

## Revelation 1 – Introducing Jesus

The book of Revelation begins with a statement of God’s desire for His servants, those who accept Jesus as Lord and Savior, to understand what our future holds. We are given a clue as to one reason He chooses to share this truth with us in the book of Genesis.

Gen. 18:17-19 And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? **For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him**, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

He expects us to teach that truth to our family as well as others that we care about. He also expects that these truths will impact how we live our lives. The Apostle John is God’s chosen instrument to share this message with us.

God is the best Father, and He knows our human weaknesses. He encourages us to study the book of Revelation by promising us a blessing if we will invest our time and energy in carefully reading the Revelation record and treasuring its teachings. The more we understand of the truths presented in this book, the more visible should be its impact on how we live—in establishing priorities, in the choices we make, in our service to others, in our prayer life, etc.

The Lord chooses to address His message to seven specific churches in existence at the time John received the Revelation. John is clear in identifying the author of the message as God—“Him which is...was...and is to come.”

Rev. 4:8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about *him*; and *they were* full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

He then goes on to specifically connect this description to Jesus Christ. In verse 8 this description is expanded to identify Him as “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending.” In other words, He was before all things (from the human perspective on earth) and will be the culmination of all things (from the human perspective on earth). Jesus is identified as the One who “loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,” (verse 5) our Savior and Redeemer. He is also specifically identified as the Son of God.

John next shares the fact that Jesus is coming back to earth and will be visible to “every eye” in the process. It is most natural for us today to believe this possible only because of today’s technology, but I don’t think that is true. Even though I can’t explain how, I believe the glory of the Lord as He descends to earth will be seen by everyone--without the use of modern technology.

It’s also important to note that the Lord’s return will not be a welcome sight for many. John tells us, “all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him.” (verse 7)

John informs us that he was on the island of Patmos when he received the Revelation. This island was used as a prison camp for those deemed enemies of the Roman Empire.

John was there at the decree of the Emperor Domitian. Why? For his public declaration of “the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.” (verse 9)

In verse 11 John begins a description of how he received the Revelation. John tells us that he was “in the Spirit,” and I believe he is referencing a special time of worship and communion with the Lord as described in Ephesians.

Eph. 5:18-21 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

All of a sudden John hears a voice behind him. It sounds like “a trumpet,” (verse 10) very strong and penetrating; and the owner identifies Himself as the “Alpha and Omega, the first and the last” which is declared to be the Lord in verse 8. John is instructed to write what he sees in a book and to send it to the churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.

John turns to see the speaker, and he sees the Lord standing in the middle of seven candlesticks. He is wearing an ankle-length robe with a gold belt around the breast. His hair is white like wool, and His eyes like a flame of fire. His feet are like glowing hot brass. His voice is described this time as sounding like many waters (strong and powerful). He is holding seven stars in His right hand and has a sword coming out of His mouth. His whole being shines like the sun.

This whole vision of the Lord is one of power, judgment, purity and holiness. The candlesticks are identified in verse 20 as the seven churches, and the seven stars are identified as the messengers of those churches. Hebrews 4:12 compares God’s word to a sword.

For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged 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.

The vision was so amazing that John fainted at the feet of the Lord. The Lord strengthens him with the touch of His right hand and tells John not to be afraid. John should have understood that this same Lord Jesus whom he had seen crucified, dead, buried, risen and ascending to heaven hadn’t just disappeared into oblivion. He is alive and has complete authority over hell (a place) and death (a state of being).

John is again told to write what he has seen, what he is seeing, and what he will see.

### **Revelation 2-3 – The Letters to the Seven Churches**

In chapter 2 the Lord begins to dictate letters to each of the seven churches; however, He intends for all seven churches to read each letter. Though the contents of each letter are to the church as a whole, the appeal is for a response from each individual. Each church

is representative of the different kinds of churches that have existed since the birth of the church. Scholars much more studied than I explain how they represent the stages of church history, and I have no reason to reject that application. I think the primary application, however, is to all churches throughout the church age. Churches tend to resemble one of these seven types of churches.

1. Ephesus – This church is doing the works of God, but from duty and ritual, not from a heart of love.
2. Smyrna – This church is aptly called the persecuted church. Though it appears to be poor and sickly from a human perspective, God considers them to be rich and vibrant in their faith.
3. Pergamos – This church is tolerant and inclusive. They don't want to offend anyone. (Sound familiar?)
4. Thyatira – This appears to be a church that is very liberal with little to no spiritual discernment. They embrace false teachers and false teaching. The amazing truth—this church still has a few true believers among its members.
5. Sardis – This appears to be a church in name only. They were doing very little that could be called serving the Lord. Still, this church has a few true believers in it. I would assume they fall into the category of saved, “yet so as by fire.” (1Corinthians 3:15)
6. Philadelphia – This church is spiritually healthy and discerning. They have persevered in spite of the world's mockery. Sad to say, they are noted as having “little strength.” It just hit me that this is probably a statement as to their influence among the churches. Though they should be the most respected and emulated, their influence is diminished by the more popular wealthier, tolerant and liberal congregations.
7. Laodicea – This church is making absolutely no spiritual impact on the world around it. They are spiritually blind and materially rich.

I think it is important to note that God loves His church. He wants the body of believers to recognize their spiritual needs and respond with repentance. He encourages them with promises of special blessings for their faith and repentance. I just noticed that only the Ephesians were threatened with having their candlestick removed. In my mind this is because they most resembled the Pharisees of Jesus' day—performing ritual without heart involvement. It also stood out to me that the churches that tolerated or embraced false teachers and false teaching drew harsh words of God's violent intervention. I think this is because these churches were positioned as major battlegrounds between the spiritual forces of good and evil. Though the letters are addressed to the church as a body, the Lord's focus is clearly on the individual. He is aware of and always has words of encouragement to true believers in the church.

#### **Revelation 4 – A Scene in Heaven**

After carefully giving warning, instruction and encouragement to the body of believers, the Lord transports John to heaven to “see” more. His intent is to show John future events.

I have always been taught and accepted that John's call to heaven represented the rapture of the church. I no longer believe that to be the case. Though the experience is obviously similar to expectation, I believe this explanation creates unnecessary hindrances to clear understanding of the Revelation as it unfolds that I will reference in the coming narrative.

The first thing John sees in heaven is a magnificent throne surrounded by a rainbow. Encircling the throne are 24 "elders" seated and wearing white clothing and crowns of gold. I have read much regarding the possible identity of these 24 elders. A couple of personal observations from these verses:

- They are in position when John arrives; he is not one of them as one of the apostles.
- They are in position when John arrives. Even if John did represent the raptured church, it excludes the church.

I don't think we can be certain who they are this side of eternity. I do think that alternate translations for upcoming verses support identifying them as a heavenly council of angels or watchers as described in Daniel 4:17.

This matter *is* **by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones**: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.

One of those verses is Revelation 5:10 where some translations are similar to the NIV—"and with your blood You purchased men... You have made them... to serve our God, and they will reign...."

In doing some recent study I was reminded that both Moses and David patterned the tabernacle/temple respectively from patterns they were given. It made sense to me that when David divided the priests who would serve "at the house of the Lord" into 24 groups, he would have been following the pattern.

Another one of those verses is Revelation 11:18.

Rev. 11:18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.

In context, these are words of praise to God. They seem to be speaking in reference to men of faith as different from themselves.

John's attention turns back to the throne from which he hears voices and from which come lightning and thunder. In front of the throne is what appears to be a sea of clear glass. There are also four living creatures "full of eyes" around the throne. (These appear to be the same creatures described in Ezekiel.) The language tells us that John is describing what he sees the best he can by making comparisons. The creatures are described as having faces like a lion, a calf, a man, and an eagle. Many scholars tell posit that these creatures represent Christ as presented in the gospels—as King, servant, man and God respectively.

John makes note that the creatures and elders worship the Lord in unity of spirit and action. This should be the hallmark characteristic of God's servants in the church today. Specific reference is made to God as the Creator who created according to His own will/purpose.

### **Revelation 5 – Jesus the Victorious Lamb**

John begins this chapter begins with a vision of God the Father on the throne holding in his right hand a book that is written on both sides and sealed with seven seals. I've heard this book called the title deed to planet earth and compared to a Roman will. Future contents of the Revelation record affirm that it represents authority over planet earth.

Next, John hears an angel asking for a worthy, qualified person to step forward and open the seals. Then point is made that no "man" in the universe was found that qualified. John understood the consequences of that fact and openly wept. Suddenly, one of the elders announces, "the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals." (verse 5)

John looks toward the throne and sees "a Lamb as it had been slain" standing in the middle of the elders. He then watches "the Lamb" go and take the book from the hand of the One on the throne. Then the 24 elders and the living creatures fall down in reverence to "the Lamb." Next thing you know, an innumerable multitude of angels are surrounding the throne joining in worship of "the Lamb that was slain." (verse 12)

Obviously, the throne is God's throne and "the Lamb" is Jesus, the Son of God. It stands out to me that Jesus was not on the scene when John first was taken to heaven. Scripture tells us that when He ascended, He took His place at the right hand of the Father on the throne. It also stands out that He appeared as a Lamb having been slain. I think this is a vision of the Lord returning to heaven victorious over the grave after having offered Himself as the sacrifice for our sin. At that point, He was qualified to take the book and remove the seals.

One more observation, if the church were already raptured as represented by John, Jesus would have been there with them.

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

### **Revelation 6 – The Beginning of the End**

This chapter begins the narrative of the opening of the seals. Again, I was blinded for a long time by previous well-intentioned teaching. The assumption is that since the seals are being opened, the tribulation is starting. At this point, I don't agree with that assumption.

The first five seals seem to mirror the “birth pains” Jesus declared would precede His coming. (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21) “Birth pains” is a descriptive phrase to signify increased frequency and intensity of a series of specific events that will culminate in the visible return of Jesus Christ to establish His kingdom.

I am reminded that God’s reckoning of time and our reckoning of time are very different.

2Pet. 3:8 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 one day.

Just a couple of days have gone by since Jesus returned victorious to heaven. I think it is important to note that Jesus is the one in authority releasing the first four riders to act on their evil intentions.

Seal 1 – The rider on the white horse is the coming on the scene of the Antichrist to begin his rise to power on a platform of peace. Yes, I believe the Antichrist is alive and is already, in fact, being positioned to assume leadership.

Seal 2 – The rider on the red horse is released to destroy peace and provoke war among men.

Seal 3 – The rider on the black horse is going out to cause famine and wreak havoc on the world’s economy.

Seal 4 – The rider on the pale horse goes out specifically to cause death among men, and “hell” rides with him eager to feed his voracious appetite.

I think it is clear that these riders are all followers of Satan hoping to thwart God’s will. Just as when Satan was given permission to persecute Job, these riders are now given permission to act within prescribed boundaries. Note that they are only allowed to cause the death of ¼ of humanity.

When the 5<sup>th</sup> seal is opened, John sees under the altar all the souls that have died because of their faith in the Lord. I believe these are all martyrs since the inception of the church. Again, the deaths of these martyrs are a result of the acts of those who have chosen to follow Satan, the god of this world, in rejection of the Almighty Eternal Living God. It stands out to me that these souls are calling for God to avenge their deaths, and God responds by telling them to be patient until their number is fulfilled. In other words, their desire is justified and will be satisfied. Also, God knows the exact number of martyrs who will die for their faith in Him. I personally think that number will be reached right before the rapture of the church.

The opening of the 6<sup>th</sup> seal is very significant, and in verse 17 is described as the beginning day of God’s wrath. Many things occur with the opening of this seal—

- A great earthquake.
- The sun turns black.
- The moon looks like blood.

- The stars of heaven fall toward earth.
- The heaven appears to roll up like a scroll.
- Every mountain and island moves out of position; this indicates that the earthquake is worldwide.
- Men seek to hide themselves in fear.

Because the scripture is clear in stating that true believers will not experience God's wrath, I believe the rapture probably happens as part of this seal or just previous to it. Through an article at [www.redmoonrising.com](http://www.redmoonrising.com) I was made aware of David Lowe's study regarding the connection of earthquakes to resurrections to immortality—in other words, where the one resurrected never experienced another physical death. His conclusions made a lot of sense to me, and a rapture of believers from all over the world would directly connect to a worldwide earthquake. It makes sense to me that this would really set the stage for the Antichrist to be able to broker a 7-year peace treaty with Israel. The world will be in chaos and looking for a leader that can step in with confidence and purpose. I am reminded that scripture declares he will possess the ability to perform "lying wonders" to promote his agenda of deceit.

Th. 2:8-10 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: *Even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

### **Revelation 7 – God's Jewish Witnesses for the 70<sup>th</sup> Week and the Raptured Church in Heaven**

The next thing John sees are four angels positioned at the four corners of the earth in control of the winds. At that time they are preventing the wind from blowing. Verse 2 tells us that their task is to "hurt the earth and the sea." Another angel ascends from the east and instructs them not to do anything until the servants of God have been sealed in their forehead. The Greek indicates that this seal is for protection. In Revelation 14:1 we are told that this seal is the Father's name.

John now tells us the exact number of persons sealed—144,000—12,000 each from the 12 tribes of Israel. This emphasizes to me that this is at the beginning of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel, the 7-year period widely known as the tribulation. This time is described in the book of Daniel as "determined upon thy people [Israel] and upon thy holy city [Jerusalem]...to bring in everlasting righteousness...." (9:24) These would be Jewish witnesses who will preach the gospel to their people and whom God will use to separate out for Himself a believing remnant of Jews to enter the millennium, the 1000-year earthly kingdom of the Messiah, and through whom He will fulfill His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

I think it is important to note that the "day of God's wrath" and the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel run concurrent to one another, but are directed toward different groups of people for different purposes.

Wrath → against the wicked, God's enemies → in vengeance  
70<sup>th</sup> week → for Israel → to refine and produce a believing remnant

The next thing John sees is a great multitude of people from every nation, ethnic background and language dressed in white robes, holding palm branches and standing before the throne and “the Lamb” and praising Him. It is quite clear to me that John is seeing the body of Christ gathered before the throne after the rapture. I don't know how John could take it all in, but he then sees all the angels, elders, and living creatures on their faces worshipping God before the throne.

Because of the wording of verse 14, many assume that this is an assembly of believers who are martyrs from the tribulation period. I think it is a general reference to the church age, which has been full of tribulation/trouble of different types and to varying degrees for all believers.

Point is made that they are presented in robes of white through acceptance of Jesus' sacrifice for their sin. We will be privileged to serve God night and day in His temple, and He will dwell with us. This is the very promise the Lord made to His disciples.

John 14:1-3 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also. God will supply our every need, spiritual and physical, and wipe away all tears from our eyes.

### **Revelation 8 – The Trumpet Judgments Begin**

When the 7<sup>th</sup> seal is opened, there is silence in heaven for about a half hour. I think this is in consideration of the horrendous judgments yet to be poured out on the inhabitants of planet earth.

John then describes seeing 7 angels standing before God and being given 7 trumpets with which they will announce the commencement of 7 more judgments. Another angel appears carrying a golden censer, which is said to contain the prayers of all the saints; and he is given incense to mix with those prayers, which indicate that they are a sweet smelling aroma before God—in other words, He is pleased with those prayers. The angel then takes fire from the altar to add to the censer and throws it to the earth. Why? These prayers represent a stark contrast between the hearts of those that love the Lord and those that reject Him and blaspheme His name. Those on planet earth hear voices and thunder, see lightning, and experience an earthquake.

The seven angels then prepare to announce the upcoming judgments.

1. When the first angel blows his trumpet, hail and fire mingled with blood falls on the earth and burns up 1/3 of the trees and all the green grass.
2. When the second angel blows his trumpet, a big fiery mountain is cast into the sea, and 1/3 of it turns to blood; this, in turn, results in the destruction of 1/3 of

the sea creatures and 1/3 of the ships. In my mind this probably references a specific third of the world's oceans, or it could apply specifically to the Mediterranean.

3. When the third angel blows his trumpet, a big burning star called Wormwood falls from heaven and poisons 1/3 of the rivers and fresh water springs. I would assume this would be the result of its breaking up into fragments that are spread over a specific third of the earth.
4. The fourth angel blows and 1/3 each of the sun, moon and stars are darkened. This results in total darkness for 1/3 of the day and night respectively.

At this point there is an interruption to the announcement of the final three trumpet judgments. An angel appears in the heavens warning the people on planet earth that the coming three judgments are the worst yet.

### **Revelation 9 – Demon Locusts and Demonic Princes**

The trumpet judgments continue.

5. At the blowing of the fifth trumpet a being falls from heaven to earth and he is given a key to the bottomless pit. This seems to indicate that this pit is in the center of the earth. When he opens the pit, the air is filled with smoke, and demon locusts (my label) are released that are allowed to torment only humans. This torment is inflicted with a sting that is compared to that of a scorpion. Those who experience this sting will wish they were dead, but God will not allow them to die. John then attempts to describe the appearance of these locusts. He compares them to horses prepared for battle wearing crowns like gold with human faces; they have long hair like a woman and teeth comparable to those of a lion. They appear to be wearing breastplates of iron, and the noise of their wings sounds like many horses running to battle. The tails with which they inflict their stings are like a scorpion's, and their attack is allowed to extend over a period of five months. You see why I call them demon locusts. These locusts have a king that in Hebrew is called Abaddon, and in Greek is called Appolyon. I personally believe that it is Satan who is known by many names in scripture.
6. When the sixth angel blows his trumpet, John hears a voice from the golden altar positioned before God in His temple telling the angel with the 6<sup>th</sup> trumpet to release the four angels that are bound in the great river Euphrates. No further information is given to identify these four angels, but they have obviously been confined to this particular area until this moment in time. I personally believe they are the four demonic princes in control of the nations connected with that river, i.e., probably Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran. We know that there are spiritual forces associated with different nations on planet earth because of the message recorded by the prophet Daniel.

Dan. 10:11-13, 20 And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But the

prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.... Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come.

These angels have one purpose—to kill 1/3 of mankind. They have an army of 200,000,000 to assist them; I personally believe this army to be demonic. John's description does indicate that he is struggling to explain this army in terms the reader can understand. Some teachers make comparisons to use of today's technology, and I don't discount that this could be a valid conclusion. I think the wording of verse 20 is quite interesting, "the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not...." I think this is a clear indication that God's desire is for these judgments to cause men to repent of their evil deeds and be saved, but they choose not to.

### **Revelation 10 – A Sweet Taste with a Sickening Aftertaste**

Before being shown the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet judgment, John is shown a mighty angel descending from heaven with a cloud; a rainbow is on His head, his face shines like the sun, and his feet are like pillars of fire. I personally believe that as you continue to follow the narrative, this angel or messenger is identified as Jesus because He refers to the two Hebrew witnesses as "my two witnesses." This would not be the first time in scripture that Jesus is referred to as an angel (Genesis 16:10, 22:15-16, Exodus 3:2). The Lord is holding a book in His hand and is standing with His right foot on the sea and His left foot on the earth. I think this represents His authority over both. He then says something that is responded to by the voice of seven thunders (probably God the Father). For some reason John is instructed not to record what he heard.

The Lord then lifts His hand to heaven and swears by God that it is time to bring an end to the kingdom of Satan. The blowing of the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet will represent the beginning of the end. Point is made that these events will fulfill all that was foretold by His prophets. John is then instructed (by the voice of God the Father I believe) to take the little book from the Lord Jesus. When John asks for the book, the Lord instructs him to eat it, but warns him that although it will taste good, it will make him sick to his stomach. This is obviously a very descriptive way of telling John to read and absorb the contents of the book. As he does, he will joy in the fact that the kingdom of the enemy will be destroyed, but he will be sickened by the events that will accompany that destruction.

### **Revelation 11 – Two Powerful Witnesses**

This is a continuation of John's experience in the previous chapter. John is given a measuring rod to measure the temple of God, the altar, and those that worship there. He is specifically instructed to leave out the court of the Gentiles. He is then told that Jerusalem will be under the authority of the Gentiles for 42 months. This is another indication to me that the Lord's focus during this 70<sup>th</sup> week is on the Jewish people and the city of Jerusalem (again as was foretold to Daniel).

Point is made that the Lord will send two witnesses clothed in sackcloth to testify of His truth for 1,260 days. They will be supernaturally protected from the attempts of men to kill them. Anyone who tries to hurt them will be destroyed when they breathe fire out of their mouths. They will also have the ability to prevent it from raining, to turn water into blood, and to send plagues among the nations during the days of their ministry as they so choose. Because of the prophecy of Malachi (chapter 4), most identify one of the witnesses as Elijah; the identity of the other is not given. Some speculate that it will be Moses because of the similarity to the miracles and plagues. Others speculate that it will be Enoch since he never experienced physical death, which is unique to him and Elijah in scripture. Others speculate that the other witness could be Zerubbabel based on the prophecy of Haggai. Frankly, I don't think their identity matters. The truth is that the messenger is not what is important, it is the ministry and service to God and the declaration of His message that are important.

Only when the ministry of the two witnesses has been completed will the beast that ascended from the bottomless pit be able to kill them. Their death will be celebrated as their bodies are left lying in the streets of Jerusalem. The nations will be so happy that people will send presents to one another in celebration of the death of the prophets. After lying in the streets for 3.5 days, God raises them back to life. This causes great fear among men. They then ascend to heaven in the sight of their enemies. As referenced earlier, this resurrection is accompanied by another earthquake that destroys a tenth of Jerusalem and results in the death of 7,000 men. This scares the believing remnant of Jews, and they respond by giving glory to God.

At this point the 2d woe, or 6<sup>th</sup> trumpet is declared past. This clarifies to me that the witnesses were serving during the first half of the 7-year tribulation period since their death comes at the midpoint. It also fits in with the events John will be shown in the next chapter regarding Satan being cast out of heaven and given 3.5 years to wreak havoc.

Finally, the seventh angel blows his trumpet and John hears great voices in heaven declaring that Jesus will soon establish His kingdom. John then sees the 24 elders again fall on their faces in worship of God and recognition that it is time for the dead to be judged, the saints rewarded and those who are destroying the earth to be destroyed (Satan and his followers). It's interesting to note that the elders are talking about the prophets, saints and those that fear God's name in reference to a category of beings different from themselves. This is just another verse that makes me think these elders could be the angels/watches referred to in Daniel.

Next, John sees the temple in heaven open and inside is the ark of the covenant. I personally think this is "the ark of the covenant," though many would argue that it is just the original from which the earthly ark was fashioned. My understanding is that the ark represented the throne of God and was distinct in that regard from other items associated with the earthly temple. Only the future will tell.

Again, as with the 7<sup>th</sup> seal, those on planet earth hear voices and thunder, see lightning, and experience an earthquake—this time accompanied by great hail.

## **Revelation 12 – A Historical Perspective with Future Significance**

Again, John's attention is directed away from the judgments to observe another vision. He sees a great wonder in heaven—a pregnant woman clothed with the sun and wearing a crown of 12 stars who is about to give birth. This chapter is full of imagery, but scripture usually explains scripture. I believe this is a picture of the nation of Israel as descended from Jacob through his 12 sons and as Joseph saw represented in a dream (Genesis 37).

Another wonder appears in the heaven—a great red dragon that has 7 heads with crowns and 10 horns. This dragon uses his tail to throw 1/3 of the stars of heaven to the earth. I think this is a picture of the rebellion of Lucifer and the angels that chose to follow him in rebellion. The dragon is then pictured ready to devour the child to whom the woman gives birth.

Point is made that the woman births a man child that is destined to rule the nations with complete power and authority, and He is safely caught up to God and His throne. This is obviously a picture of the birth of Jesus and His ascension to the throne of the Father after dying as our sacrifice for sin and conquering death through His resurrection.

John then sees the woman [Israel] flee into the wilderness to a place that God has prepared to protect and nourish her for 1,260 days, or 3.5 years. Many speculate that this place of protection is Petra, Jordan.

The next thing John sees is a war in heaven between Michael and his angels and the dragon and his angels. The dragon and his angels are defeated and thrown out of heaven to earth. At this point the dragon is specifically identified as “that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world.”

At this point John hears a voice in heaven declaring that salvation is about to come through Jesus and the establishment of His kingdom since Satan, the accuser of the saints, has been banished forever from heaven. Point is made that the saints have overcome him by the “blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony”—even though many died because of that testimony. He declares that this is a time for those who dwell in the heavens to rejoice. For those who live on planet earth, however, the opposite is true. Satan has been banished to earth and is very angry; he is very aware that his time is short.

The first thing he does is to begin persecuting the nation of Israel. Many of the people of Israel are taken to the place in the wilderness in which God will protect and provide for them during the 3.5 years that Satan is in control. Again, I am reminded that Satan has supernatural powers. John sees him send a flood to destroy the people as they flee, but God causes the earth to open up and swallow the flood. Whether this is a real flood or not, I don't know. The point is that Satan will futilely try to destroy the remnant that God is protecting.

Further angered at this defeat, Satan goes to make war with the rest of the Jewish people on earth that have chosen to follow God in obedience through faith in Jesus.

### **Revelation 13 – Introducing the Antichrist and the False Prophet**

John is now shown a different event. He is positioned at the seashore and sees a beast come up out of the sea that has 7 heads and 10 horns; each horn has a crown, and each head is named a blasphemous name. John describes the beast as looking like a leopard, having the feet of a bear and the mouth of a lion. Point is made that the beast gets his power and authority from the dragon, already identified as Satan. Without going into specifics, the beast seems to be connected to the three beasts seen by Daniel in his vision (chapter 7). I think this is meant to tell us that the beast will establish and rule a powerful earthly kingdom.

Next John sees that one of the heads of the beast seems to have suffered a fatal wound, but the wound heals to the amazement of all on earth. This causes them to worship the beast and Satan, whom they seem to recognize as the one empowering the beast. They are convinced that the beast has no equal among men. They also seem to be convinced that he is invincible. John hears the beast speak with great blasphemy against God, His temple and those that dwell in heaven. Point is made that his power would be limited to a 42-month period of time.

It is revealed to John that this beast, the Antichrist, would be allowed to make war with and conquer the saints, those who have placed their faith in the Son of God. It is then revealed that all who live on planet earth whose names are not written in the “book of life of the Lamb” will worship the beast. Verse 8 very clearly states that the sacrifice of Jesus was part of God’s plan since the foundation of the world; it was not an event that God had to plan in response to the success of Satan in tempting man to sin and reject God’s authority. God knew what would happen and already had a plan for man’s redemption in place.

Next John sees another beast appear, this time coming out of the earth; this beast has two horns like a lamb and speaks like a dragon. I think the language is significant here. Jesus has consistently been referred to as “the Lamb” in this book, and Satan has been identified as the dragon. This beast, often called the false prophet, looks like a lamb and speaks like a dragon. In other words, he gives the appearance of a spiritual leader, but speaks blasphemy. This beast is also empowered by Satan to perform wonders; he publicly calls down fire from heaven in imitation of the prophet of Elijah. It is actually the decision of this beast to make every person on earth worship the first beast, the Antichrist. This indicates that this beast is the second in command to the first one. Verse 12 indicates that the wounded head of the first beast represented the Antichrist, which seems to indicate that he will mimic the death and resurrection of Jesus. The people on earth are deceived because of the miracles he does. His ability to perform miracles seems to require the presence of the first beast.

This is very thought-provoking to me; it brings to mind the words of the Lord Jesus.

John 5:43 I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.

Jesus was rejected in spite of His miracles, yet the Antichrist will be believed because of the lying wonders performed by this beast.

This 2<sup>nd</sup> beast will have an image/idol built of the Antichrist that will seem to have a life of its own; it will be able to speak. Those that refuse to worship it will be put to death. I hadn't really absorbed that before. With the rapid advancement of today's scientists, I have no doubt that this could be a demonically-possessed clone of the Antichrist.

Every person on earth, no matter their station in life, will be required to receive a mark in their right hand or forehead. Again, considering today's verichip technology, this no longer sounds impossible, but quite feasible. This mark is declared by John to be either the name or number of the name of the beast. Since the New Testament was written in Greek, I wouldn't be surprised if this number corresponds to the name of the beast in Greek. John then tells us that the number of the beast is the same as the number for man—666. Although many have tried to identify the Antichrist by assigning number values to names of prominent political leaders, I personally don't believe that is possible. Scripture states that the Antichrist won't be revealed until the restrainer [whom I believe to be the Holy Spirit] is removed [I believe through the rapture of the church]. I believe this information is given for the benefit of the people who are living during that time.

### **Revelation 14 – The Gospel Declared Throughout the World and Babylon's Destruction Soon to Follow**

John is now given a 4<sup>th</sup> vision before the narrative on judgment is continued. He sees a Lamb (Jesus) standing on Mt. Zion [I believe in heaven] with the 144,000 Jewish believers who were sealed with the Father's name. Some believe that this is a different group; I see no basis for differentiating this group from those previously identified as having been sealed from the 12 tribes of Israel (cf chapter 7). He hears a voice from heaven (that resembles other scriptural descriptions of the voice of God) accompanied by a group of singers who are also playing harps. They are singing a new song before the throne [in heaven], and point is made that no man can learn that song but the 144,000 who were redeemed from earth. They are further identified as virgins (not defiled with women) and as those that "follow the Lamb wherever He goes." They are the firstfruits of God's harvest from among men. This is a Jewish group being described with reference to Jewish festivals that I believe is a specific reference to the believing remnant of Israel/Jews that will result from the tribulation of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel. They are described as speaking truth without deceit and without fault or righteous. This is true of every believer that inherits heaven. We have been imputed His righteousness and will no longer be influenced by the sin nature. I can't wait!

It seems to me that since the 144,000 are seen in heaven, their ministry ended in conjunction with the ministry of the two witnesses. They probably died as martyrs when

Satan turned his attention to the Jewish saints on earth after being thwarted in his effort to destroy the remnant that God is protecting in the wilderness.

John's attention is now drawn to another angel flying in the heavens preaching the everlasting gospel to all those living on planet earth. This fulfills God's promise that the gospel would be carried all over the world.

And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

His message, "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." The wording is confusing as to whether this is the message of the gospel or in addition to the gospel as we know it. I tend to think it is in addition to. I know that the two witnesses and the 144,00 were declaring the whole truth. God never changes and His truth never changes. It is obvious to me that the gospel as we know it has been revealed in increments according to God's purposes. The acceptable response has always been to have faith in God's provision. I know that God is righteous and He alone is qualified to judge the response of each individual to the revelation given him.

John now sees another angel declaring another message: "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." I have heard it taught that the Bible is a tale of two cities—Jerusalem and Babylon. Jerusalem is recognized as the city of God, and Babylon as the city of false gods. This announcement has a two-fold application (is fallen, is fallen), to the destruction of the false gods and their teachings that originated from there beginning with Nimrod and to the destruction of the city itself as predicted in the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah in particular. This is yet to occur according to the specifics of the prophecies.

Is. 13:19 And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.

Jer. 50:13 Because of the wrath of the LORD it shall not be inhabited, but it shall be wholly desolate: every one that goeth by Babylon shall be astonished, and hiss at all her plagues.

Jer. 51:37 And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwellingplace for dragons, an astonishment, and an hissing, without an inhabitant.

A third angel follows this one with yet another message; he warns that anyone who worships the beast and his image and receives the mark in his forehead or hand will suffer the full measure of God's wrath. He/she will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of Jesus and the holy angels. This torment will continue forever; they will have no rest day or night.

I know that there are many who just don't believe that hell, a place of eternal torment, is a real place. They just can't seem to reconcile a loving God as consigning someone to eternal torment. They focus on the love of God to the exclusion of His righteousness and holiness. I personally don't think He would have sent His Son to suffer on the cross for our sins to provide for our salvation if there was nothing to save us from. The cross was

not a simple work of obedience for the Son of God; He had to suffer a break in fellowship with the Father for the first and only time of His being. This was suffering far beyond anything that we can imagine. His love caused Him to send His Son; His righteousness and holiness require that He condemn those who refuse His provision to eternal torment.

It's interesting to note that the saints on earth are encouraged to stay faithful and obedient in light of these announcements. Yes, they have more testing to endure, but their eternal victory is certain. Some will yet experience deliverance through death, but their works will produce fruit and will not go unrewarded.

John's attention is now directed to one "like the Son of man" [Jesus] sitting on a white cloud, wearing a golden crown and holding a sharp sickle [a harvesting instrument]. Another angel/messenger emerges from the heavenly temple and announces that the time has come for Him to reap His harvest. This can be confusing because it's easy to connect this harvest with that spoken of by the Lord to His disciples.

John 4:34-36 Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. Say not ye, There are yet four months, and *then* cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

Jesus' discourse with His disciples was in reference to a harvest of fruit that resulted in eternal life. In this section of Revelation the harvest is one of judgment using a sharp sickle. Another angel holding a sharp sickle comes out of the temple and is joined by another angel who comes from out of the altar. This last angel is identified as having power over fire. He joins in the harvest of those on earth that are destined for the winepress of God's wrath. I think the Lord's words as recorded in Matthew are helpful in understanding these verses and identifying this as the harvest of the tares.

Matt. 13:36-43 Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked *one*; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Matt. 13:49-50 So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

The winepress of God's wrath is identified as "without the city," and I believe is a reference to the final battle of Armageddon. Point is made that the battle will be very violent and bloody.

### **Revelation 15 – Preparation for the Last 7 Plagues**

This chapter begins in heaven as preparations are made to pour out the final 7 plague judgments that represent the fullness of God's wrath. John sees gathered together on the sea of glass in front of the throne those that have "gotten victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name." These are the martyrs from the tribulation period. They have been given harps and are singing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb in praise of His great and mighty works of righteousness. Jesus is acknowledged as the "King of saints." He is also acknowledged as the only holy One deserving of the worship of the nations.

Next, John sees the temple open; again, it is specifically identified as the temple where "the ark of the covenant" is located. This time seven angels clothed in white linen and having gold belts around the breast emerge possessing the ability to dispense the last 7 plagues which are given to them in vials by one of the living creatures. Point is made that the temple fills with smoke from the glory and power of God and that no man is able to enter the temple until these last seven plagues are over.

I hadn't thought of this before, but because of the priestly clothing I can't help but want to make a connection with priests. I am reminded that we are declared to be a royal priesthood. It's interesting that specific point is made that no "man" is allowed to enter the temple until the judgments are over. Could this be a reference to seven chosen men from the church, the royal priesthood, that serve as God's angels/messengers/servants in the dispensation of these last plagues?

### **Revelation 16 – The Final 7 Plagues**

At this point John hears a voice from the temple instructing the 7 angels to go and pour out "the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth."

1. The first angel pours out his plague upon the earth, and all those who have the mark of the beast and worship his image develop evil/diseased sores.
2. The second angel pours his vial upon the sea, and the water thickens like the blood of a dead man; every living soul in the seas dies.
3. The third angel pours his vial upon the rivers and springs, and they turn to blood. At this point the angel of the waters speaks up regarding the righteousness of God in dispensing this judgment since evil men were responsible for shedding the blood of the saints and prophets.
4. When the fourth angel pours out his vial on the sun, he is given power to scorch all men with fire and heat (the ultimate in global warming). The response of evil men—to blaspheme God [whom they know is causing these judgments] rather than repent.

5. The fifth angel pours his vial on the throne and kingdom of the Antichrist. His kingdom is thrown into complete darkness and men gnaw their tongues in pain and blaspheme the God of heaven because of their pains and sores. They too refuse to repent.
6. The sixth angel pours his vial upon the great river Euphrates. Its waters dry up and prepare the way for the kings of the east. At this point John sees 3 unclean spirits like frogs emerge from the mouths of the dragon, beast/Antichrist and false prophet. We are specifically told that they are “spirits of devils” that are sent to the kings of the earth and the world populous to work miracles and gather them together to “the battle of the great day of God Almighty.” The place of gathering—Armageddon. In verse 15 God again gives a word of encouragement to believers to remain faithful and spiritually alert because the Lord’s coming is very soon.
7. Finally, the 7<sup>th</sup> and last plague is poured out into the air. I think this is significant since Satan is acknowledged as the “prince of the power of the air.” (Ephesians 2:2) As with the 7<sup>th</sup> seal and 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet, those on planet earth hear voices and thunders, see lightnings, and experience an earthquake—this one described as the greatest earthquake ever to happen on planet earth since man has lived here. The wording definitely gives food for thought regarding events on planet earth before man was created, and in my mind directly relate to the fall of Lucifer and 1/3 of the angels. This earthquake causes Jerusalem to divide into three parts and destroys many of the major cities of the nations. In fact, every island and mountain disappears. The memory of Babylon and the false gods and teachings that emerged from her provoke God’s wrath to its fullest. It seems impossible that there are people who live through this earthquake, but we are told that 90 lb. hailstones fall from the sky and give rise to further blasphemy from the mouths of men.

I think it is important to note that the previous seal and trumpet judgments were more limited in scope. The vial judgments have worldwide impact.

### **Revelation 17 – Babylon the Great, The Mother of Harlots**

One more interruption in the narrative occurs as John is taken to receive specific enlightenment concerning the destruction of Babylon. People can try to spiritualize it all they want; I believe this is in reference to the actual city/region of Babylon from which Satan’s attack on mankind seems to be centered.

John’s guide is one of the angels that poured out the vial judgments. [I think it was the one that poured out the 5<sup>th</sup> vial judgment upon the kingdom of Antichrist.] He is very clear that he is taking John to observe 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.”

Jer. 51:7 Babylon *hath been* a golden cup in the LORD’S hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad.

Jer. 51:13 O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures, thine end is come, *and* the measure of thy covetousness.

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

Scripture clearly identifies the whore as the city of Babylon.

John then sees a woman sitting upon a scarlet colored beast that is full of names of blasphemy and has 7 heads and 10 horns. This description connects directly to the Dragon as described in 12:3-4 and the beast from the sea, the Antichrist in 13:1. The woman is dressed in purple and scarlet wearing jewelry of gold, precious stones and pearls and holding a golden cup. The cup is described as being full of abominations and filthiness that she used to seduce men. I believe the adultery being referenced is spiritual adultery in reference to turning men to idols and away from the worship of YHWH, the self-existing Almighty God of creation.

This woman has a name written on her forehead:

Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth.

I think the mystery is in reference to the “mystery religions” that she used to lure men away from the true God. OR Maybe the “mystery” is in reference to the success she was able to achieve in her quest to turn men from the true God. Babylon is a reference to her place of origin. It is the land of Shinar where Nimrod led the people in rebellion against God as they attempted to build the tower of Babel and establish a growing city in direct disobedience to His instruction to go out and populate planet earth. The Mother of Harlots is a reference to the fact that she gave birth to all false religions and the evil deeds that are part and parcel of the practice of these religions.

John saw her as drunk with the blood of the saints and the martyrs of Jesus. He was amazed at her public display of evil. His companion asks John why he is so amazed. He then goes on to explain the mystery of the woman and her relationship to the Antichrist and Satan. I learned in my studies that only two people are identified in scripture as the “son of perdition”—Judas Iscariot and the Antichrist. I believe that these were the only two men that Satan has personally chosen to possess or indwell.

The 7 heads are described as 7 mountains (kings/kingdoms) which the woman has ruled in her quest to destroy Israel. I think this is a valid deduction since the whole of the Bible revolves around God’s plan for Israel and the Messiah, Jesus Christ. There have been many world empires to come and go that are not referenced in scripture; and I believe that is because they had no direct impact on Israel during its existence or they existed during the time that Israel was without a nation during the diaspora.

John is told that five of the kings have fallen, one is now, and one is not yet come (at the time John lived). Point is made that the one yet to come will only be allowed a short reign. The beast is described as the one “that was, and is not, even he is the 8<sup>th</sup>, and is one of the seven, and goeth into perdition.” I believe the seven kingdoms are Egypt

(from which Israel emerged as a nation), Assyria (that conquered the Northern Kingdom), Babylon (that conquered the Southern Kingdom), Medo-Persia, and Greece (the successive ruling powers in Israel). The existing kingdom during John's lifetime was Rome. I would assume the kings being referenced would be the Pharaoh from which the Israelites were freed, Sargon (the Assyrian conqueror that sent the Northern Kingdom into captivity), Nebuchadnezzar (the Babylonian king that conquered the Southern Kingdom), Darius and Alexander the Great (the rulers of the succeeding empires), and Caesar (as representative of the Roman rulers) or Domitian (the emperor who had banished John to Patmos). The seventh kingdom of Antichrist is the one yet to come. I think the reason for the description "he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition" is a reference to Satan as the eighth but indwelling Antichrist, the seventh, who will meet his end in perdition (eternal torment).

The ten horns are identified as kings yet to come to power but will be part of the Antichrist's ruling circle and giving him their full allegiance. These kings will form the core of the Antichrist's forces that will go out to engage the returning Jesus and his saints in war. That is just so hard for me to imagine.

The waters upon which the whore sits are identified as the peoples of the nations.

It's interesting to note that the ten kings who will form core of the Antichrist's ruling circle hate the whore. Then the woman is identified as the city of Babylon. This tells me that the hatred that the kings have of the whore is rooted in jealousy of her position of wealth and power. I'm firmly convinced that the Lord is referencing the real city of Babylon, although I do see why people want to compare the United States to Babylon. We have certainly established ourselves in wealth and power and in leading the nations into spiritual adultery and rejection of God. We have thrown God out of our schools, our judiciary, and our governments. We produce and export "entertainment" that can only be described as violent and immoral. We embrace all false religions and false teachers and then want to turn around and blame God for everything that happens that we consider "bad." We want to hold Him accountable for everything without being accountable to Him for anything.

### **Revelation 18 – The Physical Annihilation of Babylon**

In this chapter John witnesses the destruction of Babylon. It is described as a city where devils dwell and every kind of evil spirit. She is very wealthy, and many nations are dependent upon their trade with her.

John hears a voice from heaven warning believers to leave so they won't have to suffer her plagues because God is about to judge her.

John records that Babylon considers her position of wealth and power as invincible. Verse 8 indicates that her destruction will come in one day. It will be so sudden and thorough that it will cause the nations to fear and those who did business with her and rode the coattails of her power to mourn.

In heaven, however, there will be great rejoicing when they see that God has avenged her treatment of God and His followers. Her destruction is pictured as the result a great millstone would have when tossed into the sea. In other words it will be swallowed up quickly and sink never to rise again. Emphasis is made that no human being will ever live there again. In verse 23 the reason for her destruction is again identified: “for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. And in her were found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.”

## **Revelation 19 – The Return of the King**

This chapter opens with a praise and worship celebration going on in heaven as a result of the destruction of Babylon. The 24 elders and 4 living creatures are again seen prostrate in worship before God. In verse 6 we are told that John hears the voice of a great multitude praising and worshipping God in anticipation of the marriage of the Lamb. Point is made that the wife is ready and clothed in righteousness.

The next thing John sees—Heaven opens up and Jesus, the Faithful and True, the righteous Judge is astride a white horse going out to war. His eyes show anger and determination and He is wearing many crowns. He is also marked with a new name with which no man is yet familiar. He is clothed in a garment soaked in blood, and His name is “The Word of God.”

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

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

John 1:36 And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!

Jesus is accompanied by the armies of heaven (in my opinion including believers and angels) on white horses and clothed in clean, white linen. Out of his mouth goes a sharp sword, His word, which He will use to conquer the nations. He is come to finish God’s work of wrath and establish His kingdom. When He establishes His kingdom, He will rule as King with a “rod of iron,” intolerant of sin and evil. His garments are embroidered with the following title: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

John then sees an angel standing in the sun and calling out an invitation to the vultures to come and enjoy the supper of the great God, and feast on the flesh of kings, captains, mighty men, horses, and other men.

Then John sees the armies of the Antichrist gathered together to make war against Jesus and His army.

In Isaiah we are told that the Lord will go first to Bozrah, presumably to deliver the saints that are being protected there in the wilderness, and then proceed to Israel.

Is. 63:1-4 Who *is* this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this *that is* glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that

speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore *art thou* red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people *there was* none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance *is* in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.

John observes that all it takes is the word of the Lord to destroy the armies of the Antichrist. The beast and the false prophet are thrown alive into the lake of fire.

## **Revelation 20 – The White Throne Judgment**

At this point John sees an angel come down from heaven that has the key to the bottomless pit and a big chain in his hand. He takes hold of the Devil, binds him up and casts him into the bottomless pit for the next 1000 years. He closes the entrance and puts some type of seal on Satan that prevents him from deceiving the nations until the end of 1000 years. At that time he will be loosed again for a “little season.”

The next thing John sees are thrones set in position comparable to a jury. He saw the souls of those that had been beheaded for their “witness for Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark.” These souls are allowed to live and reign with Christ for 1000 years. This completes the first resurrection. This would indicate that those who come to faith during the Kingdom Age will not die and will translate directly into eternity, similar to the experience of the saints who are still alive at the time of the rapture. Point is made that those who have part in the first resurrection will live eternally as “priests of God and of Christ” and will reign with Christ for 1000 years along with the tribulation martyrs.

The rest of the dead, the unbelieving, Christ-rejecting dead, will not live again until the 1000 years are over.

At the end of the 1000-year reign of Christ, Satan will be loosed from his prison and allowed to go out and deceive the people on planet earth once again. Reference is again made to Gog and Magog as among those who once again align themselves with Satan. Without going into great detail at this point, Gog and Magog are the leaders of a future alliance of Moslem nations that will attack Israel and be supernaturally destroyed by God. This event is described in Ezekiel 38-39. (For a verse by verse commentary of these chapters go to my website at [www.momsbiblejournal.com](http://www.momsbiblejournal.com).) In fact, this alliance has never before existed in history and is being formed at this very time through the alliance of Russia, Iran, Syria, etc. I believe it is one of the next events on the prophetic timetable—either it or the destruction of Damascus prophesied in Isaiah 17.

Beyond my understanding after experiencing the righteous rule of the Savior, Satan will be able to gather an army that numbers “as the sand of the sea.” They will actually position themselves to war against the saints and the “beloved city” [Jerusalem], but God will destroy them with fire from heaven. Then Satan is thrown into the lake of fire to join the Antichrist and false prophet to be tormented day and night forever.

John next sees Jesus on a great white throne in position somewhere out of the confines of heaven and earth. Maybe this is John's way of describing a different dimension of existence. He then sees all the dead, those who were not qualified to participate in the first resurrection, standing before God. A set of books were opened which are evidently a record of the works of these individuals. Each individual will be judged based on his works as recorded in these books. The Book of Life is also opened. Death and hell are cast into the lake of fire, which is identified as the second death. Whoever was not found written in the book of life was also cast into the lake of fire.

It is my opinion that no one from this group will be found in the Book of Life. Everyone, however, will get his day in court.

### **Revelation 21 – The New Jerusalem**

The next thing John sees is a new heaven and a new earth, the eternal dwelling place of all God's children. Point is made that there is no more sea. I think this is emphasizing the fact that everything that is part of our eternity will be for our enjoyment. The sea represents that which is unpredictable and uncontrollable. Then John sees the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven. John compares its beauty to that of a bride adorned for her husband. Then John hears a voice from heaven declaring that God will dwell with His people as their God. He will wipe away all tears, and there will never again be such things as death, sorrow, crying or pain. This is a new beginning for man, the beginning of his eternal existence. God declares that He has made all things new. He then declares that His purpose for the creation of man has been accomplished. As the originating source of creation and the destroying force of the original creation, He declares that all those in His kingdom can now drink of the water of life freely. Those who are part of His kingdom are overcomers, heirs of the King, His sons/daughters.

All who have rejected Him as their God—the fearful, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, whoremongers, sorcerers, idolaters, and liars—are condemned to the lake of fire. This is a thought-provoking verse. Why did He not just say the unbelieving?

At this point another one of the angels that took part in dispensing the last 7 plagues comes to take John to see the bride, the Lamb's wife. Then he carries him away in the spirit to a great and high mountain and shows him the holy Jerusalem descending down out of heaven from God. It's interesting that in verse 2 the city is described as a bride and verse 9 describes it as "the bride, the Lamb's wife." We know that the church is the bride, but the city is the place He has prepared for us, and is synonymous with the bride. This is much like a king is synonymous with his kingdom, or a ruler with his nation.

The city is described as shining with the glory of God described as a very pure light. The wall is very high and has 12 gates that are named for the 12 tribes of Israel. There are three gates each on each of the four sides (east, north, south, west), and angels are posted at each gate. Why? I have no idea. The wall has 12 foundations that are named for the 12 apostles. Is the 12<sup>th</sup> apostle Matthias or Paul? I don't know. John's companion had a

measuring reed to measure the city, the gates and the wall. It is described as “foursquare” (equal in length and width) and measured 12,000 furlongs each (estimated at 1400 miles each). We are then told that its height also measures the same. The wall is measured to be 144 cubits (or approximately 200 feet) thick. The walls of the city are made of gold so pure that it’s as clear as glass. Each of the 12 foundations are encrusted with gemstones as follows: jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sardius, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprasus, jacinth and amethyst. Although some of these names are unfamiliar, we know they will be beautiful.

Each gate is described as being one giant pearl, and the street of the city is pure gold, like the walls. There is no temple in the city since its citizens have direct access to God the Father and Son. It has need of no other light than the glory of the Lord.

It’s interesting to note that believers will still be recognized as belonging to different nations and that the kings of the earth will bring glory and honor to it from their nations. All of this leads me to believe that the city is the special domain of the church. All other saved individuals have access to the city, but live in nations established on the new earth. The gates of the city are never shut, and it never experiences night. Nothing that would defile it will ever be allowed to enter it. Only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life will be allowed in.

The wording is interesting. It indicates that things that defile still exist. I don’t know if this ties in some way to the degrees of eternal punishment that seem to be referenced in scripture. We know that evil beings will be in torment forever, but we don’t really understand how that works. I just know their existence will not be allowed to impact our eternal future.

## **Revelation 22 – Even So, Come Lord Jesus**

John is next shown a “pure river of water of life” that flows from the throne of God and His Son, the Lamb Jesus. In the middle of the street and along the sides of the river grows the tree of life. It yields 12 different kinds of fruit and produces new fruit every month. It’s interesting to note that the leaves are “for the healing of the nations.” The Greek for *healing* led me to believe that these leaves will facilitate our worship in some way.

Beautiful truth—“there shall be no more curse!” God and His Son are on the throne and His servants will forever serve faithfully and obediently. We will have access to Him and will proudly wear His name in our foreheads. Again, emphasis is made that there will be no night there. Why? I believe it is because the night and darkness are associated with evil and wickedness in scripture.

John’s guide assures him that everything he has seen and heard is “faithful and true.” This Revelation is intended to make the children of God aware of their future.

Jesus now speaks up and assures John that He is coming quickly and that those who treasure and live by the prophecy of this book will be blessed.

Again, John emphasizes that he personally saw and heard the things he is recording. He then falls down to worship the angel that is with him, but the angel rebukes him. He identifies himself as a fellowservant, in fact, another prophet, who also treasures the message of this Revelation. He then tells John to worship God.

This again reminds me that John's guide is identified as one of the angels that poured out the 7 vials. Maybe this is a clue that it is 7 honored prophets who are chosen to empty those vials.

John is then told that he is to share this message with others; it is not to be sealed because the time is at hand. This is in direct opposition to the instruction given Daniel; he was told to seal his message because it applied to end times.

At this point the fate of all is sure—those that are unjust will remain unjust, those who are filthy will stay filthy; those who are righteous will remain righteous and those who are holy will remain holy.

Again, encouraging words from the Lord—He is coming quickly and He will reward every person according to his work. Scripture is clear that the work of the child of God is to believe Him, and through Him we will be declared righteous. There will be no grounds for accusation or judgment that can condemn us; we are declared innocent in Christ. Those who have rejected the Lord will have to stand on their own works as they measure up to God's law, and every person depending upon his own works will be found guilty and will be condemned.

John 3:18-19 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

The Lord again identifies Himself as the “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.” He pronounces a blessing on those who do His commandments; they will have access to the tree of life and the New Jerusalem.

Verse 15 clarifies that no one is annihilated. Dogs (a derogatory term), sorcerers, whoremongers, murderers, idolaters, and liars will still exist outside of God's Kingdom.

Jesus declares that He has sent His angel/messenger to testify to John and he is to testify to the churches. He explicitly identifies Himself as the “root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.” In other words He is the qualified successor to the throne of David—in fact, the throne of the universe.

Verse 17 should reflect the heart of every believer—Come; choose to be a part of the family of God. The water of life is offered freely to “whosoever.” No one is excluded from the opportunity to choose life over death.

Now a solemn warning is given to those that hear the words of this prophecy. You are not to add to or take away from the truth that God has revealed. If you do, you will experience the plagues written in this book and your part in the book of life will be removed, you will not have access to the holy city or the blessings associated with living in the presence of God. It is this warning that makes me very careful to clarify what I share as my understanding. I am continually seeking more understanding, and sometimes that causes me to see things differently than I did before. I do not claim to know the whole truth, and I look forward to gaining more wisdom and enlightenment. I am privileged to have access to many different viewpoints from people much more learned than I, but I draw my own conclusions as I feel the Spirit is teaching me. I am responsible before the Lord for me—no one else.

The last verse of this book gets my hearty Amen! “He which testifieth these things [Jesus] saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”