuted them. Against those who threatened Judah, the Lord said, “*She shall be visited of Jehovah of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with a whirlwind and tempest, and the flame of a devouring fire” (Isa. 29:6).* The great day of wrath had come. The saint’s plea had now been answered. This is noted in verse six when the seven angels prepare themselves to sound.

***The First Trumpet (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.”***

These symbolic plagues described by John are like those cast upon Egypt in the days of Moses. The “***hail and fire mingled with blood***” is parallel to the seventh plague mentioned in Exodus chapter nine and verse twenty-four.

The ***earth, trees, and grass*** are all associated with vegetative life. This would give insight to the possible meaning of the first trumpet sounding. In other words, crops are destroyed by famine causing many of the population to die of starvation.

***The third part*** is simply stated to imply a partial retaliatory judgment (2 Pet. 3:10). In other words, a great number of people would perish. Those who remain would have the opportunity to heed the warning or face the remaining judgments that were about to be released.

***The Second Trumpet (Rev. 8:8, 9)***

***“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;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.”***

John uses a giant volcano erupting to introduce the next scene in his vision. The Roman world was aware of the destructive forces behind an erupting volcano. In A.D. 79, Mt. Vesuvius, spilling out dangerous gases and lava, destroyed the cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii. **(12)** The disaster happened so quickly that archaeological diggings have uncovered corpses preserved in natural positions. This would probably indicate that dangerous gases were the immediate cause of death. Then, the flowing lava incased their bodies.

In this pictorial prediction by John, the main emphasis is upon the ***ships*** at sea. During a literally volcanic eruption, the ships would be the saviors of the populace. Howbeit, in this scene it is the ***creatures*** of the sea and the ***ships*** that are targeted.

Rome was dependent on her great fleet of merchant ships to supply the empire. Trade was a necessity for the survival of her citizens. To damage or destroy a great number of these vessels would cripple Rome tremendously. This part of the prophecy could easily be fulfilled by the ravaging of pirates and horrific storms.

***The Third Trumpet (Rev. 8:10, 11)***

“***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;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.”***

Falling from heaven, John sees a ***great star***. It lands specifically upon the ***rivers*** and ***fountains*** of water. The star is given the name, ***Wormwood***. The term is a general name for the class of plants known as *Artemisia.* In the Old Testament it is used in connection with idolatry (Jer, 9:15; Deut. 29:18; Amos 7:12). It is further used to display the judgment of God upon the wicked. God’s bitterness toward the disobedient is personified in the title. **(13)**

Some propose that this plague defines the sin of idolatry. Since Rome refused to recognize the living waters of God’s word, and continued to drink from the waters of idolatry, the Lord destroyed them.

The most probable answer is that the star represents disease and pestilence inflicted upon Rome. In many portions of the empire water was limited. In the ancient world, the same waters they drank from, they also bathed in and watered their animals. Throughout history waterways and tributaries have been poisoned by opposing forces to conquer a village, town, or specific province. In the Old Testament there are many references to areas where the water was poison or bitter (Exod. 15:23; 2 Kings 4:39, 40). In Persian, Greek, and Roman writings there are numerous examples of the use of dead animals to contaminate wells and other water sources to defeat an enemy. In 128 B.C., the Roman army poisoned wells in Asia Minor that were relied upon by Aristonicus and his followers to ensure a Roman victory.

***The Fourth Trumpet (Rev. 8:12, 13)***

***“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. 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!”***

This vivid picture given by John depicts the turmoil within the government of Rome. It relates back to when Joseph had a dream concerning the *“sun, moon, and eleven stars”* bowing before him (Gen. 37:9, 10). Once Jacob heard his son’s dream, he asked, “*Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee*?”

In John’s revelation, Rome is crumbling because of internal decadence. Domitian, the Roman emperor who ruled during this period, would die at the age of forty-four. He was assassinated on the 18th of September A.D. 96. His executioner was Stephanus, his niece’s steward. He stabbed the emperor to death with the aid of several helpers. **(14)**

Domitian believed that he was a god. He rendered the Senate’s power as obsolete. He was the divine despot to rule with an iron fist. Near the end of his reign, the great persecution against Jews and Christians began. There is little doubt that insanity, greed, and carelessness led to his demise.

The term “*a third*” signified that this was just part of the judgment cast upon Rome. After the fourth trumpet sounded, an eagle is seen flying through the midst of heaven. The eagle was a bird of ill-omen to the ancients. The message presented warns those who put their trusts in men to look to God.

***The Fifth Trumpet & The First Woe (Rev. 9:1-12)***

***“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. 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. 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. 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. 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. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. 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. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. 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. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months. 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. One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.”***

***“Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. And to him was given the key of the bottomless pit” (vs. 1).*** The *bottomless pit* is the same as the *abyss* penned in Luke 8:31. It is the infernal region to which demons are consigned.

Once the abyss is opened, John sees a cloud of smoke arise out of it. Suddenly, out of the smoke John views a plague of locusts. These are not ordinary locusts. These infuriating creatures harm not the “*grass of the earth or any green thing” (vs. 3).* They receive the Divine command to torment all the inhabitants of the earth, except those who had the “*seal of God on their foreheads*.” The plague of locusts would inflict the empire for a period of fi*ve months*. This time frame is not to be taken literally but looked upon as a short period of persecution.

In verse seven, John discloses a clue to the meaning of this part of the vision. He states, “***And the shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle; and their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men.”*** These creatures were not locusts at all, but an army of soldiers.

In describing this army, John says they had “***hair like women’s hair”*** and ***“teeth like a lion’s***.” They also had “***faces like men***” riding into battle wearing “***breastplates of iron.***”

What John is witnessing is an invasion of Rome by barbaric tribes. Alaric (A.D. 400), who led the Visigoths, and Atilla the Hun (A.D. 451), were just two mentioned in secular history. **(13)** Rome’s demise was inevitable. Their inhumanity to man was iconic. They pushed until their enemies pushed back.

“***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” (vs. 11).*** The two terms, one in Greek, the other in Hebrew, is interpreted *Destroyer*. This army that arises from the bottomless pit does not worship God. Throughout history, God uses godless nations to inflict punishment upon others. Like the Romans, these barbaric people worshiped false gods.

In this scene of vengeance, these vicious soldiers were motivated by greed. They would plunder the empire of her treasures and destroy her citizens without mercy.

After the fifth trumpet sounds, the angel expresses to John that two more woes are to follow (vs. 12). The *first woe* had now passed.

***The Sixth Trumpet and the Second Woe (Rev. 9:13-21)***

***“And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. 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. And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them. 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. 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. 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. 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: Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.”***

***“And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates” (Rev. 9:13, 14).*** The *golden altar* is before the throne upon which the prayers of the saints were offered (Rev. 8:3). In the Mosaic temple the *golden altar* stood in the holy place between the table of shewbread and the golden candlesticks.

The voice coming from the ***four horns*** is not identified. Horns reflect power in the Old and New Testaments (Exod. 27:2, 1 Chron. 25:25, Psa. 75:10). We note that the voice is authoritative ushering in the angels standing by the River Euphrates.

The River Euphrates had always been used in Israel’s history as a border. Abraham was told, *“In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river* ***Euphrates****” (Gen. 15:18).* It was also the boundary line where Pharaoh would be defeated by the Babylonian army allowing them to push their way into Egypt (Jer. 46:6-10). John’s vision personifies the River Euphrates as a boundary from which a great army would emerge.

***“And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay a third of men” (Rev. 9:15).*** The period pronounced is a Divine declaration. God knows exactly the year, the hour, the minute, and the second when His Divine retribution would be accomplished. God has His agenda. Concerning the bringing forth of Christ, Paul writes, *“But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law”* (Gal. 4:4).

Once the trumpet sounds, John sees a great army of horsemen. This is a picture of two million cavalry soldiers riding full gallop towards their enemy. Summers exclaims that this troop of cavalry would stretch one mile wide and eighty-five miles in length. **(15)**

In verse seventeen, the riders are described as having “***breastplates of fire (fiery red), and of jacinth (hyacinth blue), and brimstone (sulfur yellow).***” This similitude relates directly to the ***fire, smoke***, and ***brimstone*** which proceeded out of the mouths of the horses. This correlates with verse eighteen when ***the fire, smoke, and brimstone*** are identified as plagues.

From a historical perspective, John sees the great Parthian cavalry located on the eastern border of Rome’s dominion. They were Rome’s most feared enemy. They ravaged her cities, burned her villages, and destroyed her citizens without remorse. ***Tails like serpents*** is an expression that magnifies the infliction of pain delivered by the Parthian Cavalry.

Verse twenty places emphasis on the fact that this was a partial judgment against Rome. When the fighting had ceased, Rome still refused to repent. They were guilty of worshiping demons, idolatry, murder, sorceries, sexual immorality, and thefts (vs. 21). Concerning Domitian, it was written, “*Domitian was extremely lustful, and called his constant sexual activities ‘bed-wrestling,’ as though it were a sport. Some say that he preferred to depilate his concubines himself and would go swimming with the commonest of prostitutes.”* ***(16)***

***An Interlude: The Little Book and the Measuring Rod (Rev. 10:1-11:14)***

Between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals (chapter seven), the Spirit paused to unmask two significant visions which would give assurance to the oppressed saints. After the second woe there is an interlude which serves as a transition from the second to the third woe.

***The Little Book (10:1-11)***

***“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: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,And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. 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. And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven,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: 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. 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. 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. 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. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.***

In this scene, we have an angel that is ordained of God to carry the little book. In chapter one Christ is said to have “***his countenance as the sun***” (1:16), He “***cometh with the clouds***” (1:7), and “***his feet like unto burnished brass***” (1:15). The strong angel of chapter ten is identified as equal to the strong angel of Revelation 5:2 and 18:21. The appearance of the angel with the “r***ainbow as a halo*** ***around his head***, ***his face like the sun***, ***and his feet as pillars of fire,”*** indicates the angel’s close relationship with the Godhead.

The ***little book*** held by the strong angel is different than the sealed book of chapter five. The sealed book contained God’s eternal purpose and only the Lamb was able to receive its contents. Concerning the ***little book,*** it was to be given to John. He would be able to read and discern the message.

The angel in verse two, setting his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, marks the domain of the message to be given. The message was a universal declaration of the coming destruction upon the inhabitants of the earth. Once the angel is properly stationed, John hears the “***seven thunders utter their voices***” (vs. 3). The ***seven thunders*** enlist the concept of perfection, completeness, and final judgments that God will cast on Rome.

In verse four, John was told that he was to “***seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them***.” This informs the reader that God divulged certain things to John that was not to be written down. Though John desired to scribe the message, it was not to be permitted.

Verses five thru seven focuses on the powerful angel lifting his hand to heaven and swearing before God and all creation that, “***there should be delay no longer***.” The angel then proclaims that “***in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel***” the mystery of God would be finished. In other words, Rome, the great persecutor of the righteous, would be no more. The declaration to “***his servants the prophets***,” relates back to those who cried underneath the altar. They pleaded for vengeance, and now it had been granted.

In verses eight through eleven, John is instructed to take the ***little book*** from the angel and eat it. He was told that it would make his “***stomach bitter, but it will be sweet as honey in your mouth***.” This scene is similar to God’s command to Ezekiel and Jeremiah (Ezek. 2:8-3:3; Jer. 15:16f).

The meaning is simple. Preaching God’s message is a blessing and a burden! The privilege of being able to preach the gospel message is as sweet as honey. Howbeit, preaching a message of doom and destruction can be burdensome. Jeremiah felt the pressure of preaching a message of condemnation. He wept throughout his ministry, and throughout history he has been called the “***weeping prophet***!”

***The Measuring Rod (Rev. 11:1, 2)***

***“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. 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.”***

The Greek word for *“temple”* is more properly rendered “*sanctuary.*” Paul referred to the church as being the “*sanctuary of God*” (1 Cor. 3:16, 17; Eph. 2:21). The measuring of the sanctuary is similar to the command given to Ezekiel and Zechariah (Ezek. 42:20, Zech. 2:5). The concept of John measuring the sanctuary was for protective reasons. God was having John mark His domain. Those that were faithful would not be harmed when the *seventh trumpet* sounded.

***“The court without the temple,”*** alludes to the *Court of the Gentiles* of Herod’s temple. It is not to be taken literally. If this were true, the Gentiles would be the aim of God’s destruction. The spiritual application denotes the worldly and unfaithful of the church.

The number ***forty-two*** is the same as the ***1260*** days or ***3 ½*** years (Rev. 11:3, 12:14). The interpretation of all three equates to a *short period of time*.

***The Two Witnesses (Rev. 11:3-14)***

***“And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly” (Rev. 11:3-14).***

The two witnesses of verse three are ministers of the gospel message. It is apparent that they preach during perilous times. Therefore, they are clothed in ***sackcloth***. The ***1,260*** days expresses the short duration of preaching Christ in the Roman world.

***“These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth” (Rev. 11:4).*** John does not attempt to hide the identity of the two witnesses. This scene is similar to the vision of Zechariah (Zech. 4:2-14). The two witnesses identified by Zechariah were Joshua, the high priest, and Zerubbabel, the governor who encouraged the Hebrew people to rebuild the temple. This accomplishment, according to God, was “*not by might, nor by power, but my Spirit saith Jehovah of hosts*” (Zech. 4:6).

In verse four, the two witnesses are likened to Elijah. The great prophet called fire down from heaven twice to destroy his enemies (2 Kings 1:8-12). They are also compared to Moses when he pronounced judgment against Korah (Num. 16:29).

“***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” (Rev. 11:6).*** John is referencing the drought that Elijah prayed for in 1 Kings 17 & 18, and the Nile being turned to blood before the great exodus of the Hebrew people during the days of Moses (Exodus 7:12-21).

Who are these two witnesses? First, we note they are martyred for preaching the gospel (vs. 7). Second, their bodies will lie in the street of the great city which is the accumulation of three ancient cities: Sodom, Egypt, and Jerusalem (vs. 8). Later the great city will be identified as the one “***which reigneth over the kings of the earth***” (Rev. 17:18). Thus, the two witnesses represent the apostles (Mark 6:7), and those who followed in their steps to preach Jesus.

***“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. 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” (Rev. 11:9, 10).***

“***They of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations***,” and “***they that dwell upon the earth***,” are one and the same. The desecration of the two witnesses and the rejoicing attitude of the persecutors show the climax of their hatred toward Christianity. The saving message often torments the disobedient (Rev. 11:10).

The celebration over killing the two witnesses comes to an end after 3 ½ days. The two prophets arise from their tombs and are taken up into heaven. The miraculous event is viewed by their enemies. Those who once rejoiced are now distressed. It is at this moment that a great earthquake occurs that destroys a tenth part of the city (Rev. 11:11-13).

John is describing the massive persecution of Christians brought about by Rome. Their cruelties toward the faithful became the catalyst that brought them to their knees. Jesus once declared, “*But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a* ***millstone*** *were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matt. 18:6).*

The city of Rome being partially destroyed would place emphasis on the seat of the empire losing its hold on the rest of the world. Though in A.D. 313, Licinius the Great attained the throne and granted tolerations for Christians; the fate of the empire was sealed. Finally, in A.D. 476, the Roman Empire would fall never to rise again.

***The Seventh Trumpet Sounding & the Third Woe (Rev. 11:14-19)***

***“The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly. 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. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,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. 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. 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.”***

After a brief interlude, a transitional statement is given between the second and third woe. Silence had followed the opening of the seventh seal (Rev. 8:1), but now voices follow the sounding of the seventh trumpet. The voices are probably the cries of the four living creatures.

The song by the creatures praise the victory of the saints, “***The kingdoms of the world are become the kingdoms of our Lord.”*** As the seventh seal served as a prelude to the sounding of the trumpets; the sounding of the seventh trumpet is a prelude to the events that follow.

Verse eighteen alludes to a vision given to Daniel***: “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”***

By a careful comparison of Revelation eleven and Daniel seven, the reader gains insight on the judgment that takes place. “***The time of the dead”*** speaks of the spiritually dead. The saints had cried for judgment against their oppressor. Now, those that “***destroy the earth***” (ancient Rome) will receive her just condemnation.

***“And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament” (Rev. 11:19).*** In the tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant was in the *Holy of Holies*. The Shekinah, which was the *glory of His presence,* dwelt above the ark between the two cherubim’s (Exodus 25:22).

This reflective scene is meant to declare to ***covenant*** and ***promises*** of God. God informed the saints that they would be protected during this period of destruction against Rome. John offers comfort to the saints that the final axe is about to fall, and the saints will be delivered.

(12) Waddey, Class Notes

(13) Gaius Suetonius Tranquillas, *The Twelve Caesars*, Translated by Robert Graves, (London England: Penguine Books, 1957),

pp. 311, 312.

(14) Will and Ariel Durant, *The Story of Civilization*, (New York: America Schuster, 1944), vs. 3: “Caesar and Christ,” pp. 428,

429.

(15) Ray Summers, *Worthy Is the Lamb*, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1951), p. 159.

(16) Tranquillas, p. 313.

**CHAPTER VII**

**THE BATTLE OF THE LAMB**

**(REVELATION 12:1-14:20)**

***The Radiant Woman with Child (Rev. 12:1-17)***

***“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:And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. 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. 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. 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. And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. 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. 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. 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. 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. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. 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. 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. 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. 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.”***

In Revelation 10:9-11, John received the ***little book*** in which he devoured. The contents are now going to be shared in the next nine chapters. Up until this scene, John shared bits and pieces of the pictorial overview of God’s judgment against Rome. Now John unfolds the details to the devastating fall of the empire.

First, John sees “*a great wonder in heaven*” (vs. 1). He views a woman “***clothed with sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars***.” In Matthew twenty-four, Jesus used the ***sun, moon, and stars*** to symbolize the fall of Jerusalem that would take place in A.D. 70. Howbeit, the meaning in Revelation is not presenting the same sequence of events.

The ***twelve stars*** are stated to be part of the crown worn upon the woman’s head. In chapter one, the seven stars were defined as the messengers who verbalized God’s message to the seven churches. However, there are twelve stars in this chapter, and not seven.

The twelve may represent the twelve leaders over the tribes of Israel. This would signify that John was viewing the past when the promise of Abraham was fulfilled in Christ. It must not be forgotten that John often uses Old Testament symbols to denote the New Testament church. This is the probable explanation in this case. The crown refers to spiritual Israel. It focuses on God’s ordained plan of redemption. The woman radiates with the light of God’s will for the church.

Verse two depicts a pregnant woman about to give birth. This may be an allusion to the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the birth of Christ, “***Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child” (Isa. 66:7).*** This is apparent when John writes concerning the birth of the child in verse five. The writer sustains that a ***“man child”*** was born who was to “***rule all nations with a rod of iron***.” The child is furthered described as going up to heaven and sitting on His throne. It does not take much thought to come to the realization that John is speaking about Jesus.

Between verses two and five, the enemy of the woman and the child is described in detail. ***“And there appeared another wonder in heaven”*** is introduced to pause the scene of the woman and child and focus on the ***great red dragon***. The depiction of the dragon having ***seven heads, ten horns, and seven crowns*** is like the prophecy of the coming of Antiochus Epiphanes in the book of Daniel (Den. 8:10).

Red***,*** which is the color of blood, envisions the dragon’s murderous character. Jesus described Satan to His disciples as “*a murderer from the beginning*” (Jn. 8:44). As the Devil was able to tempt Adam and Eve to fall, and to have them driven out of the garden, he seeks to drive God’s elect from their holy habitation.

The ***seven heads*** focus on Satan’s perfection of evil. There is no good in him. He is the perfect representation of all that is evil and unholy.

The ***ten horns*** signify Satan’s diabolical methods of fighting against all that is good. He uses whatever he can to carry out his plans to destroy the church.

The ***seven crowns*** are not the victory crowns (***stephanos***) given to the saints. In this pictorial, Satan is wearing a royal headdress (***diadema***). (18) In the realm of evil, he is king!

In verse four, the dragon stands before the woman in labor waiting to destroy the child, “***for to devour her child as soon as it was born***.” Yet God intercedes and lifts the child to heaven. Without a doubt, this scene focuses on the resurrection and ascension of Christ.

“***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. 12:6).*** Mary, after the birth of Jesus, fled from Bethlehem fearing the death of her son. Likewise, in this scene, the woman is seen fleeing into the wilderness. First, she flees to a place that God prepared for her. Secondly, her basic needs are supplied in the wilderness setting.

Is the woman in the wilderness Mary? We cannot say that the woman is the church, for the church did not give birth to Christ, but just the opposite. It would be more suitable that the woman represents God’s elect from both the Old and New Testaments.

In verses seven thru twelve, john presents another episode of his vision. He views the angels of heaven led by Michael the Archangel warring against Satan and his angels. After this short battle, Satan is defeated and cast out of heaven. John uses various titles to identify Satan: *Great Dragon, Old Serpent, the devil, and Satan.*

The key to this brief interlude focuses on Satan’s plot to “**deceive *the whole world****.”* His method of warfare is not by sword or spear, but by deception. After Jesus was resurrected from the dead, Satan sought to convince men that the apostles stole the body (Matt. 28:12-15). Yet by the testimony of the apostles and other witnesses of the resurrected Messiah, Satan’s plot was destroyed.

Verse ten sheds further light when John says, “***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.”***

Satan’s defeat came by the ***blood of the lamb, the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto death (Rev. 12:11).*** In turn, the saints rejoiced (Rev. 12:12) because the Old Serpent had been cast down or defeated.

In the next verse, John again brings up the persecuted woman. In this scene John views, the woman flying away from the great dragon who is seeking to destroy her (Rev. 12:14). The “***time, and times, and half a time***” is the same as the 1260 days. She runs to the wilderness which typifies God’s place of refuge allowing her to avoid being devoured by the dragon. Howbeit, before the woman could escape, the dragon spews a flood out of his mouth (Rev. 12:15).

The flood cast out of the devil’s mouth is indicative of deception and lies. It is not a literal flood but is used to denote Satan’s diabolical scheme to tempt the saints and cast doubt.

In verse sixteen, the dragon’s plot was spoiled when the earth (the unconverted) swallowed up the woman. This personifies the gospel effect upon the world. While Satan believed the church would be destroyed by the flood of lies and deceit, the truth prevailed, and many unbelievers turned.

The dragon, being angered by the success of the church, sought to make war with her remnant. Who might these be? They are the ones who ***“keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ***.” In other words, the faithful saints.

***The Sea Beasts (Rev. 13:1-10)***

***“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. 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. 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. 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? 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. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. 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. If any man has an ear, let him hear. 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.”***

In this chapter John sees a terrible beast rise from the sea. Its power is given by the dragon (vs. 4). The beast is stated to have ***seven heads*** and ***ten horns***. Each of the horns has a crown and on each of the ***heads*** is written the ***name of blasphemy***.

In Daniel seven a parallel vision is presented. The great prophet sees four beasts arising from “***the great sea***.” The ***sea*** represents nations emerging from conflict. The ***four beasts*** of Daniel’s vision are the four great empires that arose from the ashes of conflict.

The ***seven heads*** and ***ten horns*** match the great dragon’s description. The symbolism is used to show that the ***beast*** is satanic in origin. It possesses ***ten crowns*** indicating its rule over the Roman world. The ***head***, which concedes of its authority, is active in ***idolatry*** and ***blasphemy***. Hence, the ***beast*** (Rome) is submissive to the ***dragon*** (Satan).

***“And the beast that 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.”*** Homer Hailey comments: *“In the mighty world-wide Roman Empire was combined the tearing power of Chaldea (the lion), the crushing force of Medo-Persia (the bear), and the swift and ferocious character of Macedonia under Alexander (the leopard).”* ***(17)***

There can be no certainty concerning John’s description of this powerful creature. Howbeit, he must be speaking about an empire that dominated the world.

Verse three identifies one of the heads of the ***beast*** being ***wounded to death***. When all the inhabitants of the earth believed the head was dead, the wound was healed. **“*All the world wondered after the beast*.”**

The head that receives the wound was probably Nero. Seutonius, a Roman historian, writes that after Nero’s death, friends circulated that the past emperor was still alive and would soon return to “*confound his enemies*.” (**18**) After the death of Nero, the empire was thrown into a two-year state of anarchy. It would not be until Vespasian that order was restored.

***“His deadly wound was healed”*** is presumed to be the emperor Domitian. Like Nero he sought to destroy the church. He was the mirrored image of the emperor in his brutality and arrogance.

***“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?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. 13:4, 5).***

The ignorance of men is iconic throughout the Bible narrative. Men so often choose to bow before emperors and kings without acknowledging the Great Creator. Rome is only allowed to continue her course for forty-two months, the same as the three and a half years.

***“And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. 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. 13:6-8).***

The beast speaks blasphemy against God, the church (tabernacle), and them that dwell in heaven. The actions of his evil heart are manifested by him ***making war with the saints.*** His power (realm of authority) was **over *all the earth***. Yet it does not include those who are in the Lambs book of life and were slain throughout the ages.

Because of the saint’s refusal to worship the beast, God exhorts the faithful to remain firm. Why? The enslavers will soon be enslaved. Likewise, those that killed their loved ones will be killed.

***The Beast of the Earth (Revelation 13:11-17)***

***“****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. 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. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,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. 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. 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: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.”*

The first beast came from the ***sea***, whereas the second arises from the ***earth.*** The sea once again is defined as the world of turmoil and conflict. The earth is the empire in which the first beast controls. This is proven in verse twelve when the second beast “***causeth the earth and them which dwell therein***,” to worship the beast from the sea.

The beast that came out of the earth had “***two horns like a lamb***,” and spoke, “***as a dragon***” (Revelation 13:11). The horns indicate the power of the second beast. With only two horns his power was limited. The lamb is used as a religious symbol. This would conclude that the second beast had an outward religious appearance. It could mean that the second beast was the ***Commune***, the official body that was charged to enforce emperor worship.

For the second beast having the ability to ***speak like a dragon*** characterizes his servitude to the emperor. His master was the ***sea beast***, and the master of the sea beast was the ***dragon***. The dragon is ironically defined as the ***god of this world***, Satan (2 Cor. 4:4).

In Verses thirteen thru fifteen shows the second beast convincing the masses to worship the beast by deception. The great wonders and miracles were not true miracles, as Christ and His apostles performed, but deceptive tactics used by the advocates of emperor worship.

Verse fifteen enforces the fact that the second beast gave life to the first. In other words, these false prophets claimed that their magical powers came from the throne of Rome. This would imply that the people could either worship Domitian or be executed for treason.

The ***mark***, verses fifteen and sixteen, was not be taken literally. The seal that God placed on the foreheads of the righteous was symbolic (Ezek. 9:4). Likewise, the mark placed upon the right hand of idol worshippers in chapter thirteen is also to be taken figuratively.

The intent of the writer was to view the empires distaste for those who refused to bow before the emperor. They were to be rejected by Roman society. They were not allowed to purchase items in the marketplace.

***The Number of the Beast (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.”***

John informs his readers that by common deduction one would be able to know the name of the beast. Let’s note that this is not a 21st Century projection. The beast was a man who lived during the period of the apostles, and the early days of the church.

The key to unraveling the mystery of the beast begins with the number six. If the number seven defines perfection and completeness, the number six represents imperfection and incompleteness. John uses the number three times. Six, six, six simply means complete imperfection. In other words, Domitian, with all his strength and authority, was incomplete, imperfect, and unable to conquer the church.

***The Lamb and the 144,000 (Revelation 14:1-5)***

***“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. 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: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. 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. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.”***

First, what is the meaning of **Mount Zion**? Mount Zion is spoken on several occasions throughout the Old and New Testaments. John is using the name symbolically in this passage. The Hebrew author stated, “*But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels*” (Heb. 12:22). Therefore, it becomes obvious that heavenly Jerusalem and Mount Zion are one and the same.

Second, who are the 144,000? Chapter seven revealed the first mentioning of the 144,000. Looking back, they were termed to be the righteous saints who were being martyred by Rome. They were also defined as spiritual Israel. In verses two and three, John hears a voice from heaven. The singing John hears is compared to ***many waters***, ***great thunders***, and ***harpers harping with their harps.***

Both the voices and the song were unique. John defines the chorus as being the 144,000. He further declares that only they could learn the song. Why? They were the ***redeemed from the earth.***

In verses four and five, John further discloses information concerning the large gathering of the elect. He reveals that “***these are they which were not defiled by women.”*** In other words, they were virgins. If one were to take these verses literally, women would be excluded from the church. John’s intent is to unveil the unblemished quality of the martyred saints.

Not only were these saints abstaining from spiritual corruptness, they followed Christ ***whithersoever He goeth***. The apostle further adds, “***These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb***.” This definition of the righteous had been used by Paul (Rom. 16:5), and James (James 1:18).

Further, John declares that the 144,000 were those who spoke no lies or false doctrines (vs. 5). They stood for truth. Standing for truth can sometimes mean a death sentence. Isaiah, speaking of the Messiah, proclaimed, “***And He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death, because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth” (Isa. 53:9).***

***Angels of Warning (Revelation 14:6-13)***

***“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,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. 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. 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, 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: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. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. 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.”***

Verse six is the only place in the book of Revelation where the word ***gospel*** is used. It has been said that angels were never meant to preach the gospel message. Yet it should be obvious that this view is incorrect. The gospel is more than sitting down with another and teaching what he or she needs to do to be saved. That part of the gospel message was to be preached by men (Rom. 10:14). However, it was angels who pronounced the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:8-20), silenced Zacharias (Luke 1:5-22) and ministered to Jesus in the garden (Luke 22:43).

The angelical gospel message in Revelation fourteen is, “***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”*** (vs. 7).

After the first flying angel another follows. The pronouncement of this angel is simple, “***Babylon has fallen***.” Why? ***“Because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication***” (vs. 8). Babylon is Rome. This is the first usage of the title in the book, but it will become a major focus in the latter end of John’s revelation (Rev. 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2).

Do not be concerned that John uses the past tense when speaking of the fall of Rome. Jeremiah also used the past tense in his prophesies against ancient Babylon. After Jeremiah’s prediction, Babylon would not fall for another fifty years (Jeremiah 51:8).

After the second angel heralds out his message, a third angel visually appears on the scene. This angel declares a message of warning against all those who ***worship the beast and his image***. This relates back to Revelation thirteen verses twelve thru sixteen. As Christians tasted the bitter wrath of Roman tyranny, those who served the Beast would “***drink of the wine of God’s wrath***.” The picture sketched concerning their eternal destiny is further implied in verse eleven, “***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” (Rev. 14:11).***

After condemnation is declared against the wicked in chapter thirteen, the phrase, “***Here is the patience and faith of the saints***” (*Rev. 13:10*) is stated. Again, following the third angel’s warning of the wrath of God, the same proclamation is made (Rev. 14:12). This is without a doubt a great testimony to the early saints.

***The Harvest Scene (Rev. 14:14-16)***

***“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. 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. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.”***

The color ***white*** continues to represent purity or holiness. The cloud denotes judgment. When Jesus ascended to heaven in Acts chapter one, two angels declared, “*Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into the heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).*

In verses fifteen and sixteen, an angel is seen coming out of the temple in heaven, giving charge to Christ to ***thrust in thy sickle***! The angel serves as an ambassador to the Father. This is evident by him (the angel) coming out of the temple.

The ***harvest***, though associated with the final judgment in certain parts of the Bible (Matt. 13:24-30), is not used here for that reason. In this instance, the term is used to focus on the salvation of the righteous.

***The Winepress (Rev. 14:17-20)***

***“And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. 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. 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. 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.”***

The metaphorical description of the winepress speaks of the damnation of the wicked. Out of the temple comes another angel carrying a ***sharp sickle***. A second angel ascends from the ***altar.*** This altar is the ***altar of incense*** which had been used before to symbolize judgment (Rev, 8:3-5).

This vivid pictorial shows ***the sharp sickle (***God’s vengeance***) gathering the “clusters*** ***of the vine of the earth***” (the wicked). After doing such, the ***vine*** is cast into the ***great winepress***, which is defined as the ***wrath of God***. Instead of drawing juice from the ***cluster of grapes***, the winepress draws ***blood*** (vs. 20). The blood was like a great lake that was as deep as a ***horse’s bridle*** and reached the space of a ***thousand and six hundred furlongs*** (two hundred miles).

The horror of this dramatic event exceeds man’s imagination. John is trying to paint a picture of the colossal destruction that is about to befall Rome. This is not a partial judgment upon the empire. This is the final battle where there are no survivors.

(17) *Homer Hailey*, p. 285.

(18) *Tranquillas*, p. 299.

**CHAPTER VIII**

**THE SEVEN BOWLS OF WRATH (Rev. 15:1-20:10)**

***Prepare for the Final Wrath (Rev. 15:1-8)***

***“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. 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. 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. 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. And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: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. 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. 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.”***

John begins this part of the vision by introducing the ***seven angels*** who are to carry out the final judgments against the ***Beast***. This part of the vision is summed up as “***the last***.” In other words, this is God’s final act of vengeance concerning the Roman Empire.

In verse two the ***sea of glass***, which separated man from God in chapter four, is once again in view. This time the sea is mingled with fire. This description is symbolic of the persecution and trials endured by the righteous (1 Cor. 3:12-15). Their perseverance allowed the saints to stand upon the ***sea of glass*** and sing praises to Jehovah.

The ***harps of God*** are not to be taken literally. They have been used in various parts of the prophecy to represent praise. John does not diverse in verse two. The praises given to God in this chapter centers on the final victory and death blow delivered to the empire.

The ***song of Moses*** is the same song the children of Israel sang after crossing the Red Sea (Exodus 15). This is also the ***song of the Lamb***. As Moses was the leader of the Israelites out of Egypt, the Lamb is the leader of persecuted saints out of the hands of the Romans.

Verse four offers more insight on the singing of the hymn. The saints were happy because “***thy judgments are made manifest.”*** God told the saints to be patient and wait (Rev. 6:10-11). Their waiting was over. Those that once fed their children to the lions, hung their bodies upon crosses, and burned them in mass graves were about to feel the burning wrath of God’s vengeance!

Currently, John sees the ***Holy of Holies*** open before him. He views seven angels carrying the ***seven plagues***. The angel’s robes are ***pure and white***, and they are girded with ***golden breastplates***. Their attire reflects the one who commissioned them---GOD! They are His chosen vessels to carry forth the final wrath upon Rome.

***The four beasts*** are seen handing the***seven golden vials***to the***seven* angels**. The ***vials*** are defined as the ***wrath of God.*** The ***seven trumpets*** sounded out only a partial judgment that served as warning for the people of earth to repent. Now the ***bowls of wrath*** are being dispersed, not to warn, but to destroy.

In verse eight, the temple is shown to be ***full of smoke***. The smoke is iconic of the glory and power of God. John envisions God closing heaven from the inhabitants of the earth that serve the beast. He had given them time and opportunity to respond to the gospel. Upon their refusal, vengeance is cast upon them.

***The First Bowl (Rev. 16:1, 2)***

***“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. 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.”***

The first vial of wrath was poured out upon the earth. It was directed at those who ***worshiped his image.*** Most probably the ***vial of wrath*** was aimed against emperor worship. Hence, judgment was being cast against the religious leaders of Rome.

***The Second Bowl (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.”***

In this passage, John eludesto the Nile River being turned to blood (Exodus 7:17, 20). In this scene, John is not writing about a literal sea. He discloses the great masses that held their allegiance to Caesar.

When the second bowl is poured out, every man in the sea dies. To take this literally would mean that not one survivor would emerge out of the empire. John is focusing on the spiritual and not the physical. The ***masses of the sea*** were those who were spiritually dead. Their rejection of the word was blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

***The Third Bowl (Revelation 16:4-7)***

***“And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. 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. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.”***

When the ***fourth bowl*** is poured out, the sun begins to scorch men with fire. The ***fourth trumpet***, which sounded earlier, caused the ***sun, moon***, and ***stars*** not to shine. The same sun that was once darkened, blazes with a terrible fire which in turn torments the inhabitants of the earth.

In this scene, the sun mimics the gospel message. The same word that offered them salvation condemns them. This could be further expressed by their response to the plague. John states, “***They blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over the plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.”***

Some authors propose that the first four plagues are aimed at nature. In the Old Testament, God used nature as an instrument of Divine wrath (Psa. 104:4). Rome suffered great losses from volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and various other natural disasters. Let’s not forget, however, John is writing figuratively and not literally.

***The Fifth Bowl (Revelation 16:10, 11)***

***“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,And blasphemed the God of heaven because of******their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.”***

The last three bowls centered on the moral and political corruptness of Rome. The fifth bowl is poured out “***upon the seat of the beast***.” This wrath is aimed directly at Caesar.

***“And his kingdom was full of darkness”*** describes the political unrest within the governmental structure of Rome especially among the emperors throughout their history. Insanity, bloodshed, incest, assassinations, and mistrust were associated with the Caesars of Rome. They thought themselves to be gods, yet they died from mortal wounds. Domitian was murdered by those closes to him.

***And they gnawed their tongues for pain”*** describes the prideful reaction of the leadership of Rome. Even though the empire was deteriorating around them, they bit their tongues, and continued to blasphemy God.

***The Sixth Bowl (Revelation 16:12-16)***

***“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. 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. 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. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.”***

In the sounding of the sixth trumpet the river Euphrates was first introduced (Rev. 9:13ff). The four angels, who bound up the river, are seen loosening the destructive army that invaded Rome. Now, John sees the great river being dried up, allowing the ***kings of the east*** to have no deterrent.

John then changes the focus from the ***kings of the east*** to the three unclean spirits. They are said to be like frogs. The second plague cast against Egypt involved frogs (Exod. 8:1-15). They appear in Revelation chapter sixteen coming out of the “***mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophets.”***

In verse fourteen, these unclean spirits are further identified as being ***spirits of devils*** that work miracles. These spirits are commissioned by the dragon (Satan), the beast (Caesar), and the false prophets (religious leaders) to muster up an army. How? By ***working miracles***! These are not true miracles, but deceptions used by the false prophets. This same type of camouflage was used in Revelation 13:13 by the beast that arose from the earth.

This army, blinded by deception, gathers to fight against God (vs. 14). The place of battle is called ***Armageddon***. Homer Hailey offers some historical insight on this place:

The Bible speaks geographically of “Megiddo and its three heights” (Josh. 17:11), “Megiddo and her towns” (Judges 1:27). “the waters of Megiddo” (Judges 5:19), and “the valley of Megiddo” (2 Chron. 35:22; Zech. 12:11), but makes no mention of a Mount of Megiddo. Megiddo was a strategic point in the protection of Israel and Judah, since it guarded the northern entrance to Israel. It was in this area that several decisive battles were fought, the most memorable being that of Deborah and Barak against Jabin and Sisera of the Canaanites; a decisive victory was given Israel by Jehovah (Judges 4, 5). It was in the valley of Esdraelon (Jezreel), “west of the hill of Moreh,” that Gideon’s three hundred men defeated and drove out the Midianites, another batter determined by Jehovah (Judges 7:1). Saul and Jonathan were slain at the eastern extremity of the plain (1 Sam. 31:1-6); and it was at Megiddo that Ahaziah, king od Judah, in league with Joram of Israel, died having been slain at the command of Jehu (2 Kings 9:27). King Josiash fought against Pharaoh Necho in the valley of Meghiddo, where he was slain (2 Kings 23:29f; 2 Chron. 35:22). This provede to be a decisive battle of history in that Josiah slowed Necho in his effort to reach Haran and aid Assyria against Babylon. This delay of Necho allowed Babylon to defeat the Assyrian army, making Babylon the leading power of the east. **(20)**

It is obvious that Armageddon simply represents a place where decisive battles were fought. It cannot be interpreted as an *end of time* event. Why? There will be no battle fought when the second coming takes place (Matt. 24:36-51). Hence, in this passage Armageddon may be interpreted as the final battle against Rome.

***The Seventh Bowl (Revelation 17:17-21)***

***“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. 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. 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. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. 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.”***

Thus far we have viewed the bowls poured out upon the earth, water, and the sun. Now John sees the seventh angel pour out his bowl upon the air. The fourth element depicts the realm in which Satan’s followers reside. Paul proclaimed, “*Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2).*

After the vial is poured out, John hears a voice from the temple say, “***It is done***” (Rev. 16:17). What is done? The great Roman Empire has crumpled. The terrible oppressor of God’s people has been destroyed.

On three previous occasions “***thunders and lightning’s***” had been used to bring in the wrath of God or to conclude one. In this scene, John sees the seven bowls of the seven plagues concluded by these elements. The severity of the seven bowls is far more damaging than anything thus far. This is further accentuated by the ***mighty earthquake***.

This earthquake paramount’s the severity of God’s action. Concerning the fall of Jerusalem, God tells Ezekiel, “***Thou shalt burn with fire a third part in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled: and thou shalt take a third part, and smite about it with a knife: and a third part thou shalt scatter in the wind; and I will draw a sword after them” (Ezek. 5:2).***

***“The wind of the fierceness of His wrath”*** is comparable to verse eight of chapter fourteen. In that passage Babylon made “***all nations to drink of the wrath of her fornication***.” Jesus said, “***Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again” (Matt. 7:1, 2).*** Rome merely received the wrath that she so wickedly rendered to others.

***“And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found” (Rev. 16:20****). The* ***islands*** and the ***mountains*** were representative of the government officials of Rome. After a war, important people tend to flee. They realize that if they are found, they would face the firing squad. Today men still search for war criminals that fled from Germany after World War II.

***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 plagues of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great” (Rev. 16:21).*** The hail was not ordinary hail. Each stone weighed nearly a hundred pounds.

The hail is just another punishment aimed at the wicked. Throughout the Old Testament, hail was emblematic of judgment (Isa. 28:15-18; Exodus 9:18-26; Josh. 10:11). In this scene the size of the stones shows the extent of God’s wrath. No human could survive such a storm.

The last bowl being poured out is furthered detailed in the next few chapters. Babylon would suffer great losses. Her strength would be abolished. Soon she would crumble into the annals of history.

***The Scarlet Woman (Revelation 17:1-8)***

***“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: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. 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. 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:And upon her forehead was a name written, Mystery, Babylon The Great, The Mother Of Harlots And Abominations Of The Earth. 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. 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. 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.”***

***“Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters” (Rev. 17:1).***  In chapter twelve, John spoke of a woman who was ***arrayed with the sun***. She represented God’s elect; whereas, the great whore personifies evil.

This harlot ***sitting upon the waters*** correlates to Jeremiah’s reference concerning Babylon, “*O thou that dwellest upon many waters” (Jer. 51:13).* The waters are representative of the nations over which Rome ruled.

Verse two further elaborates on the meaning of the verse one. The ***waters*** being the ***kings of the earth*** committed ***fornication*** with the ***great whore***. In other words, they encouraged and participated in her evil schemes and atrocities.

In Acts 12:20-25, the governing officials from Tyre and Sidon praised Herod and worshipped him as a god. Because of this action, God struck down the magistrate, *“And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms and gave up the ghost” (Acts 12:23).*

In verses three and four, John is ***carried away the Spirit*** into the wilderness. The first woman with child was taken into the wilderness for protection. Howbeit, in this chapter, the wilderness is a place of desolation. God told Zephaniah that Nineveh would be a ***desolation*** and ***dry like a wilderness*** (Zeph. 2:13). The Lord informed Isaiah that the ***rivers*** would be turned into ***wilderness*** (Isa. 50:3).

The great wore is sitting on a “***scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.”*** Most probably this is the sea beast identified in chapter thirteen. Hence, the ***whore*** is Rome, and the ***beast*** represents the Empire.

The whore is “***arrayed in purple and scarlet color and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls***” (vs. 4). Her appearance is one of splendor and wealth. Internally she is a whore. This is expressed by the cup which is full of ***“abominations and filthiness of her fornication.”*** Jesus stated against the Pharisees*, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward. But are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness” (Matt. 23:27).*

John further identifies the woman by name. ***“And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” (Rev. 17:5).*** The name ***Mystery*** implies something hidden that must be revealed. At one time the inhabitants of the earth were stunned by the beauty of Rome. Now, her true self had been exposed. She is the “***Mother of Harlots***.” Her whorish disposition equates her with all the ***abominations of the earth***.

History records that there was an ancient custom in Rome where the prostitutes in the public brothels wore a frontlet on their foreheads inscribed with their names. These marks identified them as prostitutes. **(22**) Therefore, in this part of John’s vision, Rome is viewed wearing her frontlet identifying her as the mother of all prostitutes.

***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” (Rev. 17:6).*** The cup from which she drank was filled with the ***blood of the saints***. The writer becomes more specific when he identifies these murdered souls as followers of Jesus. The word admiration should be more properly rendered ***wondered***, ***astonished*** or ***marveled***.

While John centers his attention on the woman, an angel replies, “***Wherefore didst thou marvel?”*** The angel tells John the answer to the identity of the great mystery of the harlot and the beast that carried her into the wilderness unveiling once again the appearance of the beast as having “***seven heads and ten horns***.”

***The Mystery Revealed (Rev. 17:8-18)***

***“ 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. And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. 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. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition. 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. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. 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. And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. 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. 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.”***

In Revelation thirteen, John described the beast as having ***seven heads*** and ***ten horns***. It was concluded that the head that received the ***death stroke*** was ***Nero*** and the emperor ***Domitian*** was Nero revived.

In the next few verses in chapter seventeen, John is given further information concerning the harlot. The ***seven heads*** are presented as ***seven mountains***. Though Rome was built beside seven mountains that bordered the Tiber River, this is not the intention of the writer in penning this portion of the vision. The number seven, used on various occasions, indicates ***perfection*** of ***completeness.*** The focus in this chapter is on the entire Roman Empire.

***“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” (vs. 10).*** There have been a multitude of scholars who have tried to number the emperors of Rome to find meaning in this passage. The difficulty in so doing is trying to find a starting point. If you begin with Julius Caesar, Nero would be the sixth emperor. Yet, to make Domitian the seventh, Galaba (A.D. 68-69), Otho (A.D. 69, served only 3 months), Vitellus (A.D. 69, served 1 month), Vespasian (A.D. 69-79), and Titus (A.D. 79-81) would all have to be overlooked. **(21)**

Some historians begin their count with Augustus (30 B.C. to A.D. 14). This would make Nero the fifth king. To place Domitian in the sequence, one would have to eliminate Galba, Otho, and Vitellus. This would make Vespasian the sixth, Titus the seventh, and Domitian the eighth. This theory is most comfortable because it would make Domitian the reincarnation of Nero.

Let’s get real, up to this point none of the numbers in the book of Revelation were to be taken literally. Why would John do so now? To keep in harmony with the book, the ***five kings*** are symbolic of the past emperors who persecuted the saints. The ***one*** presently seeks to destroy the church. After this period others will rise to martyr the saints.

***And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition” (Rev. 17:11).*** The ***eighth*** beast is identified with the ***seven.*** His characteristics are the same. They both came from the abyss and sought diligently to destroy the church. It makes perfect sense that the last beast is Domitian. After the death of Nero, a legend grew throughout the Empire that Nero would be resurrected. Tertullian and Eusebius, two ancient historians, describe Domitian as being like Nero in his cruelty and persecution of subjects in the empire. (**22)**

***“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. 17:12).*** The angel informs John that there will be some future allies that will join forces with Rome. Even though they will be strong, they will render total allegiance to Rome (Rev. 17:13). In verse fourteen the angel conveys to John that Rome and her supporters will make war with the ***Lamb***. Yet, their efforts will be in vain. Why? The Lamb is the “*Lord of lords, and the King of kings!”* The Lamb will be successful in destroying the ***great whore***, and the saints will share in the victory with Christ because we are the “***called, chosen, and faithful***.”

In verses fifteen thru eighteen, John is enlightened concerning the mystery of the beast with ten horns. The waters are stated to be “***peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.”*** The ***ten horns*** are explicated as rulers over kingdoms that eventually turn against the wicked whore. The ***woman*** is construed to be “***that great city”*** which is further identified as the one that “***reigneth over the kings of the earth.”***

***Babylon is Fallen (Rev. 18:1-24)***

***“And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. 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. 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. 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. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. 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. 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. 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. 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,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. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: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,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. 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. The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,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! 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,And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! 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. Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her. 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. 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;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. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.”***

***“And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power and the earth was lightened with his glory” (Rev. 18:1).*** Lenski denotes that the light that came forth from the angel was about the message he was about to deliver. **(23)** The day of rejoicing had arrived. The fall of Rome, which took centuries to unfold, had finally arrived.

In verse two, the angel with a ***strong voice*** heralds out the message, “***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***.” John alludes to the prophecy received by Isaiah concerning the fall of ancient Babylon (Isa. 13:20-22). In John’s vision, the great city of Rome, and the empire itself would be buried in the annals of history.

“***For all the 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” (Rev. 18:3).*** The political, economic, and military strength of Rome was strong. Many nations had prospered from her wealth. Yet, at what price?

In verse four, the saints are told, “*be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”* How was this achievable? By *coming out of her*!” The patriarchs were told to leave their sinful locations and to go where God would lead them (Gen. 12:1-3; 19:12-17; Exodus 3:10).

In the next two verses, the angel tells John that the sins of Rome have reached the heavens. In other words, God had reached His tolerance level. His reaction is a swift punishment comparable to what she had released on the saints. In fact, it would be double.

The biblical assurance that the wicked will be punished should be a comfort to the righteous. Man, typically wants vengeance now. He wants justice and retribution immediately. Yet, after God does act, and the smoke has cleared, one notes that God’s punishment is far worse than one could imagine.

***“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”*** *(Gen. 18:7).* The great empire rose out of greed and crumbled because of pride. She was noted for everything elegant and grand. The finest wines, garments, perfumes, and delicacies were a part of her glory. In the end, she crumbled into obscurity.

“***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” (****Rev. 18:8****).*** The one day is not to be taken literally. It simply indicates that the destruction of the empire will come suddenly and completely.

In verses nine thru nineteen, the destruction of the empire is felt by the nations that depended upon her, the merchants that grew wealthy by her power. In the end, they mourn over her carcass in deep distress (vs. 18).

“***Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her”*** (*Rev. 18:20*). While those who profited from Rome by the misfortune of others, heaven and the saints rejoice.

As the cheering progresses, a mighty angel picks up a great stone and cast it upon the sea. He then proclaims, *“****Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all”*** *(Rev. 18:21).* This scene is reminiscent of Jeremiah’s instruction to Seraiah to pronounce judgment upon Babylon (Jer. 51:61, 62).

After Seraiah read the book, he tied it to a stone and *cast it into the midst of the Euphrates (Jer. 51:63). “And thou shalt say, thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her: and they shall be weary. Thus far are the words of Jeremiah*” (Jer. 51:64).

The silence of desolation is personified in verses twenty-two thru twenty-four. “*By her sorceries*,” places emphasis on Rome’s deceptive ways over her subjects. The last verse of this chapter identifies the reason for their annihilation, “***And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth”*** *(Rev. 18:24).*

***Victory (Rev. 19:1-5)***

***“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: 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.  And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.   And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.   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.”***

Peter exclaimed, “*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9).* God promised the martyred saints that He would avenge them. Seasoned with patience and nobility, God keeps His promise.

As the smoke of the great whore rises above the heavens, the righteous cry out victoriously. The eternal smoke from the whore’s fall was foreshadowed by the third angel in Revelation 14:9-11.

Verse four shows the four beasts and the twenty-four-elders kneeling before God who sits upon His throne. Earlier in John’s vision, the temple could not be entered during the period that the seven bowls were poured out upon the inhabitants of the earth (Rev. 15:8). The smoke had cleared because God’s wrath had been delivered upon the wicked.

In the next two verses, John hears two voices. First, one voice comes out of the throne (vs. 5). Without identification, it heralds out a command for all those who serve God to praise Him. Second, John hears a voice as “***it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings***” (vs. 6). This voice bellows, “***Alleluia***.” Why? “***For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth***.”

***The Bride and Groom (Rev. 19:7-16)***

This section is often misunderstood. There are those who feel that this chapter speaks about the second coming of Christ. Their conclusion is based upon the statement, “*for the marriage of the Lamb is come*” (vs. 7). The true understanding of the passage is gained from the Hebrew custom of marriage.

Take for example, the marriage of Joseph and Mary. The book of Matthew records*, “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on the wise: When as His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost*” (Matt. 1:18).

In the Jewish betrothal was a solemn promise before witnesses (Mal.

2:14), embodying the essentials f the marriage vow. No further

promises followed. In later times it was ratified in writing. By virtue of

the betrothal the bridegroom and the bride became husband and wife

as is shown in the next verse where Joseph is called Mary’s husband,

and in verse 20 where she is called his wife (Deut. 22:24). It is a

mistake to regard “husband” and “wife” as prolific terms denoting the

husband and his wife to be. This is reading into the Jewish procedure

our modern conception of an engagement. The Jewish betrothal was the

marriage itself. But the Jewish custom placed an interval, no longer or

shorter, between the betrothal and the bringing home of the bride to

her husband’s house. **(24)**

It is obvious, that the scene in Revelation is speaking about the “betrothal” of the Lamb and the church.

Verse eight reveals the “**white**” linen that the bride is given to wear. It is termed the ***righteousness of the saints***. The garments of the saints are not to be taken literally. These white robes are symbolic of the attire worn by God’s elect (Eph. 5:27).

“***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***” (***Rev. 19:9***).  This is the fourth beatitude expressed thus far (Rev. 1:3; 14:13; 16:15). Not only are the saints arrayed in white linen, but they are termed blessed because of their obedience to the gospel (1 Cor. 1:9).

***“These are the true sayings of God”*** enforces the serenity of God’s eternal promises. Throughout the book the faithful are encouraged to remain faithful. If they do, they will “***eat of the tree of life”*** (Rev. 2:7),

***“will eat of the hidden manna”*** (Rev. 2:17) and will ***“sit on Christ throne”*** (Rev. 3:20).

So, touched by the vision and the statements made by the angel, John falls before the angel’s feet to worship him. The apostle, if not so overwhelmed, would had never done such an act. Immediately, the messenger informs john to stop, and to worship God (Rev. 19:10). Then the voice states, ***“for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”*** In other words, “*I am but a messenger delivering a message from the true source of all prophesy, Jesus.”*

The ***bride*** has already been viewed in verse seven. Now, the groom, who was first introduced as the Lamb, is seen riding a ***white*** horse. He is marching off to battle with His great army to destroy those who tried to murder the bride. At this point, the gallant soldier’s title is echoed into the ear of John as the ***Faithful and True*** (vs. 11).

***“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. 19:12). “***His eyes were as a flame****”* focuses on the Lord’s ability to see within the hearts of men. His judgments are just. The many ***crowns*** properly rendered **diadems** lends credence to the Lord being the true “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (vs. 16).

***“He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself} (vs. 12b).*** Jesus, once stated on earth, “*No man knoweth the Son, but the Father*” (Matt. 11:27). The mystery of the Godhead has astounded men for centuries. Through God’s word, we learn so much about the Holy Trinity. There are also a thousand questions left unanswered.Ho

***“And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God” (vs. 13).*** Some scholars believe that the vesture was sprinkled with the blood of His enemies. Others state that the blood is that of the martyred saints. This writer believes that the garment is covered in the Lord’s own blood.

John is seeing descriptive clues concerning the rider of the ***white*** horse. Each clue is of a personal nature. All doubt is eliminated when His name is stated to be the ***Word of God***.

As Christ is viewed riding forth with His great army (the saints), He smites the nations with a ***sharp sword.*** Also, “*He shall rule them with a rod of iron*.” The Psalmist proclaimed, *“Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash the in pieces like a potter’s vessel*” (Psa. 2:9). There is no escape from the wrath of God, and there is no question who is the true King. This is further taken when John writes, “***And He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”***

***The Angel’s Call (Rev. 19:17, 18)***

***“And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; 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.”***

In this scene, John views the Beast and his great army ***gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse*** (vs. 19). The battle did not last long. Thus, in the end, the beast (emperor of Rome), the false prophets (those who enforced emperor worship), and they that *worshipped his image,* were cast alive into the *lake of fire.*

The ***remnant*** in verse twenty-one are shown being slain with the sword (the Word) of Him (Jesus) who ***sat upon the horse***. The remnant is probably referring to the kings and the armies mentioned in the previous verse. The whole scene in the last few verses envision the Lord’s victory over evil. God’s people had finally been avenged.

(20) *Hailey*, p. 336.

(21) Dub McClish, *Studies in Revelation*, (Denton, Texas: Valid Publications, 1984), “The Fall of the Harlot, *the Beast and the False Prophet*,” by James Meadows, p. 182.

(22) J. A. Thompson, *The Bible and Archaeology*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdsmans Publishing Company, 1982), p. 443.

(23) R. C. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John’s Revelation*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1943), p. 515.

(24) Lenski, p. 40.

**CHAPTER NINE**

**THE VICTORY OF THE LAMB**

**(Revelation 20:1-22:21**

***The Thousand Years* (Rev. 20:1-10)**

**“*And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.  And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, 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.  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.  But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.  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.  And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, 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.  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.  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.”***

In this episode, John sees an angel coming down out of heaven. Clutched in the angel’s hand is the key to the abyss and a great chain. His mission is to bind the dragon and cast him into the abyss.

Four titles are given to the evil one in verse two. He is called the ***dragon***, the ***old serpent***, the ***devil***, and ***Satan***. It is apparent that John wanted the reader to know the identity of the one being cast into the abyss.

The ***thousand years*** must not be taken literally. It is a number denoting a long period of time. Satan was going to be bound by God for ***deceiving the nations***. After this period, Satan would once again be loosed for a ***little season*** (vs. 3).

The binding of Satan for a thousand years began with the fall of Rome. This period will not end until shortly before the Lord returns. Prior to the Second Coming, the old serpent will be loosed. He will at that time deceive the nations. Howbeit, in the end the trumpet will sound, and the Second coming will take place.

It is imperative to note that no signs are given in the Holy Bible concerning the Lord’s return. It cannot be interpreted to mean anything specific. God’s people, throughout the ages, have been charged to remain faithful.

***“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” (vs. 4).***

Who are these souls sitting upon thrones and judging the world? John indicates that these are they who were martyred for the word of God. They were the victims of Rome’ terrible wrath. They had been crying for vengeance underneath the altar of God (Rev. 6:9). Their testimony judged the whore and all that worshiped her.

***“But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.  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” (vs. 5, 6).***

This first resurrection is implied to be different than the resurrection of the physical body on judgment day.Some propose that the first resurrection speaks of baptism. Water baptism represents the death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-6). The meaning could also focus on a resurgence of the faithful. The dead are those who were martyred for the cause of Christ. The second death, which was presented in Revelation two verse eleven, is speaking about eternal damnation. They are identified also as ***priests of God and Christ***. They reign with Christ during this ***thousand years***.

***“And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, 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. 20:7, 8).***

After this thousand years wherein Satan is unchained, he prepares an army for battle. Gog and Magog are drawn from Ezekiel’s prophecy. Homer Hailey comments:

The world from which Satan draws his new forces is Gog and Magog. An

Interpretation of “Gog and Magog” must depend upon Ezekiel’s

prophecy, chapters 38-39. “Gog, of the land of Magog” was the prince

of countries to the north (38:2f), the east, west, and south (38:5). He

would invade and cover the land of Israel (38:6-9). His eyes would be

upon the spoil of the land to take it for himself (38:16)- but he would

be utterly destroyed, buried in defeat, as the birds would gorge on

the carcasses of his forces (chap. 39). **(25)**

It is obvious that John interpreted Gog and Magog as being the ***nations which are in the four corners of the earth (vs. 8).*** Their numbers were as the sand of the sea. Their purpose was to accomplish what Rome could not do—destroy the church.

Verse nine pictures a great army surrounding the ***camp of the saints*** which John also calls the ***beloved city*** (the church). Before the first shot could be fired, God brings destruction upon Satan’s army. He (Satan) is then pictured being cast into the lake of fire and brimstone (vs. 10). It is termed a place “***where the beast and the false prophet are***” and a place where the pain and torment are never quenched.

***The Final Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15)***

***“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.”***

Several commentators discuss their perception of the one who sat on the throne. Some have proposed that it is God the Father pictured in the scene while others propose that it is Christ. The Bible informs the reader that Christ the Son and God the Father judge the nations (Acts 17:31; Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10). Therefore, either, or, may be used in this verse without taking away the intent of the author in unfolding the scene before us.

“***The earth and the heaven fled away”*** refers to a similar statement made by the apostle Peter. He wrote, “*But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as a day*” (2 Pet. 3:7, 8).

Verse twelve pictures a great courtroom scene. Here we find mankind standing before the throne of God. One case after another being tried. The ***books*** that are opened exhibit all the works of every soul whether good or bad. The author had no intention of wanting the reader to believe that the books were to be taken literally. They signify the omniscience of God.

*The book of life* is addressed throughout the Old and New Testaments (Psa. 69:28; Mal. 3:16; Luke 10:20; Phil. 4:3). When one is baptized into Christ, his or her name is written in the book of life. When one falls or strays from the truth, his or her name is removed from the book. This book is not made of paper, glue, and binding. One will not find erasing marks or penciled in names. The names of the saved are imbedded in the mind of God.

***“And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire”*** (Rev. 20:14, 15). How much more explicit does God have to be? There are a great number of people who do not believe in eternal punishment of the wicked. It is obvious from a study of chapter twenty that the ***lake of fire***, the ***second death***, and the tormenting of soul’s ***day and night forever and ever*** paint a horrific picture of hell.

***A New Heaven and New Earth (Rev. 21:1-8).***

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

***“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: (vs. 1).*** Peter exclaimed, *“Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pet. 3:13).* The early saints hoped for this new world where no sin was present. Not the same earth being revised, but a new dwelling place promised by Christ in John 14:1-5.

“***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. 21:2).*** The new heaven and new earth are synonymous with ***new Jerusalem***, and ***new Jerusalem*** is personified as the ***bride***. In Revelation 19:7-10, John revealed the bride making herself ready for the s marriage supper. She is now seen in chapter twenty-one coming down out of heaven. Why would John use the title ***new Jerusalem***? Old Jerusalem was at the center of worship for the Jewish nation. Jesus stated concerning Old Jerusalem, “*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen her chickens under her wing, and ye would not!”* (Matt. 23:37).

Old Jerusalem was defiled. New Jerusalem came down out of heaven. It was untouched by the evils of this world. It was built by the hand of God and nothing blemished or unclean could pass through her beautiful gates.

Verse three fully expands upon this thought when John is told, ***“The Tabernacle of God is with men***.” God’s glory in the hearts of men is exemplified by having even a closer relationship with Him in heaven. The saints, who endured the trials of the flesh, are granted the right and privilege to dwell in the eternal presence of God.

***“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away”*** (Rev. 21:4).  The old heaven and earth as well as the sea was engulfed with sorrow, pain, and death. The ***beast***, the ***whore***, and the ***dragon***, and they that ***worship the beast*** had no part in the new heaven and new earth.

Throughout history men have fought for country, honor, and freedom. Wars have been fought in the name of peace. It took a carpenter’s son to guide men in the way of peace.

“*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. 21:5). After seeing the glorious bride coming down out of heaven, he is told to write down what he saw. The apostle is given the seal of authority, “***for these words are true and faithful***.” The psalmist, speaking of the Israelites leaving Egypt and entering the promised land, stated, *“For He remembered His holy promise, and Abraham his servant”* (Psa. 105:42).

**“*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****” (Rev. 21:6).* In the beginning of the book, John heard the voice of a trumpet proclaiming to be ***the “Alpha and Omega”*** (Rev. 1:11). In this scene most probably, the same person of the Godhead now sits upon the throne. The ***fountain of the water of life*** is now flowing freely. It is symbolical of eternal life. A life without pain, hunger, thirst, or death. Most of all, a life without Satan.

***“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son”*** (Rev. 21:7).  What is the meaning of ***all things***? Most assuredly all the blessings promised throughout the book. Each of the seven churches of Asia were given promises that encouraged them to keep the faith. God after the revelation offers all the blessings proposed in the book to those who overcome.

***“And he shall be My son”*** refers to the Old Testament. In Genesis chapter twenty-five, verses twenty-nine thru thirty-four, Esau sells his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of pottage. The firstborn son was the one who would rightfully receive the blessing of the patriarch when his life is near an end. He at that time would be considered the head of the household. In heaven, all the saints receive the blessing of the first born.

In contrast to verse seven, God initiates judgment upon the wicked in verse eight. *“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”*

***Holy Jerusalem (Rev. 21:9-22:5)***

***“****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. 21:9). John is told that he is about to see the ***Lamb’s wife***. There should be no speculation of the definition of the ***wife***. She is the church.

In the next few verses, the bride is called ***holy Jerusalem.*** She is seen *descending out of heaven* and having the ***glory of God*** (Rev. 21:10, 11). This ***glory*** is said to be ***her light*** which was like a ***precious stone***. It is further identified like a ***jasper stone*** being clear as ***crystal***. This attribute of the bride is descriptive of her purity.

“***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***” (Rev. 21:12). Ezekiel’s vision is like John’s*. “And the gates of the city shall be after the names of the tribes of Israel: three gates northward; one gate of Reuben, one gate of Judah, one gate of Levi.   And at the east side four thousand and five hundred: and three gates; and one gate of Joseph, one gate of Benjamin, one gate of Dan.  And at the south side four thousand and five hundred measures: and three gates; one gate of Simeon, one gate of Issachar, one gate of Zebulun.   At the west side four thousand and five hundred, with their three gates; one gate of Gad, one gate of Asher, one gate of Naphtali” (Ezekiel 48:31-34).* Ezekiel depicts each gate, including their location, having a specific name inscribed on them. In John’s vision, this escalates the close personal relationship between spiritual Israel (the church), and God.

In verse fourteen, the previous verse becomes clear. ***“And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and n them the names f the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”*** These twelve foundational stones are inscribed with the names of the twelve apostles. By viewing the gates with the inscription of the twelve tribes and the foundational stones bearing the names of the twelve apostles, the Old and New covenants are united.

***The Measuring of Holy Jerusalem (Rev. 21:15-17)***

***“And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.   And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.  And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel” (Rev. 21:15-17).***

Earlier, John was given a reed and told to measure the ***temple of God***, and the ***altar,*** and ***them that worship therein*** (Rev. 11:1). Now, near the end of John’s vision New Jerusalem is seen being measured, not by John but by an angel. He is commissioned to measure the ***city***, and the ***gates thereof***, and the ***wall thereof***.

At first glance, one may want to try to mentally calculate the dimensions of the great city, but this would be against the intentions of the writer of the book. The focus should be on the number to an even greater degree of perfection. If we were to take the numbers literally, the city would be shaped like a perfect cube. Its length, height, and breadth would equate to nearly fifteen hundred miles. The descriptive dimensions of the city are intended to define the city as being perfect and complete.

“***And he measured the wall thereof, a hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the ange***l” (vs. 7). Though an angel measured the wall for John, the measurements were given in terms known to men. The wall, unlike the city, is measured in cubits and not furlongs. A cubit was determined by the distance of a man’s elbow to the end of his middle finger which is about eighteen inches. This would make the height of the wall a little over 215 feet.

Walls are made to eliminate the fears of the inhabitants within. In this scene, God’s people are assured that there are no enemies who can enter the Holy city. Those who enter the beautiful city will be under God’s divine protection.

***The Walls, The Foundation, and the Twelve Gates (Rev. 21:18-21)***

***“And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.  And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.  And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.”***

The walls being made of jasper (quartz) were beautiful to behold. The city was made of pure gold. It was so shiny that one could see his or her reflection. It must be understood that figurative descriptions are being given of the city. These symbols were not to be taken literally.

In verses 19-21, the writer points out that the foundations of the walls are made of the most precious stones. Each of the gates were formed out of one pearl. Only one street is found in the heavenly abode. The road from each gate converges onto one main street. It is formed out of pure gold, yet transparent.

No doubt, the description of the holy city is not meant to be taken literal. Transparent gold, giant pearls, and precious stones are merely representations of the glory and pureness of heaven. What we find to be precious on earth has no worth in heaven. To God, the meek and obedient spirit, is the most precious commodity.

Why are these precious stones used to paint a picture of heaven? How would you explain something never seen before? You would compare the item to something others could relate to. That is what John does in relaying his vision.

***The Inner City (Rev. 21:22-27)***

***“And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.  And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.   And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.  And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.  And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.  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.”***

John designates Christ as the Light (Jn. 1:1-9). It is not difficult to see how the holiness of God and Christ illuminate’s heaven.

In verse twenty-four, the saved walking in the light, and the kings bringing their glory unto the heavenly city, have the same meaning. Through the gospel men are saved. From every walk of life, the Bible depicts ***kings***, ***fishermen***, and ***slaves*** responding to the word.

***“And the gates of it shall not be shut all by day: for there shall be no night there” (vs. 25).*** Many cities throughout the Roman Empire were fortified cities. During the days the doors were opened, yet in the evening when safety was an issue, the doors were closed. In heaven, there is no need for the doors to close. God and Christ illuminating presence offers security.

In verses twenty-six and twenty-seven all nations are clearly visible. God’s people are blinded to nationality or color. Heaven is made up of all people, from all nations, who have obeyed God.

***Eternal Life (Rev. 22:1-5)***

***“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.   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.  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: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.   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.”***

Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, *“If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water” (Jn. 4:10).* The river in John’s vision is ***bright as crystal***. This indicates that it was not polluted with any type of impurities.

***Behold, I Am Coming (Rev. 22:6-21)***

**“*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.   Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book” (Rev. 22:6, 7).***

What was said in the beginning of the vision is now repeated (Rev. 1:1). John is also reminded once again that the Lord will come quickly (Rev. 3:11). Also, we note the sixth beatitude used in the book, ***“blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophesy of this book.”***

***“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.   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.   And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand” (Rev. 22:8-10).***

This is the second time that John bows before an angel(Rev. 19:10). In both instances John is rebuked and directed to worship God. Contrasted with Daniel’s instruction to not make the prophesy public (Dan. 12:4-9), John is told just the opposite. The time of vision was at hand and needed to be shared with the saints.

***“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.  And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.   I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last” (Rev. 22:11-13).***

Jesus shows the natural order of events. The wicked will continue in their sins, whereas the righteous must remain righteous. Why? Because the prophesy was at hand. He gives credence to the message by once again identifying Himself as the ***Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, and the first and the last***.

**“*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.  For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie*” (Rev. 22:14, 15).**

The seventh beatitude identifies those subjects who dwell within the walls of the paradise of God. The wicked remain without the gate and are subject to an eternal punishment.

***“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” (Rev. 22:16).***

Jesus once again uses the root of David as one of His titles (Rev. 5:5). He is the ***bright and morning star***. The light that shone so bright in darkness, but the darkness did not accept it (John 1:5).

***“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” (Rev. 22:17).***

No greater invitation has ever been given than what one finds here in this verse. To the sinner, Jesus opens His arms pleading with them who are willing to drink from the waters of life. It is an invitation that addresses all nationalities.

***“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: 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” (Rev. 22:18, 19).***

God wants man to take His word seriously. Though this warning is given to those who read the book of Revelation, divine inspiration is not to be taken lightly.

***“He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.  The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen” (Rev. 22:20, 21).***

This last dialogue of the book is both personal and universal. John was the last remaining apostle. The vision was a homecoming for John to be able to see his friends once again. John is eagerly ready for the Lord’s return. He had lived a long life and was ready to enter the next phase of his existence, paradise.

There is also a universal blessing upon all those who believe and wait for the Lord’s return. It is seeded in the grace extended to the saints. The ***amen*** brings us to the conclusion of the Holy Bible.

(25) Hailey, p. 339.