

Revelation:

A Reference Commentary.

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Oh, there's ah clear indication in ah book called Revelations.

Oh, there's ah clear indication
 in ah book called Revelations
 St. John wrote ah long-long time ago
 call it the words of life
 call it a warning-in-light
 ya know it talks about a man that wears ah robe
 and there's a strong Revelation
 that gives an indication
 Its talk about a man who owns ah throne
 call him the First and Last
 You know he wears a golden sash
 Holy-Holy-Holy is the Lamb
 He was First born of the Dead
 and He's comen back again
 and of his kingdom Brother there's no-end
 He said don't forget to feed my sheep
 you know the homeless in the streets
 'cause what you do for them you've done for me
 seven angels he addressed
 warning labels tell the rest
 and why do they call that book a mystery
 He's coming back just the way he left
 every tribe He will address
 When Michael blows that horn called victory.

Jim F. Bean II. [A soldier of Christ on the highways of the USA]

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Foreword.

Anyone who tries to write a commentary on Revelation owes a debt to those who in the past have written commentaries on Revelation and who have had to grapple with its many difficulties, these are acknowledged in the references. Mounce has been my constant companion for most of the writing of this book and also helpful have been Barclay, Caird, Hailey, Hendriksen, Hughes, Johnson, Ladd, Lang, Milligan, Morris and Wilcock. Other commentaries and works consulted are listed at the end of the introduction. At times we have all stumbled through passages we didn't or barely understood. The problem is illustrated by the many variant interpretations one can find, as well as the different schools of interpretation. I owe a great debt to a series of tapes by Malcolm Smith who first demonstrated to me that the key to much of its interpretation lies in the bible itself. He made difficult passages suddenly seem to be brilliantly clear, his interpretation belongs clearly to the idealist school. Without hearing his tapes this commentary would not have been written. I have to note that as I wrote this commentary my stance has changed from idealist to more futuristic. Anyone who writes on Revelation should write for his own generation and therefore I have eschewed a preterist interpretation and used more of a futurist interpretation because we in the West are looking for the appearance of the antichrist and need to be prepared for his coming which will precede the greater coming of our Lord. However there is a danger in being pre-occupied with the appearance of the antichrist (Rev 13) because we may become so preoccupied that we as the church stop our pre-eminent work of preaching the gospel to all nations and to the ends of the earth and of making disciples (Rev 11).

Everyone who tries to write a commentary on Revelation brings his own baggage, his own doctrinal assumptions, the same is true here. No one has 'the' correct interpretation of Revelation, this is partly because it shows the principles but not always the details, (Wilcock) its interpretation depends on the circumstances of the church at the time. To some it may be 'Wake up!' Strengthen that which is about to die..' to some it may be 'Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.' The book of Revelation will bless all who hear it and take it to heart and therefore it speaks to all churches, of all ages, to some the beast is Rome to others China, Russia or the future antichrist. The reader must judge for himself whether the argument or scriptures used have weight or not. It is hoped that the references given will give the reader the clues required to make up his own mind as to the interpretation, I hope that this commentary will show the solid biblical basis of Revelation. In many ways a commentary on Revelation is a lifetimes work, as its interpretation will mature as we mature. I trust that if you differ from me on some

points you will bear with me, 'We all stumble in many ways.' James 3:2. In 1 Thess 5:21 Paul tells them to 'test everything and to hold on to the good', I hope that everyone who reads this commentary will also take this attitude.

Why yet another commentary on Revelation? Like Everest, because it is there, but also because I am convinced that the keys to its interpretation lie in scripture and to give due acknowledgement to those Christians persecuted throughout the ages and even now, to those the beast is alive and waging war on the saints and overcoming them. Another reason is that as Christians we all, in every generation, need to know the signs of His coming and to hear afresh and to heed the message within Revelation.

When I wrote the commentary I was aware of the saints that preceded me and who gave their lives for the truth of the gospel. But in our generation I wanted to write a commentary that would be relevant which is why I have not included much historical information on the Roman Empire. Most Christians in the West are looking out for the antichrist and so it is important to look for the signs of his appearance. But at the same time Christians in other parts of the world are undergoing persecution and Revelation is relevant for them too. So a purely futuristic interpretation of Revelation is not really appropriate to our times.

It is a reference commentary because I have tried to incorporate all the major cross-references upon which it is based or that shed light on the book from the old and new testaments and Revelation itself. It is also written on a verse by verse basis and there is some duplication because of this. I hope that it will therefore be of use to as a reference tool as well as shedding light on a book that many Christians who take their bible seriously may find perplexing. One of my aims is to make it as pastoral as possible and to show its relevance to our living; to those under persecution and under pressure to compromise with the world there is much application and encouragement.

Revelation is a closed book to many but to those who diligently study it, it will slowly reveal its treasures and the joy of such discoveries will amply reward the effort made. I commend the last book in the bible to those disposed to make such an effort.

I would like to thank Alan Nairne, David Easlea and John Platt for reviewing the manuscript and adding their comments.

All scripture references are from the New International Bible unless otherwise stated. My Greek Bible is linked to the KJV. Differences between the NIV and KJV are indicated in my website at <http://www.apocalipsis.org/kjv.htm>

The differences amount to very little in so far as they affect the interpretation of Revelation.

The Textus Receptus (received text) upon which the KJV is mainly based was the edition produced by Erasmus in 1516, with further work by Stephanus (d 1559) and Theodore Beza (d 1605). Erasmus did not have the last six verses of Revelation and he translated it into Greek from the Latin Vulgate, see 'tree of life' (NIV) vs 'book of life' (KJV) in Rev 22:19. Erasmus had only one copy of Revelation in the Greek and a copyist copied this for him, as he had to give the manuscript back. The copyist had difficulties because the text of Revelation was buried within a commentary and therefore some mistakes were made. Some of these eventually found their way into the KJV.

In Revelation the MT and CT mostly agree, the major differences are with the RT upon which the KJV is based. "I counted 140 verses within the book of Revelation where the Received Text (RT) does not agree with the Majority Text (MT). Also, I noted 23 verses of the Critical Text (CT) that do not agree with the MT. Clearly the CT is much closer to the original than the RT in the book of Revelation." (Greek Texts and The Revelation found at <http://www.dtl.org/versions/e-mails/revelation.htm>). Therefore as far as Revelation goes we are safer using the NIV rather than the KJV.

(xxxx) Refers to an unknown or forgotten reference, it indicates that the thought expressed originated with someone else.

I have followed Wilcock by splitting Revelation into eight scenes.

Numbers after any Greek word are Strong's

Revelation: A Reference Commentary.

1. Introduction:

To many on reading Revelation for the first time, particularly as a new Christian, it seems a fantastic book, but as one grows in the understanding of the bible more of it becomes recognisable and familiar. The reason why it seems fantastic to us is because of the apocalyptic style it was written in. This style would be familiar to the first century readers, but it is not a style with which we are familiar and it is therefore a barrier to our understanding the message of the book. The aim of this short commentary is to fill in some more gaps in our understanding and to show how both OT and NT scriptures, and indeed Revelation itself, provide many of the keys to the interpretation of the book of Revelation. Much insight can be gained merely by studying the many cross-references within Revelation and in particular the contrasts within it. It is rooted in particular with OT imagery but a detailed study reveals a NT perspective on a surprising number of aspects of the book. It also contains a supreme unity all of its own, but its unity with the rest of the word of God makes it a treasure throw. The best commentary on Revelation is scripture itself and I have therefore kept comment to a minimum, as this may only muddy the water. I have tried to answer the question 'what does it all mean', however it is only possible to provide answers to some of these questions. I do not claim to totally understand all the book, but some insights should prove useful.

Revelation is a frequently neglected book partly because its symbolism makes it obscure. Therefore it cannot be read lightly but with diligence it will yield its treasures to those who seek them. Another reason why it is not often preached upon is the warning in 22:18-19 about adding or taking away from the words of the prophecy. However the blessings of 1:3 and 22:7 also mean that it is to be read, heard and understood.

Why should we study Revelation?

- i. It claims the highest level of divine authorship of any book in the bible (1:1).
- ii. Because of its symbolism and the consequent difficulty in understanding it, it is frequently neglected, but *all* scripture is profitable.

- iii. It has a blessing to those who hear it and take to heart its message (1:3, 22:7).
- iv. It has a message to the church throughout all generations and it has blessed and strengthened the church throughout past generations.
- v. It has a message that is relevant to us today, just as the letters to the seven churches were relevant then.
- vi. It is God's last word to the church in the scriptures both in place and time.
- vii. It has a particular message for those undergoing persecution.
- viii. It shows the end of history, it shows the defeat of God's enemies and heavenly blessing for God's saints.
- ix. It shows us the glorified Christ as in no other book in the bible.

Revelation was written to show God's servants what must *soon* take place, that is it is a prophecy concerning the near future (1:1, 1:3, 1:19, 4:1, 22:6, 22:10) and also the distant future because it shows us the end of God's enemies. The words of the prophecy were originally intended to be read aloud, one must assume that anyone with a maturity of the Christian life and a good knowledge of both the OT and NT such as an elder would be able to make sense of the book at the time it was written. There is a blessing for the person who reads aloud the book to the assembly, as well as to those who hear and take to heart what is written in it because the time for those things in it to be fulfilled is near. The book shows tribulation for the saints in the form of persecution and tribulation for the world in the form of wars, famines, demonic attack, deception, disasters and plagues from God warning mankind to repent. No doubt our Lord had in mind the period of persecution under the Roman Empire lasting until Constantine in 314 AD when giving this prophecy to John but He also had in mind all the periods of persecution lasting until the time He returns. This is the last book in the bible and therefore it is His last word to His people warning us to be faithful to the end when He returns in glory with his holy angels and ushers in God's eternal kingdom and reign. This book is intended to strengthen our faith until he returns.

The book claims to be an apocalypse (1:1), a prophecy (1:3) an epistle (1:4, 11:22:21) and a vision (9:17). It is written partly in the style of apocalyptic Jewish

literature of the time (200 BC to 100 AD), and there also exists a sizeable body of early Christian writing that falls into this genre (Talbert). Other examples of this style of writing in the Bible include parts of Daniel and Zechariah, the nearest modern equivalent is the political cartoon. That Revelation falls into the apocalyptic genre is one of the keys to its interpretation. Mounce points out that 'a major role of the apocalypse was to explain why the righteous suffered and why the kingdom of God delayed' we can see this clearly in Revelation which is helpful on both these points. This type of literature was written under the pseudonym of some important person from the past such as Moses or Enoch, in this respect Revelation differs, being written under the name of John, which was a common name at the time. The apocalypse is usually revealed by a celestial being such as an angel, this is the case with Revelation, however it explicitly claims God as the author, but it is mediated through Jesus Christ and his angel. The message of apocalypse is expressed using vivid symbolism and depicts the struggles between good and evil in world history past and future. It depicts man as being powerless to overcome evil. Finally God will intervene cataclysmically to destroy the powers of evil. This may be associated with the coming of the Messiah and the inauguration of God's kingdom (xxxx). This apocalyptic idiom would be a familiar style to John's audience, but to us it seems strange. Ladd comments that the book is filled with allusions to OT prophetic writings but that there is not a similar proven allusion to any known Jewish apocalyptic writings. Swete quoting another source says that of the 404 verses of the Apocalypse there are 278, which contain references to the Jewish Scriptures, and he then gives an extensive list of about 300 OT references. One difference between Revelation and Jewish apocalyptic literature of the time should be noted, although John was a Jew he is also a Christian and as such his message is Christ centred.

The reason for the apocalyptic style is likely to make it vivid enough to remember by those undergoing persecution and to whom it is primarily intended, those undergoing persecution may not remember so easily the theology of Paul's epistles but the vivid imagery of Revelation could easily be recalled (Goldsworthy). The use of symbolic imagery also makes it meaningful to all generations because it does not tie the symbols to any one specific event in church history. Obviously the imagery of the beast can frequently be shown to relate to the Roman Empire (as in the preterist interpretation) but it is not tied down to *only* the Roman Empire but to tyrannies down through the centuries that persecute the church culminating in the antichrist. It also means that we cannot use Revelation to predict the exact time of the Second Coming of Christ, the point of Revelation is to help prepare God's people for the second coming and the difficult time prior to it.

The book is apocalyptic in style and therefore must be interpreted symbolically and not literally. Taking a completely literal approach soon gives rise to difficulties, for example, when trying to work out who the eight kings of Rev 17:11 are, or the meaning of the number of the beast, 666, or the new Jerusalem which is a 12,000 stadia cube. By its own admission it is symbolic, Jesus himself explains the symbolism of the seven stars and seven golden lampstands (1:20) and thus gives us Christians at the end of the second millennium a key to its interpretation.

Rev 1:20 The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

However the books symbolism is not something mystical, it relies on the bible's own symbolism which any biblically literate reader should be able to understand. The reason we do not understand Revelation is that we do not know our bible well enough.

As a prophecy it is foretelling the future as well as telling the word of God. As an epistle John stresses repentance and holiness on the part of the saints. It aims to encourage the saints to endure persecution, and not to compromise with the standards of the world and in doing so it shows the rewards of those who overcome and obey the words of this book and the punishment of the cowardly.

We owe to the book of Revelation a kaleidoscope of descriptions and visions of Jesus in his heavenly glory, for example: the vision of the someone 'like a son of man' (1:13-16); the Lamb, looking as if it had been slain (5:6 ff.); the Lamb as the shepherd leading his people to springs of living water (7:17); the Lamb standing on Mount Zion with the 144,000 (14:1); the rider on the white horse as King of kings and Lord of lords (19:11 ff.) and the Lamb as the Lamb of the new Jerusalem. We also owe to Revelation a great many names of Jesus: the faithful witness; the firstborn from the dead; the ruler of the kings of the earth; the First and the Last; the Living One; the Amen; the ruler of God's creation; the Lamb, Faithful and True; the Word of God; King of kings and Lord of lords; the Alpha and the Omega; the Root and the Offspring of David; the bright Morning Star. It also gives us many examples of hymns of praise and worship, which have inspired hymn writers down the centuries.

2. The message of Revelation:

Revelation reveals to us the spiritual world, spiritual truth using pictures from our earthly world but from the viewpoint of heaven (xxxx). It shows us the grand scheme of history from the Garden of Eden to the new heaven and new earth. The purpose of the book is to encourage Christians in difficult times, to show them that God is in control, despite the appearance of tyrannical regimes being in control, who can persecute Christians and even kill them at will. It is not intended to show us the future of history in terms of specific events, or to allow us to predict the future, but it does show that world history will follow general principles. For example, there will continue to be wars, famines, pestilences and other disasters; the church will be persecuted by world powers that will martyr Christians. Revelation also shows us that natural disasters are God's warning to the world. The symbolism of the book enables it to be interpreted in the light of circumstances throughout the gospel age. The beast may be Judaism in Acts, Rome in John's time; at other times it could be the Roman Catholic Church, or Russia or China. Throughout church history there have always been those who persecute God's church, it is to such persecuted Christians the book is written. It may be viewed as parallel sections each one concentrating on a particular aspect of the gospel age starting from Jesus' birth to his second coming and the end of the age. The book concentrates on the beginning at first but as the book progresses it concentrates more and more on the end rather than the beginning.

Revelation is written to show who is in control. It shows God seated upon the throne. It shows Jesus as Lord of Lords and King of Kings. It shows him defeating his enemies with the armies of heaven (the church) following him (19:14). The issue is who is Lord, is it Christ or is it the state?

Revelation is written at the start of a period of persecution lasting over 200 years and in particular to a church when the Roman Empire was in control and emperor worship was demanded under pain of death. An easy life could be gained by simply following the crowd and compromising with God's standards, a little bit of Emperor worship would make life so much easier. Clearly all around evil was attacking everything that was good; licentiousness abounded; evil people controlled society. It looks as if God is nowhere to be found, he isn't doing anything about it; Christians are being persecuted some are even being martyred and the faith of Christians was under intense attack. Christians were expecting Christ's return, but he had not come yet. The book is written to show the saints in such perplexing times that God the Creator is in control of world events and responsible for the judgements on mankind. He permits evil in the world, but He will win in the end over the forces of evil together with the Saints. It shows that the saints must follow the example of Jesus and lay down their lives for their faith and as a testimony to Jesus. The enemies of the saints will be

defeated in the end: the devil; the political powers; the false religious powers; the persecutors of the church; the seduction of the world and its philosophies. God's judgements upon mankind are His answer to the prayers of the saints. The believers must patiently endure until the end and remain faithful even unto death, through which lies victory over the enemy; just as Jesus Himself had to die in order to be victorious over Satan. God will in the end vindicate his elect and justice will be seen to be done, but this may not occur during the lifetime of most of the saints. Satan is the great deceiver, who deceives the world into bowing down to his allies the beast and the false prophet, only those who know their God and His word will resist them. Jesus will return and his enemies will be defeated, judged and eternally punished, the believers will go to be with their Lord forever and He will dwell with them. Revelation concerns the entire world history since the ascension of Christ to the end of time. The indictment on man is that he fails to glorify God as Creator and Lord, persecutes the Church and fails to repent of his sins. Revelation is the last book in the bible and the keys to its interpretation are rooted in the rest of the bible both NT and OT and in understanding the contemporary events of the day.

The main message of Revelation is summarised by the letter to the church in Smyrna (2:10):

Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days.

Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life. -

Here we find John's first warning concerning the persecution of the Church. The church is warned to be faithful even to death and they will receive the crown of life pictured by the New Jerusalem and the river of life flowing from the throne. There is nothing to fear in death because after death they will go to be with the Lord and reign with him forever. There is a death to fear and that is the second death, which is the lake of fire, and those who worship the beast will go to it. The picture of the saints given to us shows that they are persecuted because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God, and the two witnesses show that their testimony is part of God's plan for without it the seventh trumpet which ushers in God's kingdom cannot be sounded.

If warnings about persecution are one purpose of Revelation another is to warn about compromise with the world. This is spelt out in the letters to Pergamum and Thyatira. Jesus warns his servants not to compromise with the world so that it will not share in its sins and in its consequent plagues (18:4), His church, as His bride, must be spotless 14:4 ff. The book is about two sets of people on the earth, firstly those who worship the beast and his image and receive the mark of the beast's name, they will be

tormented for ever. Secondly those who do not worship the beast but keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus, these will reign with Him forever in the paradise of God. It is also a warning to sleepy, content, Christians to wake up.

It also warns that our deeds done on earth determine our destiny after death whether for punishment or reward. The rewards to those who overcome are outlined at the end of each of the letters to the seven churches while punishment for the cowardly is depicted in 21:8. Before the great white throne the dead are judged according to what they had done. In 22:12 Jesus announces that He is coming soon 'My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done'. In the introduction to most of the letters to the seven churches he announces that 'I know your deeds'. In 2:23 he announces to the church in Thyatira that he will repay each of them according to their deeds. In 14:13 those who die in the Lord will rest from their labours because their deeds follow them, the only thing we can take into the next life are our deeds done while in the body. In 14:9 those who worship the beast and his image will be tormented with burning sulphur for ever and ever, while those who are victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb (15:2, 3) and God's servants will reign for ever and ever (22:5).

It is also a book about those who worship God and those who worship idols, John is clear that only God is to worshipped, see comments on 9:20. Those who worship the beast and his image are guilty of idolatry and are punished with eternal torment. In 13:4 John makes clear that men worship the dragon, that is Satan, who gives his authority to the beast. Chapters 4 and 5 depict both the worship of God and the Lamb. The angel in 14:7 commands those who live on the earth to 'Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water' and in 14:9-12 we see the punishment of those who worship the beast and his image and receive his mark on the forehead or on the hand. Twice John is rebuked because he worships an angel instead of God. Idolaters are consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulphur and excluded from the New Jerusalem. The first bowl is poured out on those who worship the beast and his image. Those who do not worship the beast and his image reign with Christ for a thousand years.

It is sometimes said that Revelation is not relevant to today but we should see a close connection between what is described in the book and the Second Coming, which certainly is relevant today. The book describes 'what must soon take place' (1:1) i.e. the events preceding the second coming, the book is replete with warnings about his unexpected second coming ending with 'Yes, I am coming soon' (22:20). In every generation Christ could return and the church should be expecting and ready for His

return in their generation. The book is designed to prepare God's people both for the events preceding his return and for His return. In this respect its message speaks to every generation because every generation could be the last. Consider the blessing to those who read and hear and take to heart the words of this prophecy because the *time is near* (1:3) and the blessing to those who keep the words of this prophecy, spoken in connection with the Second Coming (22:7). Any interpretation should make it meaningful now so that God's people are prepared for the events preceding the return and are ready for the return because the time is near. The letters to the seven churches and the promises to those who overcome should be seen in this light especially the letter to the church in Sardis (3:1 ff.) where the church is warned to wake up or Christ will come to them unexpectedly. The church is also warned that the beast will make war against the saints and conquer them, in the light of this inevitability it calls for the saints to have patient endurance and be faithful (13:7, 10). The torment of those who worship the beast also calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus (14:12). In 16:15 Jesus warns us of his unexpected Second Coming and blesses those who stay awake and keep their cloths with them. 18:4 warns us to come out of Babylon so that we will not share in her sins and in her plagues. 19:7 indicates that the bride must make herself ready for the groom. Rev 21-22 shows the heavenly reward for those who overcome and the punishment for those who worship the beast. In the light of this any interpretation of this book should seek to make it relevant to God's people now.

In regard to the beast the church is warned the church is warned that it will silence her witness (11:7) and that it will wage war against God's people and overcome them (13:7) and that they will be imprisoned and killed (13:10). We are also warned about a false Christ, the beast out of the earth, who will be the propaganda machine for the first beast and who will demand that everyone worship the first beast and will exercise economic control. We are warned not to worship the first beast or his image, this would have implications for the church. As an example take the church in Germany before the second world war when Hitler was on the ascendancy, the church for the most part went along with him, few were prepared to denounce him. [For an account read 'The Body' by Charles Colson published by Word Publishing]. As another example, take China where there is persecution, should they join the 'state' church (Three-Self Patriotic Movement) or the underground church? For the Germans, the Chinese and for us a proper understanding of the symbolism of Revelation will allow us to interpret the events around us and prepare our hearts for what takes place. Who can say that persecution will not arise in the West? But for us, perhaps it is the seductive gold cup of the prostitute that is the greatest threat to the church in the West.

It is also a book of contrasts; consider the bride and the whore. Consider the fate of those who worship the beast who are tormented forever and ever, and those who worship God who will reign for ever and ever. Contrast the beast with the Lamb. There are the counterfeit miracles of the false prophet and the authentic miracles of the two witnesses. There is the heavenly city of the New Jerusalem and the earthly city of Babylon the great. There is Jesus who is, and who was, and who is to come, and the beast who once was, now is not, and will come up out of the Abyss and go to his destruction. There is the second death contrasted with the crown of life. There are those with the mark of the beast on their forehead and those with the names of the Lamb and the Father on their foreheads. Compare Babylon, which will never have the music of the harp in it, and the redeemed who have harps in heaven. Babylon will never have the light of a lamp in it again but in the New Jerusalem the Lamb is its Lamp. Babylon will never have the voice of bride and bridegroom in it again while in the New Jerusalem the bride will forever sing Hallelujah to the Lamb. There is the great supper of God and the wedding supper of the Lamb. There are the cowardly who go to the lake of fire and those who overcome who have the water of life. There are God's servants who serve him day and night and the Devil who accuses them day and night. Compare the Lamb looking as if it had been slain and the beast with a fatal wound. There are those who have no rest day or night with those who rest from their labours.

To overcome or conquer (Gk *nikao*:G3528) is a keyword in the book, at the end of each of the letters to the seven churches its members are urged to *overcome* so that they will receive their heavenly reward just as Christ *overcame* and sat down with his Father on His throne (3:21). In 21:7 'He who *overcomes* will inherit all this' referring to John's vision of heaven. In 12:11 the saints *overcame* the devil by 'by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony'. In 6:3 we see a white horse whose rider 'rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a *conqueror* bent on conquest'. In 13:7 the beast 'was given power to make war against the saints and to *conquer* them'. In 17:14 The ten kings make war against the Lamb, 'but the Lamb will *overcome* them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings--and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers'. Revelation can be considered an expansion or commentary of Rom 8:35-39 in which we are more than conquerors through him who loved us (Rom 8:37)

(Rom 8:35-39) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? {36} As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." {37} No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. {38} For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, {39} neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Another key phrase is 'patient endurance' which occurs four times in the book (1:9, 3:10, 13:10, 14:12) which refers to patient endurance under persecution.

Revelation is written to God's servants in order to show them what must soon take place. There is a blessing for all those who read, hear and heed the things written in it. This includes all God's servants from John's generation to the generation when Christ returns. It urges all who hear to overcome so that he can eat of the tree of life in the paradise of God. The book features the second coming of Christ prominently, while the futurist telescopes most of the book to immediately prior to Christ coming, Christ does come again to all those who die before his second coming. To some death will bring rejoicing and praise to others mourning. This book is written to martyrs to tell them that in death they become overcomers, who 'overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death' 12:11.

The Christians who live between the first and Second Coming of our Lord live in a state of tension between the spiritual realities, which are perceived by faith, and the life of the senses lived on the earth (xxxx). Revelation shows us the heavenly reality of God on his throne governing the universe (Ch 4). It declares to us that Jesus is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth (1:5). That Jesus rose from the dead guarantees that we too will rise from the dead; Jesus is the ruler of the kings of the earth even though this does not appear to be so. When Jesus returns all the dead saints will rise from the dead and God's enemies will be defeated, thus our faith in the heavenly realities depicted in Revelation and the rest of the bible will be vindicated. This tension is further illustrated in 1 John 3:2, we are now children of God, but we do not know what our future bodies will be like except that when Christ returns we 'shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is'. Paul also speaks about the Christian hope of the redemption of our bodies, Rom 8:23-25, which will occur at His return 1 Cor 15:12 ff., 1 Thess 4:13-18. Note that Christ has already risen from the dead, but the dead in Christ will not rise from the dead until he comes

again. Until then we live by faith in the Son of God, who died for us and rose for us, we live now by faith not by sight (1 John 5:4-5, 2 Cor 5:1-7)

Just as Genesis tells us the beginning of history, Revelation tells us how it will end. In a sense Revelation tells us nothing new, but it emphasises and repeats in a new and vivid way, in images, what the rest of scripture says to the church. It is God's last message to the church telling her that she will be persecuted, but that He, God, is in control, and that she will in the end be victorious over her enemies. At the end of the first century God knew that centuries of persecution lay ahead for the church and this is His way of preparing the church and comforting the church in her troubles. It shows her that there is a happy ending for those who overcome.

For those who don't know the Lord, who do not know his love and have not been freed of their sins (1:5) its message is given by Psalm 2:

(Psa 2:10-12) Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. {11} Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling. {12} Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

And also by the angel in 14:7:

(Rev 14:7) He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgement has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water."

Revelation depicts the fearful image of the Lake of fire for those who are not in the Lamb's book of life. Revelation declares God as Creator and Jesus as redeemer and it is to Jesus we must come for salvation. The picture of the Lamb who was slain shows the same Jesus who died on the cross for our sins now exalted at the right hand of God. The use of the term Lamb in Revelation is a constant reminder that Jesus died for our sins. It is also a reminder amongst much woe for the world of the grace of God which is available to all those who turn from their sins to Jesus.

Rev 5:9 indicates that Jesus died for everyone from every people group on the earth and therefore His salvation is freely available to everyone. See also 7:9 that indicates that people from every people group will be represented in heaven and 14:6 in which an angel proclaims the gospel to every people group on earth.

(Rev 5:9) And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

In 21:6 and 22:17 God, the Spirit and the church invite those who are thirsty, who desire, to take the free gift of the water of life.

(Rev 21:6) He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life.

(Rev 22:17) The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

He stands at the door of our hearts and knocks and we need to invite Him in and fellowship with Him (3:20).

Revelation assumes the rest of the bible, which is why it does not give a detailed plan of salvation. The following scriptures may help those who want to discover God and Jesus for themselves: Isa 53, Luke 5:31-32, Heb 11:6, John 3:16-17, 6:44, 20:31, 1 Tim 2:3-6, Acts 3:19, 17:30-31, 20:21.

2.1. A Portrait of the Risen, Ascended and Glorified Christ in Revelation.

The first verse of Revelation declares that the book is 'The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place.' This can be interpreted in two ways, as a revelation of the person of Jesus Christ or as the revelation coming from God and mediated through Jesus Christ. There is no point in arguing for one interpretation over another for both are true. Revelation shows us the risen ascended and glorified Christ as no other book in the bible and there follows a brief portrait of Jesus Christ given to us by Revelation. The book of Revelation also has many divine titles of Jesus Christ. We should also note that at the beginning of the book he is called Jesus Christ and not just Jesus or the Christ. Jesus emphasises his earthly life and his role as Saviour because Jesus means 'He will save his people from their sins' (Mt 1:21). Christ emphasises his heavenly origin because he is God's anointed One. Mike Bickle in his book 'A passion for Jesus' says that in order to overcome persecution and the temptations of the world it is necessary to be intimately acquainted with the personhood of Jesus. Meditating on the descriptions of Jesus in Revelation is one way of doing this.

In 1:1 we find that God gave Jesus Christ the revelation to show his servants what

must soon take place. Thus right at the start of the book Jesus can be seen as the master of his servants showing them his blue-print for the future.

In 1:5-6 Jesus Christ is described as:

- The faithful witness.
- The firstborn from the dead.
- The ruler of the kings of the earth.
- The one who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.
- The one who has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father.
- The one to whom be glory and power for ever and ever.
- The one who is coming again in the full view of the whole world.

In 1:13 we find someone 'like a son of man' standing among the seven churches. This emphasises his humanity, which he never lost when he ascended into heaven, the universe is controlled by a man, the first among many brothers. There then follows a description of this glorious man 'dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance' (1:13-16). The sight of him was enough to make John fall at his feet as though dead. Jesus then gives some of his divine titles (note the 'I am'):

- I am the First and the Last.
- I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever.
- I hold the keys of death and Hades.

Then comes the letters to the seven churches from the one who walks among the seven churches and whose blazing eyes observe their condition. For each church he knows their deeds as he walks among them. He praises what is good and reproves and corrects what is bad. He also himself promises heavenly rewards to those who overcome.

i. Ephesus: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands (2:1).

ii. Smyrna: These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again (2:8).

iii. Pergamum: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword (2:12).

iv. Thyatira: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze (2:18).

v. Sardis: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars (3:1).

vi. Philadelphia: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open (3:7).

vii. Laodicea: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation (3:14).

In Rev 5 we see Christ as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David as the one who has triumphed. He is standing at the centre of the throne of God surrounded by the living creatures and elders, which pictures him at the very centre of heaven. He is then introduced as the 'Lamb, looking as if it had been slain' (5:6) cf. Isa 53:7.

In 5:7 He is the only one worthy in all creation to take the scroll from the Father's hand.

He is then praised by the four living creatures as the one who is worthy to open the seals:

You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. {10} You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth

He is then praised by the angels as the one who is worthy:

Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise

He is then praised by all creation:

To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honour and glory and power, for ever and ever

Jesus is worshipped together with God.

In Rev 6 he is the one who opens the seven seals to reveal the contents of the scroll.

In 7:14 we have the marvellous description of the great multitude as those they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. In 7:17 we find the Lamb described as their Shepherd who leads them to springs of living water.

In 12:5 he is described as the one 'who will rule all the nations with an iron sceptre'.

In 13:8 the book of life belongs to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.

In 14:14 ff. he is the one who reaps the harvest of the earth.

In 19:7 we find that the bride has made herself ready for the wedding of the Lamb.

In 19:11 ff. we find one of the fullest descriptions of the Lamb in victory over his enemies.

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. {12} His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. {13} He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. {14} The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. {15} Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron sceptre." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. {16} On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS

Rev 19:17-21 describes the final victory of the Lamb over the beast and false prophet and their army, the victory over Satan is described in chapter 20.

In 21:22 we find that the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of the new Jerusalem and the Lamb is the lamp of the New Jerusalem.

In 22:1 we find that the source of the river of life is the throne of God and of the Lamb.

In 22:12 Jesus testifies that he is coming soon with his reward, it is He who will reward the righteous and the wicked for their deeds. He is described in 22:13 with the three-fold divine titles as the 'Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End'.

In 22:16 he describes himself as the 'Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star'.

Finally in 22:20 it is Christ who testifies to the truth of this book and who says "Yes, I am coming soon."

3. The interpretation of Revelation.

Goldsworthy clarifies the principles of interpretation that pertain when we come to obscure passages in Revelation.

- i. We must allow the clearer texts to take precedence over the more obscure.
- ii. We cannot allow a point of doctrine to be established on an apocalyptic vision against clear statements to the contrary in the epistolary material of the NT (i.e. the letters).
- iii. He also insists that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the key to the interpretation of the whole Bible.

In some ways interpreting Revelation is like a jig-saw, we must first find the corner pieces, an obvious example is the Lamb and the rider on the white horse in chapter 19 who is the exalted Christ, then there are other symbols which are defined in the book such as the lampstands and the dragon. From these we go on to more obscure symbols but which are clearly based on parts of the OT such as the seven trumpets and bowls which are modelled on the plagues on the Egyptians and the beast out of the earth which is based on Daniel's visions. It is clear then that it is possible to make a framework from the less obscure within which we can fit the more obscure. It is

unlikely that we can complete the whole jig-saw but if the framework is correct we should at least grasp a portion of the whole picture.

This commentary assumes that the keys to its interpretation lie in the OT and NT scripture, but that an NT interpretation is required. It assumes that it is symbolic unless clearly meant to be literal. It assumes that the book's author is God and that it is written to the church throughout the ages from the writing of the letter to the Second Coming. The content primarily concerns the fate of the church and of her enemies. The symbology allows it to be interpreted in the light of the current historical situation throughout church history without being specific to a particular event, although there are specific events recorded such as the birth of Christ and the second coming. Many of the events recorded in the book are parallel with other events in the book. The book can be viewed from the point of view of events in the past, current events and future events, all are meaningful.

3.1. The four schools of interpretation:

There are four schools of interpretation.

i. The preterist: that it describes in veiled language events of John's own time, and until the end of the Roman Empire or at least the conversion of Constantine. This has the disadvantage in that it is only meaningful then but to us it is not as relevant. The beast is seen as only the Roman empire and Babylon is Rome, however there are clear references to the Rome of John's time and it is helpful to know the circumstances of John's time in interpreting the book. In Rev 1: 11 John is told "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea." hence in some ways it is similar to Paul's letters to the Romans, Corinthians, Colossians, Ephesians and Thessalonians. In both John's and Paul's letters God has chosen these to be preserved for His church throughout the centuries. Just as the letter to the Corinthians addresses specific problems they had then it also deals with these problems for future centuries. In the same way Revelation deals with the problems faced by the seven churches in Asia, but it also has a great deal to say to future generations. Because John uses symbolic imagery Revelation is not tied down to only the Roman Empire but may also be used to describe successive persecuting tyrannies down through the centuries. Examples of the preterist view are Morris, Hailey and Barclay. Chilton identifies the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 as the main focus of Revelation.

The next three methods of interpretation deal with the value of Revelation to future generations in different ways.

ii. The historicist: that it is a chart of the whole of history from Christ's first coming to his second, and beyond. In this method people will try to make sections of Revelation fit in with specific historical events. The beast is seen as the current manifestation of the beast such as the papacy in the time of the reformation. This position is untenable because there will be a wide variation of interpretations through the ages. But because the principles are valid to all generations, as the idealist would suggest, each generation should be able to identify the characters portrayed by Revelation. Therefore the historicist's view should not be disparaged, it has provided comfort in times of persecution throughout church history. The most important of the historical interpretation from the 12th century to reformation times makes the papacy the beast and Rome or the Roman church is Babylon. However to make Revelation a chart of the whole of human history and therefore to use it to predict when the end will come is wrong and is not how John intended Revelation to be read, but to use it to strengthen God's people undergoing particular trials is a valid use.

iii. The idealist: that between messages for the first century and prophecies of the far future it deals chiefly with principles that are always valid in Christian experience. The beast is the Roman Empire of John's day but also a succession of ungodly empires leading to the last empire from which the antichrist will come. Because Christians have been persecuted throughout the generations, each generation should be able to identify who *their* beast is. The main example is Hendriksen, see also Beale and Wilcock.

iv. The futurist: that it is largely a prophecy of events still to come, especially just prior to the return of Christ. This is the normal interpretation of someone reading the book for the first time because its imagery looks so fantastic. It means that the book will be especially relevant for those in the last generation. The beast is seen as the antichrist who emerges from a revived Roman empire. It is clear that the Second Coming features prominently throughout the book and therefore there is truth in the futurist view, but this view tends to overlook spiritual truth that is of value today. However note that John is told not to seal up the book (Rev 22:10) because the time is near, although Daniel was told to seal up the vision until the end times (Dan 12:4), this means that the book is about to start its fulfilment. The book of Revelation was written initially to the seven churches in Asia, and hence the preterist view. However the book will reach its final fulfilment when the last antichrist appears and Christ returns this is the futurist view.

Ladd divides the futurist views into two kinds, the moderate and the extreme view known as dispensationalism. The latter makes a sharp distinction between Israel and the church. The letters to the seven churches deal with seven ages of church history. Chapter 7 onwards concerns Israel because the church has been raptured by this point so that it does not suffer in the great tribulation, which occurs during the last 3 and a half years of history. This view is widely held in America, the best exponent of this view is Walvoord.

The futurist will argue that the preterist interpretation is wrong because Revelation concerns the end times, but during the time of the Roman Empire the preterist interpretation was the end time. A similar comment could be made of the historicist interpretation during the Reformation. The idealist interpretation is probably the most relevant today, to meet today's needs during hard times when Christians are under pressure and it certainly does not discount a future fulfilment either. I would strongly question the idea that Revelation *only* has a future fulfilment.

The problem for anyone trying to interpret the book is that on reading the text one can find support for all these views, which is why there is such a wide variety of interpretations and indeed disagreements. In a sense they are all correct, the futurist sees the beast as the future antichrist, the historicist sees the beast of history, the preterist sees the beast in Roman times and the idealist sees a succession of beasts leading up to the antichrist. The futurist writes from the point of view of a church not undergoing persecution now but expects it in the future particularly from the antichrist. The historicist writes from the point of view of current persecution or recent persecution as historical events and finds these in Revelation. The idealist looks to past periods of persecution and sees general principles within Revelation that can explain these. The preterist writes about how Revelation explains the persecution under the Roman Empire. They are all correct, but they all see truth from a different perspective. This commentary is written mainly from a futurist and idealist viewpoint because this interpretation will be most useful to the church in this generation in the West. While the church in the West is not undergoing persecution, war is still being waged against it in the form of false doctrine and the seduction of worldly values.

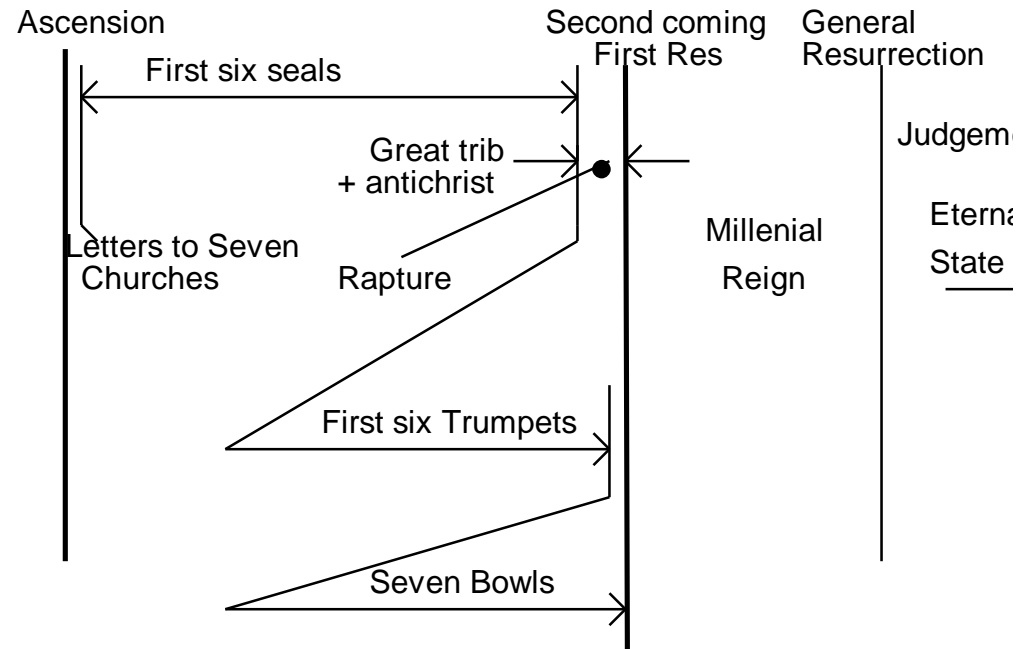
Mounce points out that 'John himself could without contradiction be preterist, historicist, futurist and idealist. He wrote out of his own immediate situation, his prophecies would have historical fulfilment, he anticipated a future consummation, and he revealed principles, which operated beneath the course of history. The interpretive problem grows out of the fact that the End did not arrive on schedule.' If the author of the Revelation is the author of the fourth gospel, then he certainly

expected to be alive when Christ returned, John 21:21-24. If we read John's first letter, 2:18 indicates that he considered himself to be living in the last hour. Rev 1:3 tells us that there is a blessing for the one who reads the words of this prophecy and takes to heart its message because *the time is near* (see also 22:10). From this we are assured that the contents are relevant now, just as our Lord's Second Coming is relevant now just as much as it was 1,900 years ago. To the writers of the NT the time of the Lord's coming is always near, Phil 4:5, Jam 5:8, 1 Pet 4:7. Jesus warns us to be ready for His return because He is coming at an hour we do not expect (Mat 24:44). Therefore Revelation warns us to be ready now because the events it depicts can occur at any time. Therefore any interpretation that puts the events either in the distant past or future is misleading because its purpose is to prepare our hearts now for what is coming soon. Just as there is a blessing for those who take to heart the message of this book at the start of Revelation, so at the end (22:7) there is a blessing on those who keep the words of the prophecy of Revelation together with a reminder that Jesus is coming soon. Part of the message of Revelation is to prepare His people for His second coming and the events preceding it.

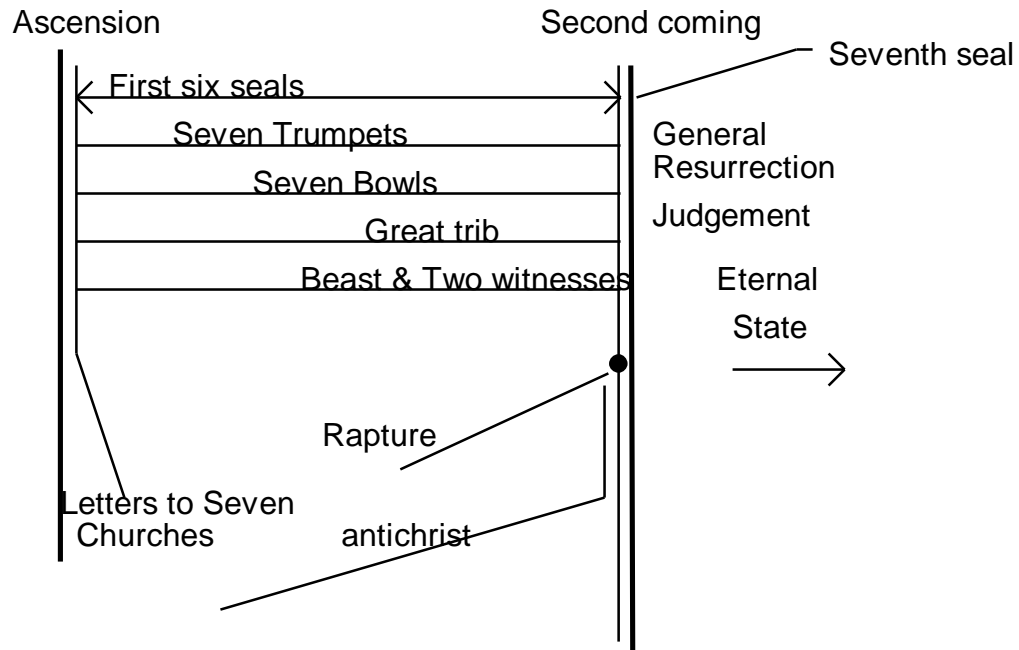
Ladd talks at some length about the two fold nature of prophecy which has an immediate fulfilment as well as a distant fulfilment, an example of this being the Olivet discourse which concerned the historical judgement of Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans in AD 70 (Luke 21:20 ff.) and the eschatological appearance of the antichrist (Mat 24:15 ff.). In the same way Revelation had its immediate fulfilment with the series of Roman persecutions on the Christians until Constantine in AD 313 as well as the appearance of the antichrist in the distant future. Therefore the correct interpretation is a blend of both the preterist and futurist views and including any tribulation that the church experiences between these two periods.

While much of it can be interpreted to describe events at the end of the age, this follows a succession of events that leads to the climax of history. It is a fact of history that throughout the gospel age there have been political and religious empires that have persecuted the church, the book of Revelation is written to those saints as well as those in the reign of the antichrist. The idea that the church will not be on earth when the antichrist is revealed is not to be found within Revelation and this idea does a great disservice to believers today. This commentary uses a combination of approaches, much of the book incorporates the circumstances of John's time which must form the basis of any interpretation, because it was written for the seven churches in Asia. It describes what is going to happen soon, in the near future, but it also looks into the distant future, it describes the end times as well so a combination of preterist, futurist and idealist are used. The approach used will depend on the text.

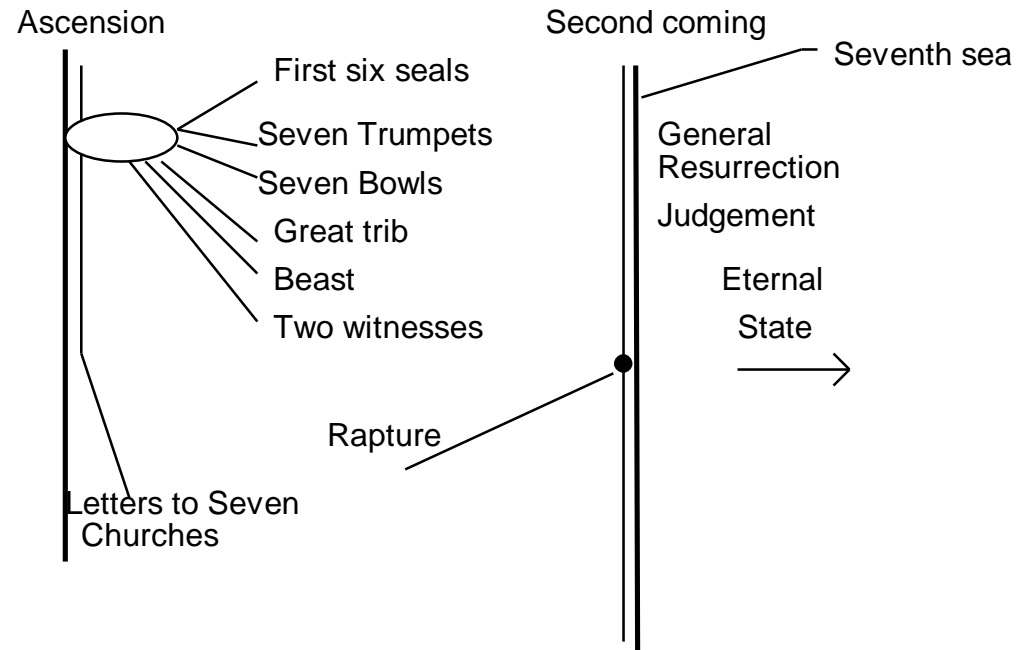
To the preterist the beast is the Roman Empire and its emperor, but to the idealist a succession of tyrannical empires throughout history who persecute the saints, but to the futurist these all find their greatest fulfilment in the kingdom of the antichrist, there is truth in all these views. The fact that the book does leave sufficient ambiguity for all these views to be true is probably deliberate so that each generation can benefit from the book. Its symbolism also means that Revelation cannot be used to predict the future, which is always veiled from man (cf. seven thunders 10:3-4). Its purpose is to prepare us for the future, especially for the consummation of all things when Christ is revealed.



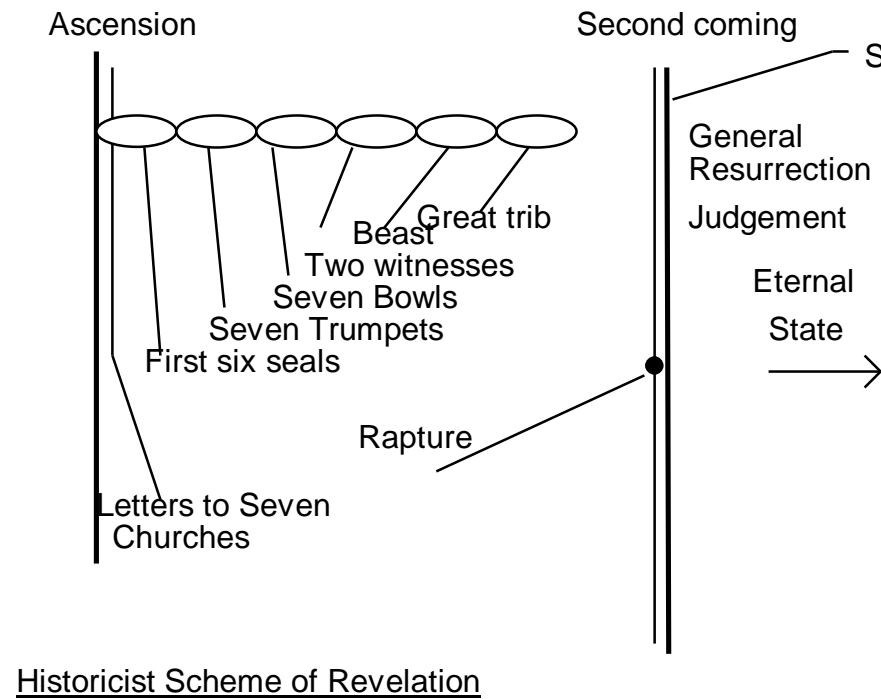
Futurist Scheme of Revelation



Idealist Scheme of Revelation



Preterist Scheme of Revelation



3.2. The Millennium:

The interpretation one chooses is likely to be coloured by one's theology on the millennium:

a. **Premillennialism:** Christ's return in power and glory will deprive Satan of all his power, raise the Christian dead, and set up the kingdom of the saints on earth. After a thousand years, Satan will re-emerge from his imprisonment, attempt once more to destroy the saints, fail, and be destroyed himself. Then will come the resurrection of the rest of the dead, the judgement of the great white throne, the final destruction of the wicked, and the making of a new heaven and earth. The appearing of the Antichrist, the tribulation, the rapture are usually held to have taken place before Christ's coming in victory, and that comes before (pre-) the millennium: hence the name of this interpretation.

b. **Amillennialism:** There is no literal millennium, the 1,000 years is symbolic. It stands for the whole time between the life of Jesus on earth and his Second Coming. There is however a biblical millennium, see Amillennialism today, William E Cox. Hendriksen is a typical exponent of this position.

c. **Postmillennialism:** Christ returns after (post) the millennium. The millennium is the triumph of the gospel in this present age, sometimes a literal 1,000 years. The best exponent of this position is Chilton.

3.3. The Rapture.

There are also three views on the rapture:

a. **pre-tribulation rapture:** This is a relatively modern view, it has spread primarily due to its inclusion in the Scofield bible and has been popularised by the writings of Hal Lindsay. Christ will come and take his church out of the world by the rapture. This will be followed by the great tribulation. Following this Christ will come again in great power and glory with his saints and angels. There is then a second and third coming, one for and one with the Church. This is clearly unbiblical but widely believed in the west because it means that Christians will not go through the great tribulation, however, many martyrs might disagree with this viewpoint.

b. post-tribulation rapture: This is the usual traditional interpretation. The Church will go through the great tribulation and when Christ comes again will meet him in the air.

c. mid-tribulation rapture: This is similar to the pre-tribulation rapture, the church will go through half the great tribulation before being raptured.

In the bible the rapture plainly coincides with the second coming, see 1 Thess 4:13-17 also 1 Cor 15:52 and He will come after a period of great distress, and after the heavenly bodies are shaken, Mat 24:30-31, (cf. Mark 13:14-26). In Revelation the rapture is described in Rev 11:12, in which the two witnesses, who represent the witnessing church, went up to heaven in a cloud. Clouds are usually associated with the second coming in the bible, see Mat 26:64, Mark 13:26, Mark 14:62, Rev 1:7, 14:14, Ezek 30:3, 1 Thess 4:17, Dan 7:13, Joel 2:2, Zep 1:15.

(1 Thess 4:13-17) Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. {14} We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. {15} According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. {16} For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. {17} After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

(Mat 24:29-31) "Immediately after the distress of those days "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken." {30} "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. {31} And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

3.4. Persecution:

One's interpretation is also likely to be determined according to whether you personally and your church locally is going through persecution, if so then it is unlikely that you will take the futurist or preterist viewpoint. In the prologue to Revelation it says that this book is to show his servants what *must soon* take place (v1), soon covers the entire gospel age as in 'I am coming soon'. Also 'blessed is he who hears and takes to heart what is written because *the time is near*' (v3). This prologue gives the impression that the content is relevant to all generations of Christians from the time it was written to the second coming.

Rev 1 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, 2 who testifies to everything he saw--that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. 3 Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

Why are Christians persecuted? Essentially because they acknowledge a higher authority than the emperor, namely Jesus and therefore will not worship the emperor. Revelation was written in a time of persecution, see section on Authorship and Date below. John also show us that the persecution arises because Satan knows that his time is short and so that he can hurt the Son by hurting his saints. Jesus spoke about the other reasons for persecution: the saints do not belong to the world, they have been chosen out of the world which is why the world hates them; if they belong to the world the world would love them (John 15:19). The world hates the saints but they must bear in mind that the world first hated Jesus (John 15:18, 20). The reason for the world hating them is that they does not know God (John 15:21). Persecution is essentially following in the footsteps of Jesus who died a death on the cross. When the saints are persecuted Jesus is also persecuted as when Paul persecuted Christians (Acts 9:4-50).

That Revelation was written to churches that were going to undergo persecution can be seen from the following verses that pertain to persecution within Revelation:

- i. John himself was on Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus (1:9).
- ii. Antipas was put to death in Pergamum (2:13).

- iii. The church in Smyrna was about to be tested by Satan some would be put in prison, some even killed (2:10).
- iv. The fifth seal shows the souls of those slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained (6:9).
- v. The great multitude have come out of the great tribulation (7:14).
- vi. The beast from the Abyss kills the two witnesses when they have finished their testimony (11:7).
- vii. Those who overcome Satan did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death (12:11).
- viii. The dragon went off to make war against those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus (12:17).
- ix. The beast out of the sea was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them (13:7)
- x. Captivity and being killed by the sword calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints (13:10).
- xi. The beast out of the sea killed all those who refused to worship the image of the first beast (13:15).
- xii. The third bowl is righteous because the inhabitants of the earth shed the blood of the saints and prophets (16:5-6)
- xiii. The whore Babylon was drunk with the blood of the saints (17:6).
- xiv. In Babylon was found the blood of prophets and saints and of all those who have been killed on the earth (18:24)
- xv. After her destruction the saints rejoice because God has avenged on her the blood of his servants (19:1-2)
- xvi. During the millennial reign John sees the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God (20:4).

Of great importance to John are those who give their testimony of Jesus, the book of Revelation is written for the encouragement of those who hold to the testimony of Jesus who is the faithful witness.

*(Rev 1:2) who testifies to everything he saw--that is, **the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.***

*(Rev 1:9) I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos **because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.***

*(Rev 6:9) When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the **word of God and the testimony they had maintained.***

*(Rev 11:7) Now **when they have finished their testimony**, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them.*

*(Rev 12:11) They overcame him by **the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony**; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.*

*(Rev 12:17) Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring--**those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.***

*(Rev 17:6) I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, **the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus.** When I saw her, I was greatly astonished.*

*(Rev 19:10) At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the **testimony of Jesus.** Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."*

*(Rev 20:4) I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw **the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God.** They had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.*

It is significant that Revelation was written about the time that the church was to endure a 200 year period of persecution ending with the conversion of the emperor

Constantine in 213. According to Fox's book of Martyrs there were ten periods of persecution starting with Nero and ending with Diocletian.

3.5. Theology of Israel and of the Church.

One's theology on Israel and the state of Israel will also help shape one's interpretation of the book. Some see Israel as having a significant role in the later days, Israel will largely become converted and the 144,000 are therefore Jewish missionaries rather than the universal elect of God, both OT and NT. Others believe that there is no separate role for Israel other than as a part of the NT church. Of course Jewish people recognising Christ as the Messiah will enrich the church, but they are not some sort of elite, they enter through the same door as the rest of the church. Paul discusses this in Rom 11 where it is clear that a Jew coming to Christ is like coming from death to life. Jesus in his Olivet discourse suggests that he will not come again until the Jews recognise Him as the messiah (Mat 23:39).

In Eph 2:11-22 Paul argues how the Gentiles and Jews are united into one body through the blood of Christ and are consequently, 'no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household' (v19). In Eph 3:6 Paul declares the mystery 'that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.' In the last days many Jews will come to Christ, the church will become complete, both Jews and Gentiles, the dividing wall of hostility will be broken down and the church will become one as Jesus prayed in Gethsemane (John 17:20-23, cf. Eph 3:6), then He will come again when His ancient people, the Jews, recognise Him (Mat 23:39). Remember that Jesus was both circumcised and baptised while on earth, though he underwent the Jewish act of circumcision as a baby, as a man he chose to undergo the Christian initiation act as well. In doing so he gives the Jews an example to follow.

Galatians was largely written to correct misunderstandings about the law and circumcision. So Paul takes the argument back to Abraham and shows that when he believed God he was justified. Therefore those who believe are children of Abraham whether they are Jews or Gentiles (Gal 3:5-14). In Gal 3:28-29 there is neither Jew nor Greek ... for they are all one in Christ. If a person whether Jew or Gentile belongs to Christ he is Abraham's seed and an heir according to the promise (Gal 3:29). Given this NT background it would be surprising to find the Jews and Gentiles treated as separate entities in Revelation, for example, in the 144,000 or the two witnesses.

The Lord has one body on this earth, which is the church in which both Jews and Gentiles share the same promises (Eph 3:6), and therefore the church figures significantly in the book of Revelation. It is written to God's servants to show them what will happen soon (Rev 1:1 see also 22:16, 22:21), servants is a general term for the church and occurs throughout Revelation, other general terms for the church used are saints and brothers. Initially it was written to the seven churches in Asia who are representative of the whole church, the number seven standing for completeness or wholeness, it should be noted that for two of the churches the Jews were antagonistic towards them (Smyrna and Philadelphia). The church is represented by the twenty four elders who in turn represent *both* the old and New Testament elect, the number twenty four comprising the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles who are representative of the old and new testament elect. These also occur in the description of the New Jerusalem with its twelve foundations upon which are the names of the twelve apostles and its twelve gates upon which are written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. The city was 12,000 stadia in length width and height and its wall were 144 cubits thick. A comparison of this census with the description of the New Jerusalem should make it evident that the census is one of the complete Old and New Testament elect. There is the census of the 144,000 sealed Israelites whose firstborn is from the tribe of Judah, these are also the redeemed of the Lord and his servants, the priestly tribe is included but the idolatrous tribes are excluded. Next comes a description of the redeemed from every nation, tribe, people and language. The church in its witness and prophetic role is featured as the two witnesses. The church is also found in the sign of a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head, she initially represents the old testament elect as the twelve tribes, compare her with Joseph's dream, and after giving birth to a male child (the Christ) she is the new testament elect. John's theology sees the elect as both OT *and* NT saints or as both Jewish *and* Gentile Christians, that is all the elect throughout time.

Revelation shows us who the true Israel is. In the letter to Smyrna Christ says 'I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan' (2:9). In the letter to Philadelphia he says 'I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars--I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you' (3:9). In 7:4 we hear the number 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel and we see them again in 14:1, these are God's faithful people, the elect of all ages.

4. Authorship and date:

Authorship:

The writer tells us his name is John (1:4), he is a servant (1:1), a brother (1:9) and one of the prophets (22:9). He assumes that the seven churches know him, he writes with the authority of an apostle. Early Christian tradition ascribes it to the apostle John. Justin Martyr (d AD 165) said that John the apostle was the author so did Irenaeus (~140 - 202) who was a pupil of Polycarp who was a pupil of John who said that John the apostle was the author. Other church fathers who ascribe authorship to John the apostle are Melito, Hippolytus (d AD 235), Tertullian (d 220), Clement of Alexandria (d 212), Origen (185-254).

The big objection to apostolic authorship is that of the style of its Greek, which is totally, different to the style of Greek used in the gospel and epistles. However there are also similarities (Morris):

Reference to the logos, John 1:1 cf. Rev 19:13

Imagery of the Lamb, John 1:29, 36 Rev 5:6 etc.

The water of life, John 4:10, cf. Rev 8:10, 21:6, 22:1, 22:17

He that overcomes, 1 John 2:13 cf. 2:7 etc., 21:7

Keeping the commandments, 1 John 2:3, cf. Rev 12:17, 14:12

Both have striking forms of Zech 12:10 (John 19:37; Rev 1:7)

An invitation to him who is thirsty, John 7:37 cf. Rev 21:6, 22:17

White clothing for angels, John 20:12 (although in Revelation angels wear shining cloths (15:6), the saints wear white (3:4, 5, 18, 6:11, 7:9, 19:14))

A commandment received by Christ from the Father, John 10:18

Other themes from the gospel:

The bride and the bridegroom (John 3:29 cf. Rev 19:7)

True worshippers (John 4:23 cf. Rev 11:1)

The dead will the voice of God will rise to live... will rise to be condemned (John 5:25-29 cf. Rev 20:11 ff.)

For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all he does (John 5:20 cf. Rev 1:1)

... I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day (John 6:39 cf. Rev 7:4, 14:1)

My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me (John 7:16 cf. Rev 1:1)

The testimony of two is valid (John 8:17 cf. Rev 11:3)

... he is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44 cf. Rev 12:15, 20:8)
 before Abraham was born , I am (John 8:58 cf. Rev 1:17-18)
 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy (John 10:10 cf. Rev 9:11)
 I am the good shepherd (John 10:11 cf. Rev 8:17)
 The man who loves his life will lose it, but the man who hates it will keep it
 for eternal life (John 12:25 cf. Rev 2:10)
 Whoever serves me must follow me (John 12:26 cf. Rev 14:4)
 The voice of God sounding like thunder (John 12:28-29)
 The prince of this world will be driven out (John 12:31 cf. 12:9)
 I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I
 am (John 14:3, cf. 22:3)
 If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first (John 15:18)
 ... anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God (John 16:2)
 the prince of this world now stands condemned (John 16:11, cf. 12:12)
you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices (John 16:20 cf. 11:10)
 In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the
 world (John 16:33 cf. Rev 3:21)
 Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name (John 17:11 cf. Rev
 7:4, 14:1)
 I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not
 of the world any more than I am of the world (John 17:14 cf. Rev 6:9).
 I want those you have given to me to be with me where I am, and to see my
 glory (John 19:15 cf. Rev 21:23)
 They will look on the one they have pierced (John 19:37 cf. Rev 1:7)
 I am returning to.... my God and your God (John 20:17 cf. Rev 3:2, 3:12)

There are also similarities with John's first epistle (paraphrased):

Overcoming the evil one (1 John 2:14)
 Overcoming the antichrist (1 John 4:4)
 Overcoming the world (1 John 5:4)
 Do not love the world or anything in the world (1 John 2:15)
 The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God
 lives forever (1 John 2:17)
 The last hour and the antichrist (1 John 2:18, 2:22, 4:3)
 Do not be surprised if the world hates you (1 John 3:13)
 I write these things to you who believe... so you may know you have eternal
 life (1 John 5:13)
 The evil one cannot harm the one born of God (1 John 5:18)
 The whole world is under the control of the evil one (1 John 5:19)

Keep yourselves from idols (1 John 5:21)

Continue in him, so that when he appears we may be unashamed before him
 at his coming (1 John 2:28)

John's second epistle:

Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist (2 John 1:7)

Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for so that you may be
 rewarded fully (2 John 1:8 cf. Rev 3:11).

Johnson in commenting on 9:11 in which the king of the Abyss is called Abaddon in
 Hebrew and Apollyon in Greek points out that this stylistic trait of giving information
 in bilingual terms is peculiar to Revelation and John's gospel (Jn 6:1, 19:13, 17, 20,
 20:16). However, see also Mk 5:41, 15:34, Mat 27: 46.

John is the only gospel to refer to a spear thrust into Christ's side (Rev 1:7 cf. John
 19:34).

John is the only one to use the word 'tabernacle' (dwelling) *Skenoo* (4 times in
 Revelation see 21:3) and John 1:14.

He calls Jesus the *Logos* Rev 19:13 cf. John 1:1, 1 John 1:1.

The authorship is of some importance because if he is the same John who wrote the
 gospel of John, he clearly expected to remain alive until Christ's return, John 21:21-24
 and in 1 John 2:18 he says 'it is the last hour'.

If this were so, all the events in Revelation would occur over a relatively short time
 period, and all the visions would be compressed into this time period. What has made
 Revelation difficult for us to interpret is the long time period that has elapsed since
 the book was written, so that the visions have been expanded over a much wider time
 period. Hence we now have the four schools of interpretation.

However the question of authorship is academic, in the sense that this book claims
 that its author is God, it is the word of God, (Rev 1:1-2), it is the only book in the
 bible that has such a claim, 1:1. The church has accepted divine authorship by
 including it in the canon of scripture.

*Rev 1:1 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his
 servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to
 his servant John, 2 who testifies to everything he saw--that is, the word of God
 and the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

Date: Most commentators say around AD. 95 during the reign of Domitian (81-96), some say during Nero's reign 54-68. During Domitian's reign emperor worship became widespread. Domitian was in the habit of banishing his enemies, whereas Nero was not, his persecution was local to Rome. Domitian's policy was legal and ore widespread. John was released from Patmos on Domitian's death. He tells us that he was on Patmos, suffering because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus (1:9). It should be noticed that John was told to write what he had seen and send it to the seven churches (1:11, cf. 1:19). Thus he wrote this book on Patmos and sent it to the churches, presumably before his release.

That Ephesus had lost its first love and Sardis was dead both point to a late date.

Revelation was clearly written in a time of persecution (Morris):

- i. Antipas had been killed (2:13).
- ii. John was exiled to Patmos because of his faith (1:9).
- iii. The church in Smyrna was about to suffer including imprisonment (2:10).
- iv. There are the souls slain because of the word of God and their testimony (6:9).
- v. The woman is drunk with the blood of the saints (17:6).

What is also clear is that the majority of the NT will have been written by the time Revelation was written. Both Paul and Peter died during Nero's reign. John makes use of both OT and NT sources in Revelation.

Compare the date that Revelation was written with the dates that other books in the Bible were written:

Romans	AD 57
2 Tim:	during the reign of Nero 54-68 Paul was martyred after the big fire of Rome in 64.
2 Peter:	Peter was martyred during reign of Nero < 68
James:	50s or early 60's
Hebrews:	before the destruction of the temple in AD 70.
Acts:	AD 63.
Luke:	AD 59-63 or 70's or 80's
Mark:	AD 50's or 60's or before AD 70.
Matthew:	AD 50's to 70's
John:	Late in first century

As Lenski points out Revelation itself shows that John wrote the book while he was receiving the visions. While the repeated commands: 'Write!' in 1:19, 14:13, 19:9 might leave the question open as to just when John was to do this writing, John's own statement in 10:4, informs us that he was about to write but was forbidden by the angel for writing what the seven thunders said. John is to write 'into a book' (1:11); in 22:6-19 we see 'this book' completed save for the last few sentences. The angel (22:7-15) and Jesus (22:18,19) speak of 'this book' as one that has already been written, see 22:19. It is therefore, incorrect to think that John wrote in Patmos some time after he saw these visions or waited even until he returned to Ephesus. Lenski also points out that this does present John as writing in 'excitement' because he was in the spirit (1:10, 4:2, 17:3, 21:10), but rather, John's mental faculties were in no way disturbed; on the contrary, they were stimulated, exalted, and functioned with perfection.

Early date: Chilton and Gentry have recently proposed the argument for an early date. Gentry has written a scholarly book on the early dating of Revelation 'Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the book of Revelation'. They both argue that the late date is almost entirely due to a statement by an early church father, Irenaeus (AD 130-202) who claimed to know Polycarp who knew John. Gentry points out that if an early date is proposed circa AD 64 then most of the judgement visions in Revelation (chs 4-19) could easily be applied to the historical turmoil which came to a head shortly after John wrote. The fulfilment of the majority of its prophecies would then apply to the very beginning of Christianity, rather than to its conclusion. Contained in Revelation might be prophetic allusions to the first Roman persecution of Christianity (AD 64-68), the Jewish war with Rome (AD 67-70), the death of Christianity's first persecutor (Nero Caesar, AD 68), the Roman Civil Wars (AD 68-69), and the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (AD 70). Chilton's commentary on Revelation takes it to be a prophecy about the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. The main points of Gentry's argument for an early date are as follows:

i. Thematic evidence: (Rev 1:7 NIV) *Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.* The theme is that of the coming of Christ in judgement which causes men to mourn. Gentry contends that 'those who pierced him' and 'peoples of the earth' refer to the first century Jews. The NT fixes the blame for Christ's crucifixion on the Jews rather than the Romans. Chilton translates the Greek word *ge* as *land* rather than *earth*, the land being the promised land. It should be noted that Jesus warns those in Judea to flee 'When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies' (Luke 21:20-24). The coming of Christ in 1:7 refers to his coming in *judgement* upon the Jews in AD 66-70. In Mat 24:1-2 Jesus refers to the

destruction of the temple, in Mat 24:30 "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory". In Mat 24:34 Jesus says "I tell you the truth, *this generation* will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened." This is the preterist view which sees Mat 24:30 referring to the coming in judgement against Jerusalem rather than the bodily second coming of Christ.

ii. Political evidence: the sixth king of Rev 17:9-10 who reigns now is Nero. This begs the question then of who is the eighth king of verse 11?

iii Architectural evidence: He identifies the temple of 11:1-2 with Herod's temple in Jerusalem. c.f. Luke 21:24 Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

iv. Ecclesiastical evidence: The fact that it is the Jews who are troubling the seven churches (2:9, 3:9) is strong evidence of an early date since after AD 70 the few Jews left alive after the destruction of Jerusalem were dispersed among the nations. Acts is full of illustrations of Jewish persecution of Christianity.

v. Historical evidence: this evidence is surveyed and shows that the evidence of Irenaeus is not overwhelming.

5. OT and NT imagery.

5.1. OT imagery:

Much of the imagery used is derived from the OT, but the theology is NT. John is not slavish to the sources he uses, Austin Farrer talks about the rebirth of images. For example he takes the first plague of Egypt when the Nile turns to blood, even in the wooden buckets and stone jars (Exo 7:16-21). In Revelation this plague is split into two parts (Caird) in the second trumpet a third of the sea is turned to blood and in the third trumpet a third of the drinking water (rivers and springs) is turned bitter so that many people died (Rev 8:8-11).

1) Take for example Rev 12:1 depicting the woman clothed with the sun:

Rev 12:1 A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head.

At first sight this is meaningless, unless that is we know the OT. Compare this with Joseph's dream:

Gen 37:9 Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."

Then this difficult description now means the OT church because the twelve stars are the twelve tribes and the following 5 verses now start to mean something, therefore we do not have to resort to pagan mythology to interpret this sign.

2) As another example look at the beast out of the sea, Rev 13:1.

Rev 13:1-2 And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. 2 The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.

This reminds us of the beasts that Daniel saw:

Dan 7:2-7 Daniel said: "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. 3 Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea. 4 "The first was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle. I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a man, and the heart of a man was given to it. 5 "And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a bear. It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, 'Get up and eat your fill of flesh!' 6 "After that, I looked, and there before me was another beast, one that looked like a leopard. And on its back it had four wings like those of a bird. This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule. 7 "After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast--terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns.

Daniel is then given the interpretation in which the four beasts are four kingdoms:

Dan 7:16-18 I approached one of those standing there and asked him the true meaning of all this. "So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things: 17 'The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth. 18 But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever--yes, for ever and ever.'

The beast of Revelation is a composite of the four beasts of Daniel.

3) The 144,000 from Rev 7:4-8, this is a census. In the OT when a census takes place the subjects of the census need to pay a ransom. Therefore the 144,000 are the redeemed of the Lord.

Exo 30:12 "When you take a census of the Israelites to count them, each one must pay the LORD a ransom for his life at the time he is counted. Then no plague will come on them when you number them.

4) The seven trumpets and seven bowls are both modelled on the ten plagues on the Egyptians.

5.2. The Exodus theme:

The Exodus of the children of Israel out of Egypt, through the desert to the promised land forms a thread that runs through Revelation (Caird).

i. Firstly the saints are persecuted typified by the cry of the martyrs, Rev 6:10, cf. the cry of the Israelites for deliverance from slavery.

ii. The saints are protected from the effects of the plagues by the seal of God which is reminiscent of the blood of the Lamb applied onto the house to protect the Israelites from the destroying angel, Rev 7:4.

iii. There are references to the plagues on the ungodly in both the seven trumpets and seven bowls, cf. the ten plagues on the Egyptians.

iv. The two witnesses have power to turn the waters into blood and strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want, Rev 11:6, just as Moses caused the plagues on the Egyptians.

v. The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days, Rev 12:6. The Israelites fled into the desert where they were safe from Pharaoh, they were cared for by God who gave them manna and their shoes and cloths did not wear out.

vi. The dragon pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child, Rev 12:13, just as Pharaoh pursued the Israelites. Note Pharaoh's hat is in the form of a coiled snake, Pharaoh is sometimes called a dragon.

vii. The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent's reach, Rev 12:14, the serpent representing Pharaoh.

viii. The dragon spewed water like a river to sweep the woman away, but the earth helped the woman by swallowing the river, Rev 12:15-16, this corresponds to the drying up of the Red Sea.

ix. Those who had been victorious over the beast, stood by the sea and sang the song of Moses, Rev 15:2-3, this was first sang after the Israelites crosses over the Red sea and the Egyptians were destroyed in the sea.

x. The New Jerusalem describes the Promised Land, a city that has foundations.

xi. There is a reference to the hidden manna in Rev 2:17.

xii. Egypt is mentioned as a persecutor in Rev 11:8.

5.3. Main OT passages used:

The Seven trumpets and seven bowls is based on the plagues of Egypt.

The vision of the throne in heaven is taken from Isa 6 and Ezek 1.

The four horsemen of the Apocalypse are based on Zec 6.

The 144,000 sealed is based on the census taken of Israel, Exo 30:12.

The sealing of the 144,000 is based on Ezek 9:3.

The fifth trumpet, the plague of locusts, is based on Joel 1-3

The mighty angel and the little scroll is based on Ezek 1-3

The two witnesses are based on Moses and Elijah and Zech 4:2-14.
 The woman clothed with the sun, moon and crown of twelve stars are based on Joseph's dream Gen 37:9.
 The woman's stay in the desert for 1260 days is the same time Elijah was cared for by Ravens and the widow, 1 Ki 17.
 The beast out of the sea is from Daniel 7.
 The image of the beast is based on Nebuchadnezzar's statue in Dan 3.
 The harvest of the earth is based on Joel 3:12.
 The sixth bowl is based on Zech 14, Joel 3 and Ezek 37, 38.
 Babylon is taken from various OT prophets.
 Mourning over Babylon, Ezek 26-28, Isa 23.
 The new heaven and new earth are taken from Isa 65.
 The New Jerusalem employs imagery from Ezek 48.
 The tree of life is taken from Genesis
 The Lamb that was slain, Isa 53:7
 The last battle between the Lamb and his enemies, Ezek 38, 39
 The ten kings, Dan 7:24.
 There are also many references to the earthly tabernacle and its articles

The messianic Psalm 2 is quoted from verse 9 three times in Revelation, and there are other more obtuse references to the Psalm, Caird says that Revelation is an exposition of Psalm 2.

(Psa 2) Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? {2} The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One. {3} "Let us break their chains," they say, "and throw off their fetters." {4} The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. {5} Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, {6} "I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill." {7} I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "You are my Son ; today I have become your Father. {8} Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. {9} You will rule them with an iron sceptre; you will dash them to pieces like pottery." {10} Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. {11} Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling. {12} Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

5.4. NT Imagery.

Much NT imagery is also used in Revelation.

The seven seals bare a striking similarity to the Matthew 24 discourse.
 Firstborn from the dead Rom 8:29 cf. Rev 1:5, 7:5
 The two witnesses, cf. Mark 6:7, Acts 1:8 cf. Rev 11:3.
 The foundations of the New Jerusalem, Eph 2:19-22 cf. Rev 21;13
 Herod at Christ's birth cf. Rev 12:4
 The seal of the Holy Spirit 2 Cor 1:22, Eph 1:13 cf. Rev 7;3
 The transfiguration, Mat 17:2 cf. Rev 1:16
 The pearl of great price Mat 13:45-46 cf. Rev 21:21
 Beheading of John cf. Rev 20:4
 The rapture Rev 11:12
 The crucifixion i.e. the use of the symbol Lamb to describe Christ
 The resurrection, Rev 20:5-6
 The antichrist and the man of lawlessness 2 Thess 2:3, Rev 13
 The bride, Eph 5:27 cf. Rev 19:7, 21:2, 9.
 The Second Coming and the harvest at the end of the age, Mat 13:39 cf. Rev 1:7, 14:15-19
 Trampled upon by the Gentiles, Luke 21:24 cf. Rev 11:2
 Philippians, every knee will bow Phil 2:10 cf. Rev 5:13
 The fiery furnace Mat 25:41 cf. Rev 20:10
 Those outside the city Mat 22:13, 2 Thess 1:9 cf. Rev 22:15
 Then "they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!" Luke 23:30 cf. Rev 6:16
 The devil cast out of heaven Luke 10:18 cf. Rev 12:9

For references to John's gospel and epistles see Authorship.

5.5. The Antichrist.

The International Bible Commentary gives the following definition of the antichrist: '[Antichrist: one who assuming the guise of Christ opposes Christ--to be distinguished from 'false Christs' (Mat 24:24), i.e. messianic pretenders. Origen taught that 'all that Christ is in reality, Antichrist offers in false appearance; and so all false teaching which assumes the guise of truth, among heretics and even among

heathen, is in some sense antichrist. The incarnation reveals the true destiny of man in his union with God through Christ; the lie of Antichrist is that man is divine apart from Christ'. Abbreviated from Westcott, pp. 69,90.]. Vine says that antichrist can mean either 'against Christ' or 'instead of Christ' or perhaps, combining them both quotes Westcott above 'one who assuming the guise of Christ opposes Christ'.

The antichrist is the counterfeit of Christ because he proclaims himself to be God (2 Thess 2:4) and authenticates his claim by counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders (2 Thess 2:9). Instead of being the Holy One of God he is totally evil, he will evidence the work of Satan just as Jesus did the work of his Father. Just as the Father lives in Jesus so Satan will live in the antichrist. Judas is a type of the antichrist because Satan came into him as he was to betray Jesus (John 13:27) and both are doomed to destruction (John 17:12 & 2 Thess 2:3).

A comprehensive study of OT and NT references to the antichrist is given by Arthur W Pink in his book 'The Antichrist'. Much has been written on this subject but it should be noted that the antichrist is mentioned only four times as such in scripture and only by John (1 John 2:18, 22, 4:3, 2 John 1:7). It is clearly relevant in ones interpretation of Revelation whether the same John wrote both books because Revelation clearly figures a person who fits the description of the antichrist (Rev 13), however we owe more to Paul's description of the 'man of lawlessness' in 2 Thess 2:1-12 for what we know about the antichrist. John, it seems in his epistles, is more concerned about describing a test for heresy than *the* coming of the future antichrist.

It is clear from 1 John 2:18 and 1 Thess 2:5 that the early church was clearly taught about the coming of the antichrist, but unfortunately we do not have all of Paul's teaching on this subject. John says that *the* antichrist is *coming* and that even now *many* antichrists have *come* (1 John 2:18) just as the spirit of the antichrist is coming and is already in the world (1 John 4:3). Similarly Paul talks about the revealing of the man of lawlessness (2 Thess 2:3, 9) and that the secret power of lawlessness is already at work (2 Thess 2:6). John contrasts the Spirit of God with the spirit of the antichrist who does not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh (1 John 4:3, 2 John 1:7) or the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ, 'Such a man is the antichrist--he denies the Father and the Son' (1 John 2:22). That is he denies the most fundamental truth of the gospel that Jesus is the Son of God, God's anointed one, who lived bodily on the earth. The two truths that John is referring to are that Jesus lived on earth as a man (he came in the flesh) and that he was God (he is the Christ). The antichrist denies the unique relationship between the Father and the Son. This is the unique truth of Christianity, which Christians believe and any departure from this is heresy and the

first test for heresy. In his gospel John spells out the divinity of Jesus (John 1:1) and the fact that he lived in the world bodily as a man (John 1:14). The whole of John's gospel gives us a description of the relationship between the Father and the Son which also the antichrist and the spirit of the antichrist would deny.

Stott points out from 1 John 2:18-23 that our confession before men of who Jesus Christ is (his humanity and deity) determines whether we possess the Father or not (v22, 23) while in 1 John 4:2-6 our confession of who Jesus Christ is determines whether we have the Spirit of God or not. In 2 John 1:7 those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh (both his humanity and divinity) are both deceivers and the antichrist. The antichrist will carry this to its extreme by proclaiming himself to be God (1 Thess 2:4), counterfeiting miracles to authenticate his claim (v9) and deceiving those refuse to believe the truth about Jesus Christ and delight in wickedness (v12), thus the antichrist clearly denies both the humanity and deity of Christ because he proclaims himself to be God. This also demonstrates that the new age teaching that men are gods is most dangerous.

Berkhof points out that (a) the anti-Christian principle (of the antichrist) was already at work in the days of Paul and John according to their own testimony; (b) that it will reach its highest power towards the end of the world; (c) the Daniel passages about the antichrist (Dan 7:8, 23-26, 11:35 ff.) point to the political and Paul the ecclesiastical (power of the antichrist), while in Revelation 13 both sides are depicted together; the two may be successive revelations of the anti-Christian power; and (d) that probably this power will finally be concentrated in a single individual, the embodiment of all wickedness.

2 Th 2:1-12	Mat 24	Daniel	Revelation
{ 1-2 }	(Mat 24:4-5)		Rev 13:11
{ 3 }	(Mat 24:10)	(Dan 8:12)	(Rev 17:8)
{ 4 }	(Mat 24:15)	(Dan 7:25; 9:27; 11:31)	(Rev 13:5-6)
{ 5-6 }			
{ 7-8 }		(Dan 7:11; 7:22)	(Rev 19:20)
{ 9-10 }	(Mat 24:24)	(Dan 8:25)	(Rev 13:13-14, 16:14)
{ 11 }	(Mat 24:5)		

6. Structure.

The book is structured around four scenes, which contain a group of seven, the letters to the seven churches, the seven seals, the seven trumpets, the seven bowls.

A key verse is Rev 1:19.

Rev 1:19 "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.

This divides the book into what John has seen (a vision of Christ), what is now (the letters to the seven churches) and what is to come (the rest of the book), the verse that divides what is now and what will take place later is Rev 4:1-2. A major division is found in Rev 4:1-2. This divides the book into what is now and what will take place later, from John's point of view. From Rev 4 onwards John sees future events from the perspective of heaven, and heaven with God in control seated on his throne. All subsequent events are viewed from heaven with God in control.

Rev 4:1-2 After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." 2 At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.

Other examples of a change of viewpoint that start another scene are given in the passages below (Wilcock). These either involve a change in viewpoint or something opens in heaven:

(Rev 11:19) Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm.

(Rev 15:5) After this I looked and in heaven the temple, that is, the tabernacle of the Testimony, was opened.

(Rev 17:1-3) One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters. {2} With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries." {3} Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a

woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns.

(Rev 19:11) I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war.

(Rev 21:9-10) One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." {10} And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.

The seven seals and seven trumpets each have a significant interlude between the sixth and seventh seal and trumpet. The vision of the great prostitute is introduced by one of the angels, who had one of the seven bowls, as is the vision of the New Jerusalem. This serves to link the great prostitute with the seven bowls and to contrast the great prostitute with the New Jerusalem who is the bride of Christ.

- Prologue 1:1-3
- Greetings 1:4-8
- A vision of the risen Christ, John is told to write to the seven churches 1:9-20
- The letters to the seven churches come next and represents now. 2:1-3:22

- A throne in heaven 4:1-11
- The lamb and the scroll 5:1-14
- The first six of the seven seals 6:1-17
 - Interlude: Sealing the 144,000 7:1-8
 - The great multitude of the redeemed 7:9-17
- The seventh seal 8:1
- Trumpets introduced 8:2-5
- The first six of the seven trumpets 8:6-9:21
 - Interlude: The mighty angel and the little scroll 10:1-11
 - The two witnesses 11:1-14
- The seventh trumpet 11:19-

- The woman and the dragon. 12:1-6
- War in heaven 12:7-12

- Dragon pursues the woman 12:13-17
- The beast out of the sea 13:1-10
- The beast out of the earth 13:11-18
- The lamb and the 144,000 on mount Zion 14:1-5
- The three angels 14:6-13
- The harvest of the earth 14:14-20
- Seven angels with seven plagues introduced 15:1
- Those victorious over the beast 15:2-4
- Temple filled with smoke 15:5-8
- The seven bowls 16:1-21

- The mystery of the woman and the beast 17:1-18
- The fall of Babylon 18:1-24
- Rejoice and Hallelujah 19:1-10

- The beast and false prophet destroyed 19:11-21
- Satan bound for a thousand years 20:1-10
- The great white throne 20:11-15
- The new heaven and new earth 21:1-8

- The New Jerusalem 21:9-27
- The river of life 22:1-6
- Epilogue 22:6-21

6.1. Progressive Parallelism in Revelation.

Hendriksen has given the case for progressive parallelism in Revelation in detail. It is that the visions from Chapter 4 onwards cover the period from the ascension until Christ returns and the judgement. As the visions progress they cover more detail of the end, when Christ returns and the judgement. The following examples are given:

The scroll and the Lamb: This deals with heaven recently after Christ's ascension

Sixth seal: This deals with the second coming Rev 6:17.

The two witnesses: They go up to heaven in a cloud, that is the rapture, Rev 11:12

The seventh trumpet pronounces the time for judging the dead Rev 11:18

The woman and the dragon cover both OT and the gospel age, the ascension occurs in Rev 12:5.

The earth is harvested in Rev 14:14.

The seventh bowl records the end of the world Rev 16:17

The sixth seal, the seventh trumpet and the seventh bowl deals with the day of the Lord.

All the following are parallel periods:

i. The Gentiles trample on the holy city for 42 months. Rev 11:2.

ii. The two witnesses prophesy for 1260 days, Rev 11:3.

iii. The woman is taken care of for 1260 days Rev 12:6 and a time, times and half a time Rev 12:14.

iv. The beast exercises his authority for 42 months Rev 13:5.

Babylon is defeated in Rev 18:2, there is reference to the second coming in 17:14

The beast and the false prophet are defeated in Rev 19:20, the Second Coming is in 19:11-21.

Satan is defeated Rev 20:10

The dead are judged in Rev 20:11

The new heaven and new earth and the new Jerusalem are described in chapter 21 and 22.

The same event, the final battle, is described or mentioned in the following passages:

i. The sixth bowl, they gather the kings for battle on the great day of God Almighty, Rev 16:14

ii. The ten kings make war against the Lamb, Rev 17:12-14.

iii. The beast and the kings of the earth make war against the Lamb, Rev 19:19

iv. Satan gathers Gog and Magog for battle, Rev 20:8

The enemies of God's people are introduced in reverse order to their destruction.

11:7 The beast introduced

12:1 The dragon introduced.

13:1 The beast described.

13:11 The false prophet introduced and described

14:8 Babylon's fall introduced

16:19 Babylon falls

17:1 The woman and the beast described
 18:1 The woman's fall described
 19:20 The fall of the beast and false prophet
 20:10 The doom of Satan

Babylon's fall is mentioned on three separate occasions in 14:8, 16:9, 18:2.

The judgement and punishment of the wicked is referred to in 11:18, 14:9 ff., 14:19 ff., 20:11 ff.

7. The symbology and self interpretation of Revelation.

One of the main decisions anyone reading the book has to make is whether to interpret it literally or symbolically. Because it belongs to the apocalyptic literary style I have chosen to interpret it symbolically. There are other literary styles in the bible such as poetic, thus when reading the Psalms one interprets them accordingly. The book is symbolic and this is revealed by the sections of the book that provide their own interpretation. The book is also full of phrases such as 'After this I looked' (9), 'Then I saw' (33), 'I watched' (3), 'I heard' (23). The book of Revelation is a vision, Rev 9:17 is the only verse in which John admits that he is seeing a vision.

Rev 9:17 The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulphur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulphur.

Caird comments that 'as often happens in the Revelation, what he sees is described largely in traditional imagery, and what he hears gives the Christian reinterpretation'. Some interpreters take everything literally unless it is clearly stated to be symbolic (Walvoord) some take the book symbolically unless it is clearly to be taken literally (Caird), I have adopted Caird's view since this seem to fit the framework of the book better. The difficulty of interpreting the book lies in deciding what should be taken symbolically and what literally, this will affect ones interpretation considerably.

In chapter 1 John sees seven golden lampstands v12 and among the lampstands someone like a son of man v13 and in his right hand he held seven stars' v16.

(Rev 1:12-16) I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, {13} and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. {14} His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. {15} His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. {16} In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

In Rev 1:19 John is instructed to write down what he has seen. Immediately in the next verse Jesus explains the mystery of the seven stars and of the seven golden lampstands.

Rev 1:20 The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

So Jesus unveils the mystery of the seven stars and the seven golden lampstands. This should get us started and make us realise that the book is symbolic. This means that many things we see will seem fantastic and if taken literally will not make sense. The details if pressed too hard will not make any sense so it is no good trying to identify the ten horns on the beast because many have tried and failed. It is the principle behind the detail and not the detail that is important.

Other examples of the self interpretation of Revelation are given below:

The Lamb is the main and classic symbol in Revelation, no one takes this literally.

*Rev 5:6 Then I saw a **Lamb, looking as if it had been slain**, standing in the centre of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.*

The identity of the Lamb is not explicitly stated but He is quite clearly Jesus Christ who is later described as Lord of lords and King of kings.

(Rev 17:14) They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings--and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers."

Compare this with the description of Christ in verse 5 who is described as the ruler of the kings of the earth.

(Rev 1:5) and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,

Other examples where a symbol is interpreted include:

*Rev 5:8 And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of **incense**, which are the prayers of the saints.*

*Rev 12:9 The **great dragon** was hurled down--that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.*

*Rev 4:5 From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Before the throne, **seven lamps** were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God.*

Rev 17:9-10 "This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. 10 They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while.

17:11 The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.

17:12 "The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast.

17:15 "The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages.

17:18 The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth."

*Rev 19:8 **Fine linen**, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)*

Other examples of the literary style which is nearer to our own is shown the phrase 'I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints', (17:6), the image is a hideous one but most people will understand this to mean that she had murdered many saints.

This helps us understand the third bowl, in which the third angel pours out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. And the angel in charge of the waters says: 'You are just in these judgements, you who are and who were, the Holy One, because you have so judged; {6} for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve.' We are meant to understand that turning the waters into blood means that many people died due to drinking the water (compare with the third trumpet). If we take the account of Moses then the Nile turning into blood (or a blood like colour) should be taken literally rather than referring to death because of the narrative literary form used.

Another aid to its interpretation is to note that John sometimes sees a vision or sign and then a voice explains what he sees or it gives additional information:

1:12 he sees seven golden lampstands, in 1:20 Jesus explains that these are the seven churches.

5:6 he sees a lamb; in 5:9 the twenty four elders sing about the lamb.

7:9 he sees a great multitude; in 7:14 the elder explains who they are.

12:3 he sees a dragon and war in heaven; in 12:10 a voice explains what he has seen.

17:1 he sees the great prostitute; in 17:7 the angel explains the meaning.

It is clear that the vision that John had was in both words and pictures. Rev 22:8 'I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things'. At other times he hears first and then he sees.

In 7:4 he hears the number of those sealed (144,000) and then in 7:9 he sees a great multitude that no one could count.

7.1. Symbols in the book.

There are many symbols in the book of Revelation, here are some of the more important ones.

7.1.1. Symbols of Christ.

One 'like a son of man', Rev 1:13.

The Lion of the tribe of Judah, Rev 5:5.

The Root of David, Rev 5:5.

A Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, Rev 5:6

She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron sceptre, Rev 12:5.

The rider on the white horse, Rev 19:11.

7.1.2. Symbols of the Church.

The Church is one of the main characters in the book of Revelation.

The seven lampstands:

Rev 1:20 The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

(Rev 6:9 NIV) When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained.

The 144,000 sealed from all the tribes of Israel. Rev 7:4-8.

"Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there.
Rev 11:1

The two witnesses, Rev 11:3

The woman clothed with the Sun, Rev 12:1.

The New Jerusalem, Rev 21:2.

The army of the Lord, Rev 19:19.

7.1.3. The enemies of the church.

The red dragon, Rev 12:3: The devil.

The beast out of the sea, Rev 13:1: World political power.

The beast out of the earth, Rev 13:11: The false prophet.

The great prostitute, Rev 17:1: Seduction of the world represented as the great city.

Three signs in heaven.

There are three instances in which John saw a (great and wondrous) sign in heaven: the woman clothed with the sun (12:1), the dragon (12:3) and the seven angels with seven last plagues (15:1). The first and second signs refer to the OT church and to the devil, the third sign should also be regarded symbolically.

(Rev 12:1) A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head.

(Rev 12:3) Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads.

(Rev 15:1) I saw in heaven another great and marvellous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues--last, because with them God's wrath is completed.

7.2. The use of numbers in Revelation:

Numbers have a symbolic meaning in Revelation. Finding a deeper meaning to these numbers can be dangerous. The ten horns of the beast are ten kings, we should not try to identify the ten kings because ten is a symbolic number meaning complete, it could therefore mean 10, 14, 16, etc. One can be quite sure that 1000 years does not mean a thousand years but simply a complete period of time as defined by God. The most important number found is that of seven, which is found 55 times in the book and means, complete.

2	Witness	Two witnesses, disciples sent out in two's.
4	The world	Four compass directions
6	Man's number	Man created on the sixth day
7	God, divine, complete	God finished his work and rested on the seventh day
10	Complete	Complete from a human point of view
12	God's work in the world	Twelve tribes of Israel. Twelve apostles

Multiples of twelve:

24	Old and New Testament church, twenty four elders
144	12 * 12 OT and NT combined
12,000	Width of New Jerusalem
144,000	12*12*10*10*10 complete church

Other numbers;

666	Man of Satan, a trinity of sixes
1,600	4*4*10*10 (see Rev 14:20)

3.5 years = 42 months = 1260 days = time, times and half a time = the period between the ascension of Jesus and his Second Coming.

Rev 11:2 - *they will trample on the holy city for 42 months* - this is the same time:

- As the two witnesses prophesy for, 1,260 days.
- It is also the same as the woman's stay in the wilderness (Rev 12:6 1,260 days and Rev 12:14 time, times and half a time).
- Which is also the time that Elijah prayed that it would not rain, 3 and a half years, and God supernaturally fed him.
- The beasts exercise of authority (Rev 13:5, 42 months).
- Which is the same time as Daniel's time, times and half a time.

Examples of two:

11:3, Two witnesses

11:4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.

11:10 The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.

13:11, Two horns of the beast out of the earth

Examples using four:

4:6 Four living creatures

*7:1 I saw **four angels** standing at the **four corners of the earth**, holding back the **four winds of the earth***

*Sixth trumpet: "Release the **four angels** who are bound at the great river Euphrates." Rev 9:14-15*

*20:8 to deceive the nations in the **four corners of the earth**--Gog and Magog--to gather them together for battle*

Examples using seven:

*Rev 1:4 John, To the **seven churches** in the province of Asia:*

*Rev 1:12 And when I turned I saw **seven golden lampstands**,*

*Rev 1:16 In his right hand he held **seven stars**,*

*Rev 4:5 Before the throne, **seven lamps** were blazing. These are the **seven spirits of God**.*

*Rev 5:1 Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with **seven seals**.*

*Rev 5:6 He had seven horns and **seven eyes**, which are the **seven spirits** of God sent out into all the earth.*

*Rev 8:2 And I saw the **seven angels** who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.*

Rev 10:3 When he shouted, the voices of the **seven thunders** spoke.

Rev 11:13 At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. **Seven thousand people** were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

Rev 12:3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with **seven heads** and ten horns and **seven crowns** on his heads.

Rev 15:1 I saw in heaven another great and marvellous sign: **seven angels** with the **seven last plagues**--last, because with them God's wrath is completed.

Rev 16:1 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the **seven angels**, "Go, pour out the **seven bowls of God's wrath** on the earth."

Rev 17:3 Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had **seven heads** and ten horns.

Rev 17:9-11 "This calls for a mind with wisdom. The **seven heads** are **seven hills** on which the woman sits. **10** They are also **seven kings**. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while. **11** The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the **seven** and is going to his destruction.

Examples using ten:

Rev 2:10 Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for **ten days**. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Rev 5:11 Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and **ten thousand times ten thousand**. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders.

Rev 12:3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and **ten horns** and seven crowns on his heads.

Rev 13:1 And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had **ten horns** and seven heads, with **ten crowns** on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name.

Rev 17:12 "The ten horns you saw are **ten kings** who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast.

Rev 17:16 The beast and the **ten horns** you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire.

Examples using twelve:

Rev 12:1 A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of **twelve stars** on her head.

Rev 21:12 It had a great, high wall with **twelve gates**, and with **twelve angels** at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the **twelve tribes of Israel**.

Rev 21:14 The wall of the city had **twelve foundations**, and on them were the names of the **twelve apostles** of the Lamb.

Rev 21:21 The **twelve gates** were **twelve pearls**, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass.

Rev 22:2 down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing **twelve crops of fruit**, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

7.3. Some literary devices used.

John is very fond of using superlatives, especially the word 'great' in Revelation, this is typical of the apocalyptic style, *great* is used 49 times and the Greek *megas* occurs 82 times in 75 verses; great (*megas*) voice is translated as loud voice. Examples are: great earthquake (6:12); great day of their wrath (6:17); great multitude (7:9); great tribulation (7:14); great star (8:10); great river Euphrates (9:14); great city (11:8); great power (11:17); great hailstorm (11:19); great and wondrous sign (12:1); great dragon (12:9); great eagle (12:14); great authority (13:2); great and miraculous signs (13:13); Babylon the Great (14:8); great winepress of God's wrath (14:19); Great and marvellous are your deed's (15:3); great day of God Almighty (16:14); great prostitute (17:1); great authority (18:1); great wealth (18:17); great men (18:17); great supper of God (19:17); great chain (20:1); great white throne (20:11); a mountain great and high (21:10); great; high wall (21:12); great street (21:21).

The word Lamb (Gk. *arnion*) occurs 31 times but note that in 13:11 it is used to describe the beast out of the earth.

Mention has been made earlier to the frequent use that the author has made of contrasts, which help our interpretation. Other literary devices are also used to add meaning to the book, some examples are given below.

a. For example the first four seals, trumpets and bowls form distinct units. The four horsemen in the case of the seals and with the trumpets and bowls deal with the earth, sea, rivers and universe. The angel with the eternal gospel (14:7) said 'Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgement has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.' prior to the judgements of the seven bowls.

b. In 12:12 woe is pronounced on the earth and sea because the devil has gone down to you. And in chapter 13 the two beasts arise from the sea and the earth. There are three groups who mourn the demise of Babylon, the kings of the earth, the merchants who trade on the land and the sea captains who trade on the sea. The mighty angel plants his feet on the land and sea (10:2).

c. One of the angels who had the seven bowls introduces John to the great prostitute (Babylon the great) and to the bride (the new Jerusalem) evidently to contrast the two.

d. The same censer used to offer up prayer before is used to cast fire to the earth (8:3-5). Indicating the seven trumpets are an answer to the prayers of the saints.

8. Historical setting:

Hailey gives an excellent account of the historical setting. Caird lists the specific events below.

AD 60:	Earthquakes
AD 62:	Defeat of Roman army by Parthian Vologeses on eastern frontier.
AD 64:	Persecution of Christians by Nero following the fire of Rome.
AD 68:	Suicide of Nero
AD 70:	Four-year war of Jews and Romans ending with Jerusalem in ruins
AD 79:	Eruption of Vesuvius
AD 92:	Serious grain famine
AD 81-96	Reign of Domitian, institutes emperor worship.
AD 95:	Writing of Revelation.

Roman emperors:

BC 48-44	Julius Caesar
BC 31- AD 14	Octaviun (Augustus)
AD 14 - 37	Tiberius
AD 37 - 41	Caligula
AD 41 - 54	Claudius
AD 54-68	Nero
AD 68-69	Galba, Otto, Vitellius
AD 69-79	Vespasian
AD 79-81	Titus
AD 81-96	Domitian
AD 96-98	Nerva
AD 98-117	Trajan
AD 117- 138	Aelius Hadrian
AD 138-161	Antonius Pius
AD 161-180	Marcus Aurelius
AD 180-192	Commodus
AD 193-211	Septimus Severus
AD 211-217	Caracalio
AD 218-222	Heliogobulus
AD 222-235	Alexander

AD 235-238	Maximinus
AD 249-251	Decius
AD 253-260	Valerian
AD 253-268	Gallienus
AD 284-305	Diocletian
AD 313 -	Constantine

The first wave of persecution to hit the early church started with the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 8:1-4). This had two effects, it scattered the church so that it spread the gospel from Jerusalem to the surrounding areas of Judea and Samaria, thus fulfilling the first part of the great commission (Acts 1:8), plus it removed most of God's people from Jerusalem and its defeat by the Romans in AD 70.

The second wave of persecution occurred much later during the reign of Nero AD 54-68 after the great fire of Rome, which was blamed by Nero on the Christians. Both Paul and Peter are traditionally assumed to have been martyred during this period. This started the first of ten waves of persecution on the Christians during the period of the Roman Empire up to Constantine in AD 314.

Barclay gives a detailed account of the historical setting. In commenting about the date Revelation was written Barclay gives us the following details.

There is the account which tradition gives us. The consistent tradition is that John was banished to Patmos in the time of Domitian; that he saw his visions there; at the death of Domitian was liberated and came back to Ephesus; and there set down the visions he had seen. Victorinus, who wrote towards the end of the third century AD. , says in his commentary on the Revelation: 'John, when he saw these things was in the island of Patmos, condemned to the mines by Domitian the Emperor. There, therefore, he saw the revelation... When he was afterwards set free from the mines, he handed down this revelation which he had received from God.' Jerome is even more detailed: 'In the fourteenth year after the persecution of Nero, John was banished to the island of Patmos, and there wrote the Revelation... Upon the death of Domitian, and upon the repeal of his acts by the senate, because of their excessive cruelty, he returned to Ephesus, when Nerva was emperor.' Eusebius says: 'The apostle and evangelist John related these things to the Churches, when he had returned from exile in the island after the death of Domitian'. Tradition makes it certain that John saw his visions in exile in Patmos; the only thing that is doubtful--and it is not important-- is whether he

wrote them down during the time of his banishment or when he returned to Ephesus. On this evidence we will not be wrong if we date the Revelation about AD. 95.

The second line of evidence is the material in the book. There is a completely new attitude to Rome and to the Roman Empire. In Acts the tribunal of the Roman magistrate was often the safest refuge of the Christian missionaries against the hatred of the Jews and the fury of the mob. Paul was proud that he was a Roman citizen and again and again claimed the rights to which every Roman citizen was entitled. In Philippi he brought the local magistrates to heel by revealing his citizenship (Acts 16:36-40). In Corinth Gallio dismissed the complaints against him with impartial Roman justice (Acts 18:1-17). In Ephesus the Roman authorities were careful for his safety against the rioting mob (Acts 19:13-41). In Jerusalem the Roman tribune rescued him from what might have become a lynching (Act 21:30-40). When the Roman tribune in Jerusalem heard that there was to be an attempt on Paul's life on the way to Caesarea, he took every possible step to ensure his safety (Acts 23:12-31). When Paul despaired of justice in Palestine, he exercised his right as a citizen and appealed direct to Caesar (Acts 25:10-11). When he wrote to the Romans, he urged upon them obedience to the powers that be, because they were ordained by God and were a terror only to the evil, and not to the good (Rom 13:1-7). Peter's advice is exactly the same. Governors and kings are to be obeyed, for their task is given them by God. It is a Christian's duty to fear God and honour the emperor (1 Pet 2:12-17). In writing to the Thessalonians it is likely that Paul points to the power of Rome as the one thing which is controlling the threatening chaos of the world (2 Thess 2:7).

In the Revelation there is nothing but blazing hatred for Rome. Rome is a Babylon, the mother of harlots, drunk with the blood of the saints and the martyrs (17:5-6). John hopes for nothing but her total destruction.

The explanation of this change in attitude lies in the wide development of Caesar worship, which, with its accompanying persecution, is the background of the Revelation.

By the time of the Revelation Caesar worship was the one religion which covered the whole Roman Empire; and it was because of their refusal to conform to its demands that Christians were persecuted and killed. Its essence was that the reigning Roman Emperor, as embodying the spirit of Rome, was divine. Once a year everyone in the Empire had to appear before magistrates to burn a pinch of incense to the godhead of Caesar and to say: 'Caesar is Lord.' After he had done that, a man might go away and worship any god or goddess he liked, so long as that worship did not infringe decency

and good order; but he must go through this ceremony in which he acknowledged the Emperor's divinity.

The reason was very simple. Rome had a vast heterogeneous empire, stretching from one end of the known world to another. It had in it many tongues, races and traditions. The problem was how to weld this varied mass into a self-conscious unity. There was no unifying force like that of a common religion but none of the national religions could conceivably have become universal. Caesar worship could. It was the one common act and belief, which turned the empire into a unity. To refuse to burn the pinch of incense and to say: 'Caesar is Lord,' was not an act of irreligion; it was an act of political disloyalty. That is why the Romans dealt with the utmost severity with the man who would not say: 'Caesar is Lord'. And no Christian could give the title Lord to any other than Jesus Christ. This was the centre of his creed.

We must see how this Caesar worship developed and how it was at its peak when the Revelation was written.

One basic fact must be noted. Caesar worship was not imposed on the people from above. It arose from the people; it might even be said that it arose in spite of efforts by the early emperors to stop it, or at least to curb it. And it is to be noted that of all the people in the Empire only the Jews were exempt from it.

Caesar worship began as a spontaneous outburst of gratitude to Rome. The people of the provinces well knew what they owed to Rome. Impartial Roman justice had taken the place of capricious and tyrannical oppression. Security had taken the place of insecurity. The great Roman roads spanned the world; and the roads were safe from brigands and the seas were clear of pirates. The pax Romana, the Roman peace, was the greatest thing which ever happened to the ancient world. As Virgil had it, Rome felt her destiny to be 'to spare the fallen and to cast down the proud.' Life had a new order about it. E J Goodspeed writes: 'This was the pax Romana. The provincial under Roman sway found himself in a position to conduct his business, provide for his family, send his letters, and make his journeys in security, thanks to the strong hand of Rome.'

Caesar worship did not begin with the deification of the Emperor. It began with the deification of Rome. The spirit of the Empire was deified under the name of the goddess Roma. Roma stood for all the strong and benevolent power of the Empire. The first temple to Roma was erected in Smyrna as far back as 195 BC. It was no great step to think of the spirit of Rome being incarnated in one man, the Emperor. The worship of the Emperor began with the worship of Julius Caesar after his death.

In 29 BC. the Emperor Augustus granted to the provinces of Asia and Bithynia permission to erect temples in Ephesus and Nicea for the joint worship of the goddess Roma and the deified Julius Caesar. At these shrines Roman citizens were encouraged and even exhorted to worship. Then another step was taken. To provincials who were not Roman citizens Augustus gave permission to erect temples in Pergamum in Asia and in Nicomedia in Bithynia, for the worship of Roma and himself. At first the worship of the reigning Emperor was considered to be something permissible for provincial non-citizens, but not for those who had the dignity of the citizenship.

There was an inevitable development. It is human to worship a god who can be seen rather than a spirit. Gradually men began more and more to worship the Emperor himself instead of the goddess Roma. It still required special permission from the senate to erect a temple to the living Emperor, but by the middle of the first century that permission was more and more freely given. Caesar worship was becoming the universal religion of the Roman Empire. A priesthood developed and the worship was organised into presbyteries, whose officials were held in the highest honour.

This worship was never intended to wipe out other religions. Rome was essentially tolerant. A man might worship Caesar and his own god. But more and more Caesar worship became a test of political loyalty; it became, as has been said, the recognition of the dominion of Caesar over a man's life and soul. Let us, then trace the development of this worship up to, and immediately beyond, the writing of the Revelation.

i. Augustus, who died in AD. 14, allowed the worship of Julius Caesar, his great predecessor. He allowed non-citizens in the provinces to worship himself but he did not permit citizens to do so; and he made no attempt to enforce this worship.

ii. Tiberius (AD. 14-37) could not halt Caesar worship. He forbade temples to be built and priests to be appointed for his own worship; and in a letter to Gythos, a Laconian city, he definitely refused divine honours for himself. So far from enforcing Caesar worship, he actively discouraged it.

iii. Caligula (AD. 37-41), the next Emperor, was an epileptic, a madman and a megalomaniac. He insisted on divine honours. He attempted to enforce Caesar worship even on the Jews, who had as always been and who always were to remain exempt from it. He planned to place his own image in the Holy of Holies in the Temple in Jerusalem, a step which would certainly have provoked unyielding

rebellion. Mercifully he died before he could carry out his plans. But in his reign we have an episode when Caesar worship became an imperial demand.

iv. Caligula was succeeded by Claudius (AD. 41-54) who completely reversed his insane policy. He wrote to the governor of Egypt--there were a million Jews in Alexandria--fully approving the Jewish refusal to call the Emperor a god and granting them full liberty to enjoy their own worship. On his accession to the throne, he wrote to Alexandria saying: 'I deprecate the appointment of a High Priest to me and the erection of temples, for I do not wish to be offensive to my contemporaries, and I hold that sacred fanes and the like have been by all ages attributed to the immortal gods as peculiar honours.'

v. Nero (AD. 54-58) did not take his own divinity seriously and did nothing to insist on Caesar worship. It is true that he persecuted the Christians; but this was not because they would not worship him, but because he had to find scapegoats for the great fire of Rome.

vi. On the death of Nero there were three Emperors in eighteen months-- Galba, Otto and Vitellius, and in such a time of chaos the question of Caesar worship did not arise.

vii. The next two Emperors, Vespasian (AD. 69-79) and Titus (AD. 79-81), were wise rulers, who made no insistence on Caesar worship.

viii. The coming of Domitian (AD. 81-96) brought a complete change. He was a devil. He was the worst of all things- a cold-blooded persecutor. With the exception of Caligula, he was the first emperor to take his divinity seriously and to demand Caesar worship. The difference was that Caligula was an insane devil; Domitian was a sane devil, which is much more terrifying. He erected a monument to 'the deified Titus son of the deified Vespasian.' He began a campaign of bitter persecution against all who would not worship the ancient gods- 'the atheists' as he called them. In particular he launched his hatred against the Jews and the Christians. When he arrived in the theatre with his empress, the crowds were urged to rise and shout: 'All hail to our Lord and his Lady!' He enacted that he himself was a god. He informed all provincial governors that government announcements and proclamations must begin: 'Our Lord and God Domitian commands...' Everyone who addressed him in speech or in writing must begin: 'Lord and God.'

What were the Christians to do? What hope had they? They had not many wise and not many mighty. They had no influence or prestige. Against them had risen the might

of Rome which no nation had ever resisted. They were confronted with the choice- Caesar or Christ. It was to encourage men in such times that the Revelation was written. John did not shut his eyes to the terrors; he saw dreadful things and he saw still more dreadful things on the way; but beyond them he saw glory for those who defied Caesar for the love of Christ. The Revelation comes from one of the most heroic ages in all the history of the Christian Church. It is true that Domitian's successor Nerva (AD. 96-98) repealed the savage laws; but the damage was done, the Christians were outlaws, and the Revelation is a clarion call to be faithful unto death in order to win the crown of life.

Hailey traces the reigns of emperors and the times (or waves) of persecution from Nero (54-68) to Diocletian (284-305) which ended with Constantine I in 313.

9. References:

Full length commentaries:

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14. John F Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Moody press, 1989 Ed. Dispensationalist, futurist approach, widely read in America, it gives a good summary of the dispensational futurist school, much is based on Alford (350 pp).
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17. *Revelation*, Ralph W Harris (Executive editor), *The New Testament Study Bible (NTSB)*, *The Complete Biblical Library*, Vol. 10, 1990, World Library Press Inc., Springfield, Missouri 65802. Includes the word by word Greek text with English translation along with comment. An excellent aid, but it uses its own number system not Strong's meaning that you need to buy their 6 volume Greek-English dictionary. Note, commentary written by Horton. (428 pp).
18. *Revelation, The Preachers Outline & Sermon Bible (POSB)* Vol. 13, 1992, Alpha-Omega Ministries, Inc., Leadership Ministries Worldwide, PO Box 21310, Chattanooga, TN 37424-0310, Ph 615 855 2181 Fx 615 855 8616. (314 pp). A preachers outline, mainly futuristic and somewhat dispensational, but a useful resource.

19. Stanley M Horton, *The Ultimate Victory, An Exposition of the Book of Revelation*. Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, Missouri, 1991, Futurist and Premillennial; a scholarly approach and not as dogmatic as most dispensational approaches and therefore worth getting. Note this is the same author who wrote the commentary for the NTSB. (368 pp).

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21. Alan F Johnson, *Revelation, The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 12, Zondervan. Excellent commentary and well worth getting. Note: this is summarised with over 100 pages in *The NIV Bible Commentary*, Vol. 2: New Testament, K L Barker & J R Kohlenberger III (editors), Zondervan, 1994.

22. John P Newport, *The Lion and the Lamb*, 1986, Broadman Press. This is a nice commentary, he started out with a dispensational view and the view he now holds is described as historical-premillennial or covenant-premillennial. He quotes Mounce, Ladd and Johnson quite a lot and contrasts his views with dispensationalist such as Hal Linsey. It is well written and one that I would recommend for the average reader.

23. Robert W Wall, *Revelation, New International Biblical Commentary*, Hendrickson Publishers, 1991. A solid commentary, mainly idealist interpretation, a little too short for the student and more suitable as a reference for the layman. Quite extensive footnotes (295 pp).

24. David Chilton. *The Days of Vengeance, An exposition of the book of Revelation*. Dominion Press, 1987, 721 pp. This book deserves wide readership on account of it being one of the few preterist and postmillennial commentaries around (believing in the eventual Christianization of society before Christ returns). While he is postmillennial much of it reads as amillennial. His knowledge of the Old Testament is good and he understands that this is the key to interpreting Revelation. His main thesis is that Revelation was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. While you may not agree with his thesis, his commentary is eminently readable and will be enjoyed by the biblically literate reader.

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4. Geoffrey B Wilson, *Revelation*, Evangelical Press. 1985. Short but good summary, excellent value for money.

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6. Charles H Talbert, *The Apocalypse, A reading of the Revelation of John*. Westminster John Knox Press. 1994. Deals with Apocalyptic literature, a useful contribution.

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9. J Ramsey Michaels, Revelation, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, 1997, 265 pp.

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1. Lerry W Fogle, Revelation Explained, Not setting dates but seeing Jesus, Bridge Publishing, 2nd ed. 1995, Symbolic approach, concentrates on the visions of Jesus, useful for the layman (326 pp)

2. Richard Brooks, The Lamb is all the Glory, 1986, Evangelical press. Pastors treatment, too light weight to be of much use to the scholar. However a number of people have told me that it is a good book.

3. R H Mounce, What are we waiting for? A commentary on Revelation. Eerdmans, 1992. A popular summary of the author's main work above.

4. Warren W Wiersbe, Be Victorious, Victor books, 1985. Preacher's treatment of Revelation.

5. Triumph of the Lamb, A Self-Study Guide to the book of Revelation, Ted Grimsrud, Herald press, 1987. (188 pp.)

6. The Revelation to John, A Commentary, Martin H Franzmann, 1968 Concordia Publishing House. (148 pp.)

7. Courage for Today - Hope for Tomorrow. A study of Revelation, 1973 Augsburg Publishing House. (144 pp.) Short commentary and study guide, useful for group bible study.

8. Tim LaHaye, Revelation – Illustrated & made plain, 1973, Zondervan (322 pp.). Dispensational, anti Roman Catholic and it takes the seven churches as representing the seven church ages. Despite the title the book is quite a serious treatment of Revelation containing some useful material to the preacher.

Other reference material.

1. Billy Graham, Approaching Hoofbeats, Hodder and Stoughton, 1983. Deals with part of Revelation.

2. Malcolm Smith, 1981. Set of nine tapes on Revelation, Good News Crusade - AudioTape library. The best treatment I know of belonging to the idealist school, unfortunately not in print.

Can be ordered from Good News Crusade - AudioTape Library (£3.50 each) Tel (44) 1726 813 595 Fax (44) 1726 69853. These are post free to UK and approx. cost to the USA inc postage: 1 tape \$7.50, 4 tapes \$27, 5 tapes \$33, 6 tapes \$40 VISA accepted.

i. Christ among the Candlesticks

ii. The throne, Lamb and sealed book

iii. First six seals

iv. The 144,000

v. Two witnesses

vi. Woman, Child and the Dragon

vii. Beast like a Lamb

viii. The thousand years

ix. The New Jerusalem

3. David Pawson, When Jesus returns, Hodder & Stoughton, 1995. Summarises Revelation. Discusses the rapture and the millennium. Useful discussion of the millennium.

4. William E Cox, Amillennialism Today, 1966, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co. Not a commentary of Revelation but it gives the amillennialist viewpoint.

5. Dave Hunt, A Woman Rides the Beast, 1994, Harvest house publishers, Deals with Rev 17, describes the Roman Catholic church as the woman, an antidote to ecumenism.

6. Clifford and Monica Hill, From Ephesus to Laodicea, Prophecy Today, Vol. 11, No 5. p26-27.

7. Jerome H Smith, *The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*. 1992. Thomas Nelson Publishers. Contains some useful cross-references allowing one to compare scripture with scripture, although its view is both futurist and dispensational.
8. Arthur W Pink, *The Antichrist*, 1923, Kregel publications 1988. Useful background material, includes OT references to antichrist, discusses Babylon.
9. Charles C Ryrie, *Dispensationalism today*, 1965, Moody press, Essential reading in order to understand the background to dispensational commentaries like Walvoord and Newell.
10. William E Cox, *An examination of Dispensationalism*, 1963, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co, An antidote to dispensationalism.
11. William E Cox, *Biblical studies in Final things*, 1966, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co.
12. Joyce G Baldwin, *Daniel*, 1978, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, IVP.
13. Graeme Goldsworthy, *The Gospel in Revelation*, Paternoster press, 1984, 1994. A series of essays on Revelation which are well worth reading.
14. Leon Morris, *Apocalyptic*, IVP, 1973. A general study of Apocalyptic writing in general.
15. H H Rowley, *The Relevance of Apocalyptic, A Study of Jewish and Christian Apocalypses from Daniel to the Revelation*, 2nd ed., Lutterworth Press, London, 1947.
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18. Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary New Testament*, AMG Publishers 1992.
19. John R W Stott, *The letters of John, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, Inter-Varsity Press, 1988 (234 pp). Useful discussion about the antichrist.
20. *Vines Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985.
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23. Fox's book of martyrs.
24. Carlton and Mineer. *Unlocking the Mysteries of Revelation, using the Keys of the Feasts of the Lord*. 1999. Available from Amazon.com
26. Dr Kenneth L Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the book of Revelation*, Institute for Christian Economics, 1989. Scholarly book on the dating of Revelation, which argues for an early date.
25. Dr Kenneth L Gentry. *The beast of Revelation*, Institute for Christian Economics, 1989. This is a two part book, the first is on the identity of the beast (Nero) and the second is on when Revelation was written (early date). The second part is a popular version of the author's scholarly book on the dating of Revelation 'Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the book of Revelation'.
26. R C Sproul. *The Last Days according to Jesus*. Baker books. 1998. This discusses the preterist view of prophecy.
27. Don K Preston. *Who is this Babylon?* www.eschatology.org. He argues that Babylon is Jerusalem.

Commentary on Revelation.

10. Prologue (1:1)

Rev 1:1 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, 2 who testifies to everything he saw--that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. 3 Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

v1 - *The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, -* The revelation of Jesus Christ, Revelation = *Apocalupsis* (Greek), that is, it is the unveiling coming from Jesus Christ. Apocalypse is also known as a type of literature of the type of Daniel. It is coming from Jesus Christ and it is the unveiling of the plan of God for the world and especially his servants, the Church. It shows us what goes on behind the scenes, in heaven. It can also be read as a revelation of the person of Jesus Christ, but in the context described here God gave the revelation to Jesus to show his servants what must soon take place, it is the former that is most likely, see 22:16. Although it does of course reveal to us Jesus as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Alpha and Omega, the Lamb that was slain and there are many more descriptions of Jesus in the book. It gives us a full description of the glorified Christ in his heavenly glory while the gospels describe Jesus in his humility, without Revelation we would have a poorer understanding of the glorified Christ. The word *Apocalupsis* (unveiling) is also used of the second coming, which points to the removal of that which now obstructs our vision of Christ, 1 Cor 1:7, 2 Thess 1:7, 1 Pet 1:7, 13, 4:13. Paul received his revelation of the gospel from Jesus Christ (Gal 1:12). Revelation shows us Christ now, as He is in his heavenly glory and when He comes again every eye will see his heavenly glory and power.

v1 - *which God gave him to show his servants* - This book has the fullest and most explicit claim to divine authorship of any book in the bible, therefore whether it was John the apostle who wrote it down is irrelevant. The author is God, God gave it to Jesus, just as he gives Jesus the scroll later in 5:7. It is written to his servants, that is to Christians. The Greek for servants means slaves, the NASB uses the word bondservant. Servant is a common expression for Christians in Revelation, see Rev 1:6, 2:20, 6:11, 7:3 and 7:15, servant or to serve is used 19 times in all. The book is

written to God's servants, i.e. to his saints to show us what must soon take place so that we should not be taken by surprise by world events and persecution in which the enemy appears to triumph. 22:16 says 'I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches...', the *you* is plural. Finally the last verse says 'The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.' Other expressions used for God's people are brothers and saints. Those who serve God on the earth will also serve him in heaven (1:6, 5:10, 7:15, 22:3).

v 1 - *what must soon take place* - i.e. 'an impending crisis' (Caird) or 'the things which must shortly come to pass' (Mounce and Walvoord). Lenski in commenting on the Greek word for 'soon' as well as 22:7, 12, 20 notes that this does not mean 'swiftly' but means 'shortly', 'soon' -- 'the period is near' (v.3). 'Soon' in the biblical sense can mean a long time, e.g. 'I am coming soon', but note that verse 3 says that there is a blessing to those who take to heart the message of Revelation 'because the time is near' the events it describes are shortly to take place. This phrase 'I am coming soon' encompasses the whole of the Gospel era and the book of Revelation does the same. The phrase 'must soon take place' is repeated in Rev 22:6 and a similar version in Rev 1:19, see also Rev 4:1. Rev 4:1 indicates that what must soon take place is viewed from heaven, events on earth are viewed with a heavenly perspective, this gives a major insight into what the book is about. In Rev 22:10 John is told not to seal up the words of the prophecy because the time is near. Daniel is told to seal up the words of the scroll until the time of the end, Dan 12:4. I would therefore interpret Revelation as being relevant to all generations from the time of the seven churches to when Jesus comes again. We find an echo here of Dan 2:28 in which God, who reveals mysteries, shows Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come (Caird). We know from John 21:22 that the disciple John expected to be alive when Jesus returned.

Johnson notes that in eschatological and apocalyptic literature, the future is always viewed as imminent without the necessity of intervening time (cf. Luke 18:8). 'Soon' does not, in other words, preclude delays or intervening events, as Revelation itself suggests. In Ch. 6 we hear the cry of the martyred saints: 'How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you... avenge our blood?' They are told to wait a little longer' (vs. 10-11). Therefore, 'soon-ness' means imminency in eschatological terms. The church in every age has always lived with the expectancy of the consummation of all things in its day. Imminency describes an event possible any day, impossible no day.

v1 - *He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John*, - This is the method by which he made it known to John, angel means messenger. The words 'He made it known' means 'He signified it' (*semaino*) in the Greek, thus it comes to John in the form of signs (e.g. 12:1, 12:3, 15:1). This reference to the (his or my) angel is repeated in Rev 22:6, 22:16. John is a prophet (22:9-10) and God is revealing his plan and knowledge of what will happen soon to John (Amos 3:7), John is not to keep it to himself (22:10). Chapter 10 in which the mighty angel gives John the little scroll to eat, can be interpreted as an example of an angel giving John this prophecy, because John is told that he must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings (10:11). It can also be noted here that this angel has the appearance of Christ because he is Christ's angel (Rev 22:16 say *my* angel), compare his appearance in 10:1 with the description of Christ in 1:13-16. In 17:1 an angel shows John the punishment of the great prostitute and in 21:9 an angel shows John the bride, the wife of the Lamb.

v2 - *who testifies to everything he saw--that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ*. - John now gives his own testimony verifying the veracity of the book. What he saw was the word of God and the testimony given by Jesus (see previous verse and 22:16) or the testimony of who Jesus is, namely King of kings and Lord of lords. This is also the reason why John was on the island of Patmos, v9, because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. Following on from verse 1 in which we are told that the Revelation proceeds from God, we are told here that it is the word of God as well as the testimony of Jesus Christ, this is no product of man's mind, it has the highest claim to be the word of God of any book in the bible. We should not therefore place the book on one side because it is difficult to understand, it has a message that is very important for the saints. It calls us to be faithful even to death (2:10, 12:11) and therefore it claims the highest authority for its authorship. The martyrs of 6:9 and 20:4 were slain because of (their obedience to) the word of God and the testimony for Jesus they had maintained. He saw the word of God, this gives us one of the keys to understand the book, i.e. he saw the word of God which is to be understood in the light of the rest of the word of God. Revelation is the last book in the bible, both last in place and last to be written. It requires all of the earlier sections of the bible, and indeed Revelation, for its interpretation. In John 21:24 the disciple John who wrote the gospel of John testifies that his testimony is true, see also 19:35, 3 John 1:12 cf. Rev 22:8. In 22:16 Jesus personally declares that he has given John this testimony and in 22:20 Jesus testifies to these things i.e. he testifies to their truthfulness. In 19:9 the angel says to John 'These are the true words of God' and in 22:6 the angel says to John 'These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must

soon take place'. The point of this is to confirm time and time again with the highest authority that these things are true because God's servants need to be prepared to die for their faith, the truth of these words is of supreme importance. If there is no new heaven and no new earth and no lake of fire then why bother to die for one's faith.

v3 - *Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near*. - This is the first of 7 blessings in the book. By *reads* is meant to be read aloud, the letters to the churches were to be read aloud, this was common practice in the early church (Col 4:16, 1 Thess 5:27). Walvoord points out that *he* who reads is singular while *those* who hear and take to heart is plural meaning the rest of the church. By *this prophecy* is meant the whole book of Revelation not just part of it (see also 22:7, 22:18), this guards against the idea that the church is not around from chapter four through twenty meaning that it does not need to take to heart that portion of the book. The blessing implies, because the '*time is near*', that what is written is useful for all generations of the church, not just those to whom it was written. This means that it cannot apply only to John's generation or to the generation when Christ returns but it applies to all God's people throughout all generations. This is confirmed from the history of the church, in which believers of all generations have been persecuted. *Blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it* - in 22:7 there is a blessing on those who keep the words of the prophecy in this book. It will purify you and uphold you during persecution; it will keep you from entanglement or compromise with the world. It will give you courage through the great tribulation, you will be an overcomer so that you will be able to join in with all God's people in the praise of the Lamb at the wedding supper of the Lamb, Rev 19:9.

v3 - *the words of this prophecy* - This book is a prophecy, this is repeated in another blessing in 22:7 where Jesus says 'Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book'. The prophecy is telling us what is going to happen in the future but it also has a moral message as the previous blessing makes clear. Chilton comments that prophecy is primarily ethical rather than seeing into the future. Many preachers ignore this because we are fascinated about the future but not with godly living. See the 'to him who overcomes' promises to the seven churches.

There are dire consequences for any one who tampers with the words of this prophecy (22:18-19). In 19:10 we are told that the 'testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy' and in 22:6 we are told that 'The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place'. In 22:10 John is told by the angel "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near".

Prophets and prophesying also feature in John's book. In 10:11 after eating the little scroll John is told "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings." The two witnesses are prophets, they prophecy for 1260 days, they have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying, the inhabitants of the earth will gloat and celebrate because these two prophets had tormented them (11:3, 6, 11). John clearly thinks of himself as a prophet, 22:9. Prophets are distinguished from saints in 11:18, 16:6, 18:20, 18:24, it is probably the office of prophets (Eph 4:11) that is being referred to because apostles are included in 18:20, the church is built on the foundations of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone (Eph 2:20).

v3 - *because the time is near* - This offers us another clue to the interpretation of Revelation. In scripture the Lord's coming is always near, for example Jam 5:8 'You to, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near' and 1 Pet 4:7 'The end of all things is near'. To each generation of Christians the Lord's coming is always near, therefore it is speaking to every generation. The last days are from the days of Pentecost to the Second Coming. It is not speaking just about those things that happen to the very last generation in the distant future. It speaks about the last things but these occur from the time of Christ's ascension to his second coming, see also 1:1 (to show his servants what must soon take place), 1:19 (Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later), 22:6 (sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place). This is God's last letter to the church and it will be helpful to the persecuted church throughout all the generations to come both in John's time, when he comes again and all generations in between. John is making the point that we should take to heart the message of this book *now* and not wait for the future. In the same way we are to prepare for the Lord's second coming now because He could come any day, scripture is quite clear that He will come at an hour we do not expect Him (Mat 24:44).

11. Salutation (1:4)

Rev 1:4 John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father--to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

7 Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.

Rev 1:8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

v4 - *John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia*, - This is John's introduction, he is known by all seven churches and therefore he simply calls himself John. There were more than seven churches in Asia. The seven churches in Asia, i.e. present day Turkey, are representative of the whole church. The number seven occurs 52 times in the book and indicates divine completeness, because God finished the work of creation and rested on the seventh day, see Gen 2:2 (see also Wilcock p62, 156). This letter would probably have been circulated around the churches as some of Paul's letters were circulated (Col 4:16).

v4 - *Grace and peace to you* - This is a fitting greeting to the saints who are saved by grace and who are therefore at peace with God. It is included as a greeting in 17 books of the NT, all of Paul's epistles (Rom 1:7), Peters (1 Pet 1:2, 2 Pet 1:2) and 2 John. 'Peace' sums up the blessings of this kingdom; 'grace' describes their origin (Ramsey). All the blessings that come down from heaven to helpless man, labouring under the fearful burden of unforgiven sin and the dread of impending wrath and the misery of conflicting passions, unsatisfied desires, and earthly woes, are forcibly and touchingly included in this one word, 'peace', the peace that is from God and that reconciles to God. The very words that come to you laden with heaven's richest mercies, to gladden and to save your soul, imply that God regards you as by nature at enmity with Him, and under the penalty of His holy law; and that deliverance from this state of sin and misery cannot be procured by any works or merits of yours or of any creature, but must be His perfectly gratuitous gift. (Ramsey)

v4 - *from him who is, and who was, and who is to come* - There now follows a three-fold formula for the Trinity. From the eternal God, who is now, who is from past eternity to future eternity (see also 1:8, 4:8, 11:17). This salutation is from God the Father, Holy Spirit and the Son, see v4-5, below. This is similar to the name God declared to Moses 'I AM WHO I AM' and 'I AM' (Exo 3:14), He inhabits eternity (Isa 57:15). This designation can only apply to God.

v4 - *and from the seven spirits before his throne*, - Seven refers to completeness, another reading is seven fold spirit. Isaiah gives seven modes (actually six modes) of operation of the Spirit in the life of Christ (Isa 11:2-4). See also John 14:16-27: the Spirit comforts (16), is the Spirit of Truth (17), lives in us (17), manifests Jesus (21), manifests Jesus and the Father (23), teaches us (26), gives us peace (27) {POSB}. The seven spirits are referred to again in the letter to Sardis (3:1), and as seven lamps blazing before the throne of God (4:5), and as the seven eyes of the Lamb, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth (5:6). John is not going against the traditional doctrine of there being one Spirit. For a detailed explanation see comments on 4:5.

v5 - *and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness* - Jesus is the last mentioned member of the trinity, with a three-fold reference to his identity and function: 'the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth' (Johnson). Jesus tells us and shows us what God is really like in his ministry on earth. He is *the* faithful witness (John 8:13), Antipas was *a* faithful witness (2:13), he was faithful to death just as Jesus was faithful to death on a cross. To the church of Laodicea he is the faithful and true witness, see also the rider on the white horse, Rev 19:11, whose name is Faithful and True. The word for witness is the Greek *martus* and the same word is used of the martyr Antipas (2:13), of Jesus the true witness (3:14), of the two witnesses (11:3) and the blood of the martyrs (17:6) the common theme being that they all seal their testimony with their blood.

v5 - *the firstborn from the dead* - The 'firstborn from the dead' is one of the many titles of Jesus Christ, he is the first to rise from the dead, see Col 1:18. In the census of Israel in Rev 7:5 we find the first tribe, which is usually the firstborn, listed as Judah because Jesus was descended from Judah. This mention of Jesus as the firstborn also assures us that that when He returns we will also rise from the dead because he is the firstborn of many brothers (Rom 8:29, 1 Cor 15:20-23). This is an important point to be made because Revelation clearly states that many Christians need to be faithful to death (2:10, 6:9, 11:7, 13:7-10, 13:15, 17:6, 20:4).

v5 - *the ruler of the kings of the earth*. - One of the purposes of Revelation is to show, despite appearances to the contrary, that Jesus is *the* ruler of the kings of the earth *now*. It is also a divine title cf. 1 Tim 6:15. There are many references to the kings of the earth in Revelation, it is also a common expression in the bible, Mat 17:25. The kings of the earth hide from the Lamb (Rev 6:15), the kings of the earth wage war on the Lamb (Rev 19:19) and lose (Rev 19:21). Revelation shows that Jesus is the ruler of even the highest of men as well as the lowest, 6:15. The kings of the earth bring their splendour into the city of God (Rev 21:24). Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of Lords (Rev 17:4, 19:16), in this book he demonstrates his authority by overcoming those who fight against him. Ladd points out that John was aware of the tendency in his day to deify and worship the Roman emperor. The Roman Senate had officially declared the emperors Julius Caesar, Augustus, Claudius, Vespasian and Titus divine after their death, and the last three had used the term *DIVUS* (divine) on their coins. Domitian the emperor at the time John wrote requested that he be addressed as *Dominus et Deus* (Lord and God). One of the purposes of Revelation is to show that despite appearances, that Jesus Christ is the true ruler of the kings of the earth, He is King of kings and Lord of lords. To the Christians living between his first coming and second coming the fact that Christ is the ruler of the kings of the earth has to be accepted by faith, because the evidence of history will frequently be contrary. Revelation however shows us the spiritual reality behind what we see with our eyes, for example, the beast representing political power derives his power from Satan, but that at his second coming Jesus will be declared with power to be Lord of lords and will defeat both the beast and Satan.

v5 - *To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood* - There follows a three-fold description of his saving work. Adoration to our redeemer, to the one who loves us and proved it by His death on the cross which cancelled our sins. This is a definition of a Christian, one who is loved by Christ and freed from his sins. This book is written to those who are saved from the wrath of God through the blood of Christ, that is his death on the cross. Only this is sufficient to cleanse and free us of our sins and make us acceptable to God. In all circumstances the saints are more than conquerors through Jesus who loves us. Only those who acknowledge the word of God and the testimony of Jesus will really benefit or make sense of the book. Jesus is the only one who can save us from the wrath of God as indicated by the bowls in this book, and finally from the lake of fire, 1 Thess 1:10. Here in a book that contains much judgement we are at the beginning reminded of the gospel that through the death and resurrection of Christ 'God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them' (2 Cor 5:14-21). The blood of Jesus which

purifies from us from sin is a theme of John's epistle (1 John 1:7); as is the love of God (1 John 4:7-11).

v6 - *and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father--to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.* - In addition to loving us and dying for he has made us to be a kingdom and priests. This is similar to Rev 5:10, 'You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth', see also 20:6, 22:5. It is Jesus who has made us to be a kingdom and priests. Ladd notes that the church is called a kingdom not just because it is a people under a king but because they participate in the messianic reign of Christ (see 5:10 also Mat 5:2-5, 19:28, Luke 22:30). The primary reference to kingdom and priests comes from Exo 19:5-6, in the OT and 1 Pet 2:9 in the NT. In Exo 19:5-6 the Israelites were promised that if they obeyed God then they would be God's treasured possession out of all the nations of the earth and would be for God a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. The tribe of Levites became the priests, and at the death of Jesus the veil in the temple was split into two because from then on all the saints, not just the Levites, are priests. 1 Pet 2:9 emphasises that the saints are a chosen people, a people belonging to God, a royal priesthood and a holy nation who will declare the praises of God who called them out of darkness (Satan's kingdom, Acts 26:18) into his wonderful light. In the OT a priest was a mediator between God and the people offering sacrifices and incense on their behalf and for their sins. In the NT the priesthood of believers means declaring to the world the good news of the gospel, that Jesus died for their sins and offering up prayer on their behalf.

Other references to 'Serve God' are Rev 7:15, 22:3. The saints are in a kingdom whose king is Christ, formerly we were part of Satan's kingdom, Col 1:13. To serve his God and Father reminds us of the words of Jesus to his disciples after the resurrection that his Father is now their Father and his God is now their God (John 20:17). These two verses (5 & 6) refer to those who know Jesus, the next verse refers to those who do not know Jesus. To those who know Jesus his return to earth will bring a new body and eternal life in the paradise of God.

v7 - *Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.* - In contrast to the two verses above which refer to our riches in Christ this verse brings mourning to the peoples of the earth who do not know the love of God and who are not cleansed from their sins. The Second Coming will be public, every eye shall see him (Mat 24:30), he will bring retribution on those who do not know him (2 Thess 1:7-9, Rev 6: 15-17, 11:18, 14:17-20, 19:15) but will be marvelled at by the saints 2 Thess 1:10, Rev 19:6-9. This vision of Christ's Second Coming is a

combination of Dan 7:13 and Zech 12:10. The announcement of Christ's Second Coming is a major theme in the book, this is based on Zec 12:10 see also Mat 24:30, for the church this will bring solace but for the world it will bring judgement. John 19:37 'They will look on the one they have *pierced*' is also based on Zech 12:10 and uses the same Greek word *ekkenteo* as in Revelation, the only two times it is used in the NT.

The second coming and the judgement upon mankind is one of the great themes of this book, its first mention is in verse 7 it's last is the penultimate verse of Revelation. In particular the book concerns the events leading up to the Second Coming. See Mat 24. There are at least twelve references to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ in the book, the other references are:

The Church in Sardis 3:3,

The Church in Philadelphia 3:11,

Sixth seal 6:12,

Two witnesses raptured 11:12,

Harvest of the earth 14:14,

Sixth bowl, 'Behold, I come like a thief!' 16:15,

The destruction of Babylon, 17:14.

The rider on the white horse in Rev 19:11.

Conclusion of Revelation: 22:7, 22:12, 22:20.

v8 - *"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."* - Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, this should be thought of as the beginning and the end of history, He is the author of history. The seven seals (Rev 5) concern the unfolding of God's plan in history. Revelation shows us that God is sovereign over human history, that God is both the beginning and the end is particularly appropriate to this book. This designation of Alpha and Omega is repeated in 21:6, 22:13. He came to earth and died on the cross (who was), he is now exalted at the right hand of God and intercedes for

us (who is) and he is coming again in power and glory to claim his own (who is to come). In Col 1:15-20 we find that all things were created by him and for him, he is the beginning of creation and the firstborn from the dead, being the first to rise from the dead. When he returns he will consummate this present age and the righteous will rise from the dead and there will be a new age with a new heaven and new earth.

Scene 1: The Church in the world.

One like a son of man (1:9)

The letters to the seven churches (2:1)

Ephesus (2:1)

Smyrna (2:8)

Pergamum (2:12)

Thyatira (2:18)

Sardis (3:1)

Philadelphia (3:7)

Laodicea (3:14)

12. One Like a Son of Man (1:9)

Rev 1:9 I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. 10 On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, 11 which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."

12 I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. 14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. 15 His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. 16 In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. 18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

19 "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. 20 The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

John sees the risen Christ in His glory and is commissioned to write to the seven churches. Paul, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel all had significant visions at the beginning of their ministry. He is told to write what he has seen, what is now and what will take place later. He is also given the interpretation of the seven stars and the seven lampstands.

v9 - *I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.* - Patient endurance is one of the key words of this book, 13:10, 14:12, it implies patient endurance under persecution. John was a brother and a fellow sufferer with readers of his letter on the island of Patmos who belong to God's kingdom, he is not writing from the comfort of home but as a fellow sufferer, therefore his writing is practical and meaningful. He suffered on the Island of Patmos because he proclaimed the word of God and testified that Jesus is the Christ, this is a repetition of Rev 1:2. Tribulation in the world is part of the life of the Christian as Jesus (John 16:33) and Paul emphasise (Acts 14:22). Ladd points out that our sufferings are 'in Jesus' just as Paul uses the expression 'in Christ', the use of the simple name Jesus calls attention to his life in the flesh. Just as he overcame so we must also overcome. Patient endurance is in contrast to retaliation cf. 1 Pet 2:23.

v10 - *On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet,* - This is wrongly translated in most English versions as 'the Lord's Day', a phrase not used until long after the apostles age. Most scholars believe that John was writing in the year 95 AD, towards the end of the reign of Domitian (81-96 AD). This particular Roman emperor conducted a terrible persecution of all Christians who refused to acknowledge his 'divinity'. On a certain day each year all Roman citizens had to go to their local city shrine, toss some incense on the official altar and declare, 'Caesar is Lord!' This became known as the 'lords day' (Hill). He was also 'in the Spirit' in 4:2, 17:3, 21:10, which could mark four major divisions in the book. Here at the start of the vision he sees the risen Christ, in 4:2 he sees God on His throne, in 17:3 he sees a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, in 21:10 he sees the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.

He was caught up by the Spirit into a state where he lost contact with time and senses and was transported into the invisible world of spiritual realities (Wilson). Compare

this with Ezekiel's experience in Ezek 2:2 in which the Spirit came into him and spoke to him and Paul's experience in 2 Cor 12:1 in which he was caught up into heaven. Here the trumpet means listen. The seven trumpets which happen later can be considered as the voice of God to the world.

v11 - *which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."* - John was commanded to write what he saw, it was a vision that John saw and he was in the spirit. The message was to be sent to the seven churches of Asia, initially. Seven is the number of divine completeness for God rested on the seventh day of creation, Gen 2:2. The seven churches represent the whole church of Christ, so it is for us also. Just as Paul's letters to the Ephesians, Romans, Corinthians etc. is also for the whole church. The order of the seven churches is geographically in a circular route.

v12 - *I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands,* - The seven golden lampstands, we are told later, are the seven churches v20, each lampstand would have a lamp, the complete church would consist therefore of seven lampstands and with seven lamps (see verse 20). In 4:5 seven lamps are linked to the Spirit of God. Solomon's temple had ten lampstands of pure gold (1 King 7:49), and in Rev 11:4 we find the 'two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth', the number two standing for the witness of the church.

v13 - *and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest.* - Someone 'like a son of man' is clearly a reference to Christ, it is used of Christ again in 14:14. The expression 'like a son of man' is first used in Dan 7:13. It is also a designation of Christ used in the gospels. 'Son of Man' is used 30 times in Matthew, 14 in Mark, 25 in Luke and 13 in John. Note 'Son of God' is only used 8 times in Matthew, 3 in Mark, 6 in Luke and 6 in John. Christ is among the lampstands, that is, he is among the church, this illustrates Christ's intimacy with His church, as promised in the Great Commission, Mat 28:19, 'And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age'. The golden sash around his waist indicates faithfulness (Isa 11:5), the priesthood also wore sashes (Exo 28:4, 39:29), a prophet could also be clothed like this (Zech 3:4). In 19:13 He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood and in 19:16 on his robe he has the name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. In Dan 10:5, Daniel saw a man dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold around his waist.

v14 - *His head and hair were white like wool* - This speaks of age, sagacity and wisdom like that of a judge who wears a wig to indicate these characteristics. See

Daniel's description of the Ancient of Days whose hair was white like wool (Dan 7:9). In this description of Christ the white hair used by Daniel of God emphasises the divinity of Christ (xxxx).

v14 - *and his eyes were like blazing fire.* - His eyes were like blazing fire, that is he sees all with piercing clarity and he judges what he sees according to his holiness. He praises what is good and gives correction to what is wrong. He appears again with eyes like blazing fire in the letter to Thyatira in which he is clearly identified as the Son of God, Rev 2:18. This description is repeated in 19:12 when he appears as the rider on the white horse and in Daniel 10:6 we find that he had eyes are like flaming torches. In 5:6 he has seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent out to all the earth. In 4:5 seven lamps are blazing which are the seven spirits of God, see 2 Chr 16:9 (For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him) and Zec 4:10 (These seven are the eyes of the LORD, which range throughout the earth.). Our Lord sees everything concerning the seven church, he is fully aware of their condition as indicated by the phrase 'I know your deeds' used in most of the seven letters.

v15 - *His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.* - His feet were of bronze, which indicates strength and stability, see Dan 10:6 in which his arms and legs are the gleam of burnished bronze. His voice was like the sound of rushing waters, see Dan 10:6 in which his voice was like the sound of a multitude, also Ezek 1:24, 43:2 in which his voice was like the roar of rushing waters. Part of his self designation used here is also used in the introduction to the letter to the church in Thyatira (2:18).

v16 - *In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.* - The seven stars he held in his right hand are the angels of the seven churches, v20, to whom the seven letters are addressed, 2:1 etc. The seven stars that Christ holds are also referred to in the letter to the church at Ephesus, 2:1 and the letter to Sardis 3:1. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance which reminds us of the transfigured Christ, Mat 17:2. Paul also experienced the risen Christ, as a bright light, Acts 22:6. There can be no doubt that this refers to the risen Christ in all his glory. Compare to the description of God in 1 Tim 6:16 who dwells in unapproachable light. Isaiah says that the Lord 'made my mouth like a sharpened sword', Isa 49:2.

Chilton points out that the seven stars are the Pleiades. Seven stars appeared regularly on the Emperors coins as symbols of his supreme political sovereignty. Yet here we

find the seven stars in Christ's hand. Dominion resides in the right hand of Christ not in the hand of the Emperor. It is Jesus who is King of kings.

v16 - *and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword,* - A double-edged sword (*rhomphia*) is a reference to the word of God, see Heb 4:12, Eph 6:17. Compare the description given here with that of the rider on the white horse in Rev 19:15, 21 out of his mouth came a sharp sword (*rhomphia*) to judge the world. In 2:12 he is described as him who has the sharp two-edged sword (*rhomphia*) and in 2:16 he will fight against those in the church at Pergamum who do not repent with the two-edged sword (*rhomphia*). Compare with Isa 11:4 'He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked'. This sword has to do with judgement, of the church and of the world.

v17 - *When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.* - When John saw him he saw Christ's glory and fell at his feet because of the unworthiness of his humanity. This occurred three times to Daniel when he saw a mighty angel, he had to be strengthened because he was so overcome by what he saw, Dan 8:18, 10:9, 10:18. Jesus places his right hand on John to comfort and strengthen him. Jesus used the phrase 'do not be afraid' after his resurrection, Mat 28:10. The phrase 'I am the First and the Last' is a divine title quoted from Isa 44:6, 48:12. The Christ is the first and the last, this description is used in the introduction to the letter to the church in Smyrna, in 21:6 he is described as the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, this is repeated in Rev 22:13, it again emphasises his divinity.

v18 - *I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever!, And I hold the keys of death and Hades.* - This is a clear reference to his life, death and resurrection and emphasises that Christ is alive forever and ever. Having died and risen from the dead and visited Hades the abode of the dead (1 Pet 3:18) he has authority over both (xxxx). He has authority over the book of life that determines each mans destiny (3:5). The designation the 'First and the Last, who died and came to life again' is used by Christ to introduce the letter to the church in Smyrna, its particular relevance to them is that they were about to undergo a period of persecution and even martyrdom (2:8). It emphasises that just as Christ lived, died and rose again that if we die we will also rise again when he comes, because he lives so we will live (John 14:19) and he will raise us up at the last day (John 6:40).

v19 - *"Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.* - Jesus is the Beginning and the End and therefore he is supremely qualified to

tell John what will take place later since he knows what the end will be (xxxx). John was therefore commanded by Christ to write, this book's author was Christ, John is the scribe. He is told to write what he has seen, what is now and what will take place later. This offers us another clue to the interpretation of Revelation, the Revelation shows John his previous vision of Christ (what you have seen), the present, that is the letters to the seven churches (what is now) and the future (what will take place later). It is not specifically the distant future although it includes the end time events. Rev 4:1 introduces the future and marks a major division in the book. The letters individually to the seven churches are 'what is now'.

v20 - *The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.* - Christ now unveils the mystery of the seven stars and seven lampstands as promised in the first verse of Revelation. God is a revealer of mysteries to his servants, Dan 2:29, 2:47, and does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets, Amos 3:7. This is the first illustration of the self-interpretation of Revelation. I.e. seven lampstands are symbolic of the seven churches. Christ shows us that Revelation is a symbolic book and therefore we must interpret the symbols in order to understand its message, Jesus gives us the keys to interpreting the book by interpreting these symbols here. Jesus is the only light (lamp) in the darkness in the world and the church bears this light before the world and is therefore a lampstand (compare with Mat 5:15 in which a lamp is put on a lampstand). We should note that the church is a lampstand (Gr. *luchnia*) and not the lamp (Gr. *luchnos*), the lamp is the Holy Spirit (see 4:5) and Jesus (21:33), the church is the repository for the lamp, and the Holy Spirit indwells her. The same idea is expressed in the two witnesses in whom the Holy Spirit is the oil (11:4). We also find that the Lamb is the Lamp of the New Jerusalem (see 21:23 also 22:5), see note on 21:23. We are earthen vessels the surpassing glory we hold is Christ (2 Cor 4:6-7). In Mat 5:14 Jesus says that 'you are the light (Gr. *phos*) of the world' to his disciples meaning as witnessing to Jesus, the church is the body of Christ on the earth, his hands, his voice etc. The lampstands are made of gold indicating the preciousness of the church in God's sight, the new Jerusalem is also made of gold. As we see Christ in his risen glory so we are to reflect this and show it to the world. His glory is already described in Rev 1:16, see 2 Cor 3:18. In 4:5 we find seven lamps blazing before the throne of God, which are the seven spirits of God. Therefore the symbol of the church as a lampstand is also a church indwelt by the Holy Spirit (the seven lamps of the lampstand), John perhaps has in mind a lampstand with seven lamps used for illumination in the Holy place (Exo 25:31-40, Num 8:2) indicating the whole church. Compare also the two lampstands in 11:4 who are also two olive trees indicating that

the church in its witness to the world is empowered by the Holy Spirit (cf. Zec 4:1 ff.). The symbol of the church as a lampstand is an apt one because her duty is to be a bearer of light to the world, to show forth Jesus. We see this in the description of the two witnesses who are empowered by the Holy Spirit to witness in power to the world (11:4). The witness of the church in the life and in the death of its members is a theme that runs throughout the book (2:13, 6:9, 12:11, 12:17, 19:10, 20:4).

Christ interprets the seven stars in his right hand as the angels of the seven churches which is almost as enigmatic as seven stars. The fifth trumpet shows us a star that had fallen from the sky to earth and is almost certainly Satan (9:1). In 12:4 the dragon's tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to earth, this is probably a reference to the angels that fell with Satan. The letters to the seven churches are each addressed to the angel of that church, note that angel (Gr. *angelos*) means messenger. Exo 23:20-23 refers to an angel that was to guard the Israelites as they went across the desert, to guide them to the land God was taking them to. Daniel refers to the prince of the Persian kingdom, no doubt an evil angel, who resisted the angel who came to bring Daniel a message. He was helped by Michael who is the great prince who protects Daniel's people (Dan 10:13, 21, 12:1), Michael is likely to be the archangel Michael referred to in Jude 1:9 and Rev 1:7. We are told that believing children have angels in heaven who always see the face of God (Mat 18:10). In Revelation we find the angel of the abyss (9:11), the angel in charge of the fire (14:18) and the angel in charge of the waters (16:5). Therefore it is quite possible that each church has its own angel.

An alternative solution is given in Mal 2:7 in which a priest who gives instruction is the messenger of the Lord Almighty, an angel is a messenger. See also Dan 12:3 in which those who lead many to righteousness shall shine like the stars forever and in Jude 1:13 false teachers are called 'wandering stars'. The fact that the letters are written to the angel of the church implies that the angel has authority over the church, so the leader of the church is the most meaningful interpretation. Ramsey argues that the angels represent Christ's delegated authority to the churches, he hold the seven stars in his right hand, representing the seat of power, they are part of the description of Christ himself. Thomas postulates the most plausible view that the angels are human messengers who are representative of the church and possess no unique leadership function, citing as evidence Epaphroditus and Epaphras, representing churches in Philippi and Colosse who went to Rome to offer help to the prisoner Paul while he was under house arrest (Phil 2:25, 4:18, Col 4:12). The Greek word *angelos* is also used frequently enough to refer to human messengers (e.g., Matt 11:10, Luke 7:24, 9:52, James 2:25). Thomas goes on to say that Christ's explanation of the stars informed John that they stood for seven visitors to Patmos, either already present or soon to arrive, men who come to help John but will return home with a specific

mission to the churches that sent them. They will be bearers of a message to their own city as part of the larger package of the whole contents of the Apocalypse.

Chilton points out that angels and stars are often linked in the bible (cf. Jud 5:20; Job 38:7; Isa 14:13; Jude 13; Rev 8:10-12; 9:1; 12:4). Both angels and stars are associated with government and rule (cf. Gen 37:9; Jud 5:20; Dan 8:9-11; 10:13, 20-21). He also holds the angel of the churches responsible for the life and conduct of the churches because He addresses the angel of each church in the letters. The similarity between angels and prophets is that they both stand in the presence of God (cf. Isa 6:1-8; Ezek 1-3, 10 Luke 1:19). Thus Chilton sees the angels as the prophetic rulers of the churches.

13. The letters to the seven churches (2:1)

Introduction to the letters to the seven churches:

The letters to the seven churches are a distinct unit of seven within the book of Revelation. Other sevenfold units are the seven seals, the seven trumpets and the seven bowls of God's wrath. Because the number seven denotes divine completeness as a whole the seven letters form a whole unit which has a message to the church universal; there are more than seven churches in Asia, for example Colossi has been omitted. In 1:11 John is commanded to 'write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea'. In verse 13 we see Christ among the lampstands, that is the seven churches, and in the letters we find out what he observed as he walks among the seven churches (2:1). Our Lord is one who walks among the churches and sees their deeds both good and bad. The seven churches represent the different imperfections that are likely to be found in individual churches in different localities and at different times. The churches give us a template against which we can measure our church in order to see our weaknesses and strengths, he also gives us the remedy for our deficiencies.

In this preliminary section God is judging His church in order to purify it from sin within so that it will be able to stand up to the coming persecution and also so that it will not be condemned along with the world (1 Cor 11:32), see the warning in Rev 18:4 to come out of Babylon lest we share in her sins and her judgement. This judgement is depicted later in the sections of the seven trumpets, the seven bowls, the judgement of the harlot and the day of judgement. Pergamum is warned about the Balaamite teaching concerning idolatry and immorality and Thyatira is warned about the false prophet Jezebel who misleads the church into idolatry and immorality. Laodicea thinks it is rich but actually it is poor, but we find that those whom the Lord loves he rebukes and disciplines. Here God warns the church because the world is infiltrating the church, but later the seven trumpets are warnings to the world to repent of its idolatry and its results, which include sexual immorality. The harlot Babylon that seduces the people of the world is herself destroyed by fire, and in Rev 18:4 God's people are warned to come out of her.

Smyrna and Philadelphia are both troubled by false Jews who slander her, later we find the 144,000 who are sealed by God to protect them from the seven trumpets, these are the true Jews, the Israel of God, who we later see as a great multitude. Smyrna is warned that a period of Satanic testing is coming and they must be faithful unto death and in 12:17 we find Satan making war against the saints and in chapter 13

we find that the beast from the sea making war against the saints and conquering them. We find that those who would not worship the beast are killed and yet in 15:2 there are those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and his name.

Ephesus was sound in doctrine and persevered under hardship, neither the world or persecution was the problem. However they had lost their first love, for Christ and each other and had therefore almost become sub-Christian. John, as his first epistle makes clear, considers love to be the essential response to God's love; 'We love because God first loved us' (1 John 4:19); 'Whoever loves God must also love his brother' (1 John 4:21). One of the features of the churches witness was that her members love each other (John 13:34-35), it is not an option it is a commandment. God's counterpart to the hatred of the world is to be the love of Christians for each other. The church in Sardis was on the verge of death and was hardly in a position to withstand attack from the world and its values. Similarly the church in Laodicea was in danger of receiving the world's values.

In verse 1:19 he commands John to 'Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later'. The letters to the seven churches form a unit as to 'what is now' and the rest of Revelation concerns 'what will take place later'.

The letters follow a general sevenfold pattern:

- i. A greeting to the angel of the church.
- ii. A reference to Christ's self designation from Rev 1:12-19, this has some application to the letter to the church.
- iii. A commendation, 'I know your deeds...' (except in case of Laodicea and Pergamum).
- iv. A rebuke if applicable (except in case of Smyrna and Philadelphia).
- v. A charge to repent or a warning.
- vi. A call to hear. The phrase '*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches*'.
- vii. A promise. The phrase '*To him who overcomes*' followed by a reference to a reward mentioned later in Revelation.

Dr A T Pierson (quoted by Lang) pointed out that these promises at the end of each letter follow an historical order. The tree of life refers back to Eden; the second death to the fall; the hidden manna to the manna in the desert; the white stone to the engraved stones on the high priest's shoulder and breastplate; the rod of iron to Moses holding the rod of God for the defeat of Amalek (Ex 17:8); the white raiment to the

garments of the priests; the pillar in the temple to those in the temple of Solomon; and the sitting on the throne to Solomon's reign in glory and peace.

Lang points out that there are three aspects under which these letters may be considered.

- i. As a description by the Lord of the state of the seven churches of believers then existing (preterist).
- ii. As a prophetic foreview of the Christian age then commenced and to conclude at the coming of the Lord (historicist).
- iii. As a revelation of the moral characteristics of churches found always throughout the age (idealist).

The first (i) is obvious but these were chosen out of all the churches then existing because these reveal the states of every church in all ages, the number seven, the number of completeness suggests this.

The second (ii) is a widely held belief that these seven church in the order used, foreshadow a progressive development of the church throughout church history.

- a. the first letter reveals the beginning of declension in the waning of first love, and the last (Laodicea) shows the final outcome of this in rejection by the Lord.
- b. The meaning of the name of each church corresponds to the historic feature of the stage assigned to each.
- c. The history of the Christian age has in fact followed the stages thus obscurely outlined in advance.

Trench has given a summary of the history of this interpretation and offers these reasons against it.

- i. The Letters themselves contain no hint of a prophetic period sense.
- ii. The apostolic, the post apostolic or even the following sub apostolic age does not know the scheme.
- iii. The advocates of this interpretation vary greatly among themselves in their distribution of the periods, examples of which of which divergence are given.
- iv. There is no truly accurate correspondence of Letters with periods.

The idea that the seven churches represents seven ages, while popular, has one great danger. This is because the last of the seven churches mentioned, Laodicea, was so lukewarm that it was about to be spat out (lit. vomit) by Christ. This view of church history will hardly encourage us to go forward with the gospel and the victory that is already ours in Christ.

One of the themes that runs through the letters are the promises of rewards to those who overcome. Clearly Jesus is the model of one who overcame (3:21). In John's first epistle we read of those young men within whom the word of God lives who overcome the evil one (1 John 2:14); those who overcome the antichrist because Jesus within them is greater than Satan (1 John 4:4); those who overcome the world by faith (1 John 5:4). Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God (1 John 5:5). In John 16:33 Jesus tells his disciples that in the world they will have trouble but not to fear because he has overcome the world.

The rewards for those who overcome involve a share in Christ himself:

- i. Will eat of the tree of life watered by the river of life whose source is Christ (2:7).
- ii. Will receive the hidden manna, which is Christ the true bread that comes down from heaven (2:17).
- iii. Will share in Christ's authority over the nations (2:26).
- iv. Will walk with Christ dressed in white (3:4).
- v. Will write on him my new name (3:12).
- vi. Will sit with Christ on his throne (3:21).

The letters to the seven churches are integral to the book because they refer to the vision of Christ and the New Jerusalem at the end of the book. In the letters he prepares and purifies the church so that it can withstand the coming assaults on it by its enemies: Satan, the beast, the false prophet, the world and its seduction which are described in the rest of the book.

Summary of the condition of the churches:

- i. Commended with nothing against:

Smyrna: Materially poor but spiritually rich, enduring affliction, slandered and persecuted.

Philadelphia: Open door, little strength, kept his word, had not denied his name, endured patiently.

- ii. Commended but with things against.

Ephesus: Hard work, perseverance, has not grown weary, cannot tolerate wicked men but had lost their love.

Pergamum: Live where Satan has his throne, Antipas was martyred, remain true to his name did not renounce their faith, but some hold to teaching of Balaam.

Thyatira: Have growing love and faith but tolerate the false teaching of Jezebel.

- iii. Nothing to commend.

Sardis: Reputation of being alive but spiritually dead. Wake-up

Laodicea: Lukewarm, materially rich but spiritually poor, blind and naked. About to be spewed out.

Ramsey notes that the descriptions of the churches in all their imperfection serves to define the limits within which the church may exist, yet all of them are part of the church of Christ despite their imperfections.

We can see in the letters to the seven churches examples of how Satan wages war against the church (Rev 12:17). In Rev 13 we see the beast out of the sea who persecutes the church and the beast out of the earth who is the false prophet. This is true to the character of Satan who is a murderer and a liar (John 8:44). In the seven churches we can see how Satan wages war against the church by persecution and slander (lies) from outside and false prophets within.

13.1. Ephesus (2:1)

2:1 *"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:*

These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands: 2 I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. 3 You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. 4 Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. 5 Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. 6 But you have this in your favour: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

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

Key phrase: You have forsaken your first love

There is much information in the bible about the church at Ephesus. The church at Ephesus was founded by Paul where he reasoned with the Jews, he left Priscilla and Aquila there (Acts 18:19). Paul came back to Ephesus and found some disciples who had not received the Holy Spirit, they had only been baptised into John's baptism, when they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 19:1-7). Paul spoke in the synagogue for three months (Acts 19:8) and then in the lecture hall of Tyrannus for 2 years (Acts 19:9-10). Then there was a disturbance because of the fertility goddess Artemis who brought the Ephesians wealth through making silver images of her (Acts 19:23), they were afraid that through Paul's preaching about Christ they would lose business. Paul left Timothy at Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3). He said good-bye to the elders of Ephesus at Miletus before going to Jerusalem (Acts 20:17-38) where he warned them that savage wolves will come in among them (Acts 20:29).

He also wrote to the Ephesians a long letter from which it is clear that they were a mature church. It is also thought that the apostle John and Mary, Jesus mother, settled at Ephesus. Some two-and-a-half centuries after Paul preached in Ephesus, the city hall was converted into a church and later used by the Council of Ephesus, which in

431 AD formally accepted the teaching that Jesus was both fully human and fully divine (Hill).

Ephesus was the most important city of proconsular Asia. Situated at the mouth of the Cayster River on a gulf of the Aegean Sea, it flourished as an important commercial and export centre for Asia. By NT times it had grown to at least 250,000 people (Mounce).

v1 - *"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:* - Possibly the angel of the church means to the spirit of the church, that is, symbolising the churches. It could also mean guardian angel or elder. We should note here that it is Jesus himself dictating the letters to the seven churches, John is the amanuensis. As with Revelation itself (see 1:1) the letters claim direct divine authorship rather than divine inspiration of a human writer. It is appropriate that the last letter to the church which would sustain the church through trials and tribulation over the coming centuries should come with the highest authority. It is Christ's own evaluation and description of the condition of the churches together with His remedy for any defects.

v1 - *These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands:* - This is a repetition of his self designation from 1:13 and 1:16. A reference to his self-designation is repeated for each of the seven churches. He holds the seven stars in his right hand, the seven stars are the seven angels of the church, this probably means that he determines the destiny of the churches. He walks among the seven churches and therefore he knows them intimately.

v2 - *I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false.* - I know your deeds, a commendation, common to all the churches except Smyrna (I know your affliction and your poverty) and Pergamum (I know where you live - where Satan has his throne). Jesus is one who knows our condition because he walks among the seven lampstands. They had hard work (*kopos*) and perseverance; Paul commended the Thessalonians because of their work produced by faith, their labour (*kopos*) prompted by love (*agapao*) and their endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess 1:3). The church in Thyatira is commended for their love and faith, service and perseverance (2:19). They had taken heed of Paul's warning to them when he left the elders that false prophets would arise out of their midst, Acts 20:28, 2 Cor 11:12. These men would be like savage wolves among a flock of sheep, they will distort the truth in order to draw

away disciples after them, Paul warned them to be on their guard against such false prophets. The Ephesians had tested the doctrine of these men and their lives and found them to be false. Jesus tells us that we will recognise false prophets by their fruit, that is their lives and the results of their doctrine. In 1 Thess 5:21 we are to test everything and hold on to the good, in 1 Cor 14:29 when two or three prophets speak the others should carefully weigh what is said. 1 John 4:1 warns us to test the spirits to see whether they are from God. 2 Peter 2 and Jude give descriptions of these people: they introduce destructive heresies, they exploit the people with stories they have made up, they will have shameful ways, they follow their own sinful ways and despise authority, they are bold and arrogant. They change the grace of our God into a license for immorality, these men are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage. In particular they are greedy for money.

v3 - *You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.* - A commendation, again it repeats the previous verse, they have endured for his name though not through love but through duty. Compare 'endured hardships' (*kopiaio*) with 'hard work' (*kopos*) in verse 2, in Greek *kopiaio* is a derivative of *kopos*.

v4 - *Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.* - Rebuke: they had deeds but not their love for each other and Jesus as at first. The word used for love is *agape* a stronger form of love rather than *phileo*, which is brotherly love. *Agape* most characterises the love that Christ has for us which is a deeply committed love and which depends more on the nature of the giver than the attractiveness of the one loved (cf. *eros* the love between lovers). We are to love one another as Christ has loved us (John 13:34), *agape* love and not just brotherly love. It is likely that they had lost their initial love for Christ, which resulted in a lack of love for each other. This is the great test for the saints, do they love one another (1 Cor 13:3, John 13:35). Their testing of everyone to see whether they are false apostles or false brethren had created an atmosphere of mutual distrust in which love could not grow (Mounce).

v5 - *Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.* -

Jesus now gives three steps to recovery:

- i. Remember your former condition (stop and recall your love in the past, realise your current position and compare to how you used to be).
- ii. Repent (change your direction, stop doing the negative)

- iii. Do the things you did at first (do the positive, repentance is not just turning from wrong but also doing what is right).

Repentance does not merely involve us in stopping doing bad things but learning to do good things (Isa 1:16-17). We are to produce fruit in keeping with repentance (Mat 3:8). 'Do the things you did at first' their love was to be practical (1 John 3:16-18, James 2:14-17). The positive thing is to love one another as Christ loved us (John 13:34-35, Rom 13:8, 1 Pet 1:22, 1 John 3:11 ff.). A survey of the term 'one another' in the NT indicates that in practise this means: agreeing with one another; forgiving one another as God forgave us; being patient with one another; encouraging one another; spurring one another on toward love and good deeds; not judging or slandering one another; offering hospitality to one another.

v5 - *If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place* - Warning that the church will die if they do not repent. There is no church at Ephesus today.

v6 - *But you have this in your favour: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.* - A commendation, Nicolaitans: followers of Nicolas of Antioch, not much is known other than in the book itself, see also Rev 2:15, the Nicolaitans and 'those who hold the teaching of Balaam' (2:14) and the followers of the woman Jezebel (2:20) represent the same group of heretics. There is a play on words here because the name Nicolaus can be derived from the two Greek words, *nikan*, to conquer, and *laos*, the people. Balaam can be derived from the two Hebrew words, *bela*, to conquer, and *ha'am*, the people. The two names, then are the same and both can describe an evil teacher, who has won victory over the people and subjugated them to poisonous heresy (Barclay). Just as Satan uses the beast to conquer (*nikao*) the saints from without (11:7, 13:7) so he uses false prophets to conquer the church from within, see also the reference to the Nicolaitans in the letter to Pergamum (2:15). It is likely that they took a laxer view of pagan society than did Jesus Christ, by allowing food offered to idols to be eaten and sexual immorality (2:14 and 2:20) they compromised with the world.

v7 - *'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches,* - A personal challenge to the members of the churches and a general invitation to the individuals who hear the words of this book, to take its message to heart (Rev 1:3, Mat 13:15-16). A similar phrase is used in the gospels by Jesus (Mat 11:15, Mark 4:9, Luke 8:8). The phrase 'He who has an ear' is repeated in Rev 13:9. Note, it is what the Spirit says to the churches, this message is for us today. This book has a number of authors, God, Jesus Christ, John, and here the Spirit (see 1:1-2, 11). The book must

be spiritually interpreted, we need to discern what the Spirit is say to the churches. For the Spirits involvement in this book see also 1:4, 3:1, 4:2, 4:5, 5:6, 14:13, 17:3, 21:10, 22:17.

v7 - *To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.* - Once again this is a personal rather than a corporate challenge. In the letter to each church there is a promise to the one who overcomes, meaning he who conquers, Rom 8:37. From the contents of the letter, the person who overcomes is the one who repents of his lack of love and finds his first love again. The letters to the seven churches are very much in harmony with the rest of the book, the promises to those who overcome always refer in all seven letters to something mentioned later in the book, for example, the tree of life in Rev 22:2. In 22:14 those who wash their robes have the right to the tree of life and enter into the city. And in 22:19 if anyone takes words away from Revelation God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city. The paradise of God is also mentioned in Luke 23:43, 2 Cor 12:2. In 22:2 the tree of life is on each side of the river of life which flowed from the throne of God and the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city which is the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is therefore the paradise of God. The tree of life takes its water from the river of life whose source is Christ. The fruit of the tree of life confers eternal life on those who eat it (Gen 3:22).

Rewards are part of God's purposes in motivating his people and in Revelation we see the rewards of the overcomers and the rewards of the cowardly, one leads to eternal life the other leads to the second death. Lang remarks that Ephesus had toiled and endured, and as to the body of their labours, the external efforts, they had not grown weary. But the inner life had felt the strain; in heart affection to Christ they had lapsed and fallen. The inner man needed renewing. He who repented, and found again this inward invigoration of love to Christ, and so overcame personally the general defeat, should be blessed correspondingly in the day of reward -- he should find permanent strength and satisfaction in the fruit of the tree of life (Lang).

13.2. Smyrna (2:8)

Rev 2:8 "To the angel of the church in Smyrna write:

These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. 9 I know your afflictions and your poverty--yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.

11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.

Key phrase: Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Smyrna is today called the city of Izmir, it lies about 35 miles north of Ephesus on the Aegean coast of Turkey. It has an excellent harbour. It had a strong allegiance to Rome and in 195 BC it became the first city in the ancient world to build a temple in honour of Dea Roma. Later in 23 BC, Smyrna won permission to build a temple to the emperor Tiberius. The strong allegiance to Rome plus a large Jewish population, which was actively hostile to the Christians, made it exceptionally difficult to live as a Christian in Smyrna. The most famous martyrdom of the early church fathers was of the elderly Polycarp, the 'twelfth martyr in Smyrna', who, upon his refusal to acknowledge Caesar as Lord, was placed upon a pyre to be burned (Mounce). There is still an active church in the city today.

v8 - *"To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again* - This a repetition of his self designation, see Rev 1:17-18. He is the first and the last word in human history and therefore is sovereign over what is in between (xxxx). Through him the world was created and human history will end when he comes again. He died and came to life again and hence conquered death, he is the firstborn of many brothers, this should be of comfort to those in Smyrna who are about to be persecuted and some will die.

v9 - *I know your afflictions and your poverty--yet you are rich!* - For the other churches (except Pergamum) Christ says 'I know your deeds' but here he says 'I know your affliction and your poverty - yet you are rich'. They were physically poor but spiritually rich, contrast this with the Laodiceans who thought that they were rich

but were poor, 3:17 (Jam 2:5). Physically the church in Smyrna suffered from persecution from the Jews and they were poor, they had few luxuries and possessions, yet spiritually they were rich in the sight of Christ. Jesus sees their affliction, he knows about it, this must be of comfort to this persecuted church.

v9 - *I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.* - Again he says 'I know the slander...' he sees their situation, he is aware of it and its injustice, once again this must bring comfort to this church. These Jews follow Satan in slandering God's people, the word Satan means accuser (12:10), but the Devil means slanderer. Behind these Jews stands Satan; it is he, not Abraham, who is their spiritual father, John 8:44, (Wilcock). Slander, that is telling lies to blacken the character of people, is one of Satan's weapons against the church, see the river of lies, Rev 12:15. Again in the letter to Philadelphia there is a reference to those who claim but to be Jews but are liars, they are actually a synagogue of Satan (3:9). See also other examples of Jewish antagonism in Acts 13:45, 14:2, 17:5, 18:6, 25:7. Paul defines a real Jew not as one physically circumcised but as one circumcised in the heart by the Spirit (Rom 2:29) and who believes God just as Abraham believed God (Gal 3:6-7).

v10 - *Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.* - Here we find John's first warning concerning the persecution of the Church, the second occurs in the letter to the church in Pergamum. First Christ counsels them not to be afraid of what they are about to suffer. Christ by telling them beforehand is indicating that, as the all knowing God, it is part of his plan and under his control. In John 16:33 Jesus tells his disciples that in world they will have tribulation, but to take courage; he has overcome the world, cf. 3:21, 5:5. In Luke 12:4 Jesus warns us not to fear man who can kill the body but do no more, we should fear God who, when the body is dead, can cast us into hell. 1 Pet 3:13-18 tells us not to be afraid if we suffer for doing right, we have the example of Jesus who died for doing right but he was raised again (cf. 1 Pet 2:19-25, Isa 51:7-8). Ten days is a limited, but complete, period of time known by God, note that Daniel asked to be tested for ten days to see whether he would still look well on a diet of vegetables (Dan 1:12). The devil will put some of them in prison to test them, not the devil himself but using his human subjects just as he uses the beast to wage war against God's servants later, 11:7, 13:7. The Lord encourages them to be faithful by stressing the reward that this will bring them just as he did in Mat 5:10-12 in which those who are persecuted because of Him will have a great reward in heaven. There were in fact ten periods of persecution during the time of the

Roman Empire until the 'conversion' of Constantine in 316 AD (Hill, see also Fox's book of martyrs). Christ is aware of what is about to happen to them, but he does not intervene because it is for their ultimate good that they be tested even unto death so that they will receive the great reward of the crown of life spoken of by James. Just as Jesus overcame by dying, so the saints overcome by being faithful even to the point of death. The church of Pergamum did not renounce their faith in the face of martyrdom, 2:13. The fact that Christ died and came to life again (v8) also ensures that even though they die they will live again.

v10 - *Be faithful, even to the point of death and I will give you the crown of life.* - By dying they will gain their (eternal) life (John 12:25). He who stands firm to the end will be saved. Martyrdom is a common theme in the book, but there is also a promise that he will receive the crown of (eternal) life. Jesus had already conquered death, he came to life again, verse 8. They will be tested, this is in harmony with the rest of scripture, after which they will receive the crown of life, Jam 1:12. They must be faithful unto death to receive the crown of life, a wonderful Christian paradox, John 12:25. The word for crown used here is the victors crown (*stephanos*), rather than the royal crown (*diadema*), which is appropriate for those who have overcome i.e. won the victory. The crown of life is eternal life, which is signified by the water of life and the tree of life later in Rev 22:1. Here in one line is the message of the book of Revelation: Be faithful, even to the point of death and I will give you the crown of life. This message is further expanded in the death of the two witnesses (11:7) and later when the beast wages war on the saints and overcomes them (13:7), but in both cases God vindicates his servants because the two witnesses are raised to life again (11:11) and we find those who are victorious over the beast praising God in heaven (15:2).

v11 - *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.* - Note the formula: 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches', we need to heed what is being said here. This verse again emphasises the reward for being faithful, even to the point of death, the far worse second death will not hurt them (21:7-8). The second death is contrasted with the crown of life of v10, the second death is lake of fire, Rev 20:14. It takes only a short while to endure the pain of the first death even as a martyr, the pain of the second death lasts for eternity. Those who endure to the end (Mat 10:22, 2 Tim 2:12) and are faithful to the death will be saved from the lake of fire. Note how the saints in 12:11 overcome Satan, who is mentioned here as the devil v10, 'by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death'.

13.3. Pergamum (2:12)

Rev 2:12 "To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. 13 I know where you live--where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city--where Satan lives. 14 Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality. 15 Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 16 Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. 17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.

Key phrase: I know where you live--where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name.

This city is where Satan has his throne, the serpent, the symbol of healing of the pagan god Asclepius was everywhere in the city. It was also a centre of Caesar worship, it had a temple dedicated to Rome and it also had many heathen temples.

v12 - *"To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword.* - The double-edged sword is a reference to the Word of God, Heb 4:16 see also Rev 1:16, 19:15. He will use this sword to fight against the Balaamites and Nicolaitans in v16.

v13 - *I know where you live--where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city--where Satan lives.* - In the case of the other church (except Smyrna) Jesus says 'I know your deed' here he says 'I know where you live--where Satan has his throne', he knows that they are living where Satan seemingly reigns, this must bring comfort to the church. Pergamum was a centre of both pagan religion and Caesar worship, Asclepius the serpent God of healing was worshipped there and so the city can truly be described as one where Satan reigns, i.e. has his throne. However this is precisely the place where Christians are to witness, c.f. 'Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified' (11:8).

The Greek word used here for witness is *martyrs*, thus by the witness of his life and death Antipas bore witness to Jesus, becoming an example for much of the book later. Jesus knows our circumstances, he knows that the church at Pergamum is where Satan has his throne, he knows about the martyrdom of Antipas this should bring comfort to the saints. Jesus is the faithful witness (1:5), Antipas is one who followed the example of Jesus and remained faithful unto death (2:10, 14:12), just as Christ remained faithful until death, and is called here my faithful witness; being faithful under persecution is one of the key messages of revelation. But after death Christ rose again, just as the two witnesses came to life again (11:11). In Revelation we find those who died for the sake of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus, but they are alive in heaven and will live for eternity as they drink from the waters of life. Just as Christ's death brings many sons to glory so the death of the martyrs is a necessary part of God's plan for the world. As Caird states martyrdom is price God's people pay for God's patience with the world. The martyrs are the seedbed of the church and the death of the martyrs acts as a testimony to men and will result in some people coming to repentance. The testimony of God's people through their life and death is a part of God's plan, just as the life and death of Jesus was.

v14 - *Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality.* - While the church coped with the external threat of persecution it did not deal with the threat from within the church. They had been infiltrated by Satan's servants who introduce destructive heresies. The book of Revelation is largely about the external enemies of the church yet we must not forget the false prophets within the church. The word of God warns us about false prophets, Mat 7:15, 24:24, 2 Pet 2:1, 1 John 4:1. In the letters to the seven churches Jesus is purifying his church so that it will cope with the coming persecution. For Balaam the false prophet see Numbers 22-25:3, 31:16, 2 Pet 2:15. He enticed God's people to commit sexual immorality and bow down and eat food offered to idols, Num 31:16. These sins all involve spiritual and physical compromise with the world, the church of God is to be blameless and holy (11:2, 14:4-5, 20:6, 21:2). Idols are mentioned because God wants to purify his church of anything that resembles idolatry (2 Cor 6:12-7:1 cf. Rev 18:4) which is the fundamental sin of those who worship the beast and his image (cf. 13:14-15, 14:7, 9-12).

v14 - *eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality* - These are the same things mentioned in the letter to Thyatira, there they tolerated the woman Jezebel, who called herself a prophetess, but who by her teaching misleads God's

servants into sexual immorality and eating food sacrificed to idols, Rev 2:20. Paul covers these topics in 1 Cor they are also mentioned in Acts 15:28, these are clearly matters that troubled the Christians of the time, see Acts 15:28-29, 1 Cor 6:18, 8:1. They involve compromise with the world, the church is to be holy and separate from the world, in the world but not of it. John was clearly concerned by idolatry (1 John 5:21).

v15 - *Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.* - For the relationship between the Nicolaitans and Balaam see Rev 2:6 in the letter to the Ephesians. They permitted compromise with the world. This heresy is one that all God's people are tempted with throughout church history, it is nothing new. Another OT figure, Jezebel, is used while describing the same sins in Rev 2:20 again she compromises with the world. The saints are to be pure for they are the bride of Christ, Rev 14:4. False teaching is one of Satan's main weapons against the church, see his river of lies (12:15). If he cannot destroy the church from without he will try to destroy it from within, in 2 Cor 11:13-15 Paul talks about Satan's servants masquerading as apostles of Christ.

v16 - *Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.* - Christ first commands them to repent, that is the whole church for allowing this sin within and in particular those actually committing the sin, but if they do not then He will fight against them, that is those who hold to the teachings of the Nicolaitans, not against the church as a whole. He will fight against them with the word of God, compare with the description of Christ at his second coming in Rev 19:15 in which he will strike down the nations with the sword that comes out of his mouth. This could therefore be a reference to the second coming which is also mentioned in the letter to the church in Sardis (3:3), or it could refer to some other judgement.

v17 - *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.* - Note the formula: 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches', we need to heed what is being said here. Manna was the daily food for the Israelites in the desert (Exo 16:31, Psa 78:24), it alludes to the proper heavenly food that is Christ (John 6:57-58) in contrast to the food offered to idols. There could also be a connection to the fruit of the tree of life, 'If anyone eats of this bread (i.e. Christ), he will live forever' (John 6:51). In the ancient law courts white and black stones were used for registering the verdicts of Juries, black for condemnation and white for

acquittal. This would mean that the Christian is acquitted in God's sight because of the work of Jesus Christ (Barclay). In the ancient world there was a common custom to carry a charm or amulet. It could be just a pebble on which there was a sacred name. To know a God's name was to have a certain power over him and to summon him in times of difficulty. It was thought to be doubly effective if no one else knew the name inscribed on it (Barclay). Lang remarks that Pergamum was tempted to eat defiled food, but he who defeated this temptation should eat of the sacred food of heaven, Christ, now hidden from men. Each who held fast the profession of His name, when it meant death to do this, shall receive His right to use His new name in the kingdom. Isaiah said that God would give his people a new name (Isa 62:2). As well as a new name in Revelation there are references to the new Jerusalem (3:12, 21:2), a new song (5:9, 14:3), a new heaven and new earth (21:1) and in 21:5 God says 'I am making everything new'. The new name would be appropriate to a new life and status in God's new creation and society. The old order of things has passed away, the saints will live in a new body and the new name signifies the demise of the old life lived in a decaying body amidst a corrupt world and the start of a new incorruptible life. The new song could only be learned by those redeemed from the earth and the new name is part of ones reward for remaining faithful to Jesus while on the old earth. It is interesting to note that Sarai, Abram and Israel all were given a new name by God to denote a change from their old life to a life after some new revelation of God (Gen 17:5, 15, 32:28).

13.4. Thyatira (2:18)

Rev 2:18 "To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. 19 I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first. 20 Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. 21 I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. 22 So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. 23 I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds. 24 Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you): 25 Only hold on to what you have until I come.

26 To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations--

27 'He will rule them with an iron sceptre; he will dash them to pieces like pottery' --

just as I have received authority from my Father. 28 I will also give him the morning star. 29 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Key phrase: Only hold on to what you have until I come.

v18 - *"To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. - Here he clearly identifies himself with the 'someone "like a son of man"' from 1:13 as the Son of God. His blazing eyes see everything, this repeats the description found in 1:14-15. The church in Thyatira was in a city, which was a centre for the worship of Apollo, known as the 'son of God' because he was supposed to be the son of Zeus. The message is therefore sent from the true 'Son of God'. Thyatira was a centre for making the image of the all-seeing eye, little glass images, which are still on sale today to tourists (Hill). Thyatira was famous for the manufacture of purple dye, and numerous references are found in secular literature of the period to the trade guilds which manufactured cloth (Swete quoted by Walvoord). Lydia was a dealer in purple*

cloth from the city of Thyatira, Acts 16:14. Purple cloth was only worn by the wealthy (Luke 16:19, Rev 17:4)

v19 - *I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.* - Compare this church to the Ephesians who lost their first love, and the almost dead Sardis. Notice that their love produced service and their faith produced perseverance, they were doing more than they did at first, theirs was not a dead faith, it was a growing faith (cf. 1 Thess 1:3).

v20 - *Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols.* - Despite their growing love and faith they tolerated evil in the form of Jezebel in their midst, she calls herself a prophetess but is in fact a false prophetess (Jezebel is transliterated from the Hebrew 'Izevel meaning, ironically, chaste [Zodhiates]). Compare this church to the Ephesians who did not tolerate wicked men (Rev 2:2), Ephesus had truth and lost their love, but they had love but lost their love of the truth and permitted impure doctrine to be taught in the church resulting in impure acts. They had not guarded the truth entrusted to them, the church leaders had not guarded their flock as those in Ephesus had. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth (1 Cor 13:6). Doctrinal error leads to immorality but the truth leads to godliness (Tit 1:1). Sexual immorality and eating food sacrificed to idols are the same sins are mentioned at Pergamum. Jezebel brought idolatry into Ahab's life, she urged him on in evil (1 King 21:25-26), especially idolatry and persecuted the prophets (2 King 9:7), note that as with Balaam in the letter to Pergamum in Rev 2:14 a famous OT figure is used to heighten the imagery. He also uses the word Jezebel because that is how God sees the prophetess. Jezebel killed the true prophets of God (1 King 18:4) and by her teaching here she is bringing spiritual death to those who follow her.

Since sexual immorality and eating sacrificed food to idols are mentioned in Acts 15:20 and in Corinthians 6:18, 8:1, we should take it literally. Eating food offered to idols would be a temptation with respect to the trade guilds, which would have feasts involving food offered to idols and possibly sexual immorality. Once again spiritual compromise is warned against; James 4:4 warns that friendship with the world is hatred towards God, it is a form of spiritual adultery. In 18:4 the saints are warned to come out of Babylon so that they will not share in her sins or her punishment. The reason for his intolerance of evil is that he wants his bride to be pure cf. 14:4-5, Eph 5:27. See also comments on 2:14.

v21 - *I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling.* - Here we see God's patience and man's response. Delayed punishment does not mean that punishment does not come in the end (xxxx).

v22 - *So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways.* - They do not physically commit adultery with her, that is Jezebel, but they follow her example. She is repaid according to her deeds (v 23) as are those who follow her, this is conditional since they can repent. Contrast the bed of suffering with the bed of adultery (Ladd). Thyatira was famous for its purple cloth which the harlot woman Babylon also wears in Rev 17:4 and in 18:4 God commands his people to come out of her 'so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues'.

v23 - *I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.* - This punishment will make all the churches aware that Jesus sees all and is intimately concerned with what they do. 'I am he who searches hearts and minds', see v18 'whose eyes are like blazing fire'. He repays each person according to what they have done (Psa 62:12, Isa 62:11, Jer 17:10, also Mat 16:27, 1 Cor 4:5, Rev 20:12, 22:12), in this verse judgement of her deeds is in this life. The similar references later in Revelation refer to the judgement of earthly deeds which occurs after death, Rev 20:12 in which after death each person was judged by what they had done and 22:12, in which rewards are according to what people have done, indicating the importance of deeds done in this life, which is one of the important messages of Revelation, see also 14:13 in which 'their deeds follow them'. We take our deeds with us into the next life to be judged and we are rewarded or punished.

v24 - *Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you):* - To those who resist sexual immorality and eating food offered to idols, and do not compromise with the world he does impose any other burden on them, see Acts 15:28. To learn Satan's so called deep secrets one has to plumb the depths of wickedness in order to appreciate God's grace.

v25 - *Only hold on to what you have until I come.* - He only commands them to hold onto what they have (their deeds, love and faith, their service and perseverance) until he comes, the second coming or death whichever is earlier, Heb 3:14. He also told the church of Philadelphia to hold on to what they had, so that no one would take their

crown (3:11). Compare this with John's injunction in 2 John 1:8 to 'Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully'.

v26 - *To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations* - This is the only instance where overcoming is defined in the specific terms of doing His will. The saints must follow the example of Jesus who did his Father's will to the end, even to the cross (John 4:34, 6:38, Mat 26:39). We see the saints having authority over nations in 20:4 when the martyrs reign with Christ for a thousand years. In Mat 10:22 we are warned to stand firm to the end during persecution and we will be saved. We see hints of the saints authority over nations in 1 Cor 6:3 they judge angels, in Rev 5:10 they reign on the earth, in Mat 19:28 they judge the twelve tribes of Israel. There is an echo from Psa 2:8 here 'Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession', v9 of which is quoted in the next verse.

v27 - *'He will rule them with an iron sceptre; he will dash them to pieces like pottery' -- just as I have received authority from my Father.* - This is quoted from the Messianic psalm 2, verse 9, it is used also in Rev 12:5 of Jesus at his birth and Rev 19:15 when Christ comes again. To rule with an iron sceptre means to destroy rather than rule sternly. Lang remarks that Thyatira was dominated by a false seducing prophetess. He who resisted this usurping tyrant, and maintained the crown rights of Christ as Head of His Church, shall himself be a ruler in the day of Christ. We have Jesus as our example of an overcomer, see also the letter to Laodicea in which those who overcome will sit with him on his throne just as he overcame and sat with his Father on his throne (3:21).

v28 - *I will also give him the morning star* - The Morning star refers to Jesus himself, see Rev 22:16, in which he is described as the bright morning star, and in 2 Pet 1:19 it refers to the second coming when 'the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts', Isa 14:12 speaks of the morning star as 'son of the dawn' but referring to Lucifer. The morning star is figurative of the approach of the day when He will appear as the 'sun of righteousness' (Vine). There are other scriptures which depict the righteous shining like stars (Dan 12:3, Phil 2:15). Thus they will receive a special interest in Christ himself.

v29 - *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.* - Note the formula: 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches', we all need to heed what is being said here.

13.5. Sardis (3:1)

3:1 *"To the angel of the church in Sardis write:*

These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. 2 Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. 3 Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.

4 Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy.

5 He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels. 6 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Key phrase: Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die,

Sardis was about 50 miles east of Smyrna and 30 miles south east of Thyatira. It was a wealthy city and most of the city practised pagan worship with its mystery cults and secret religious societies. It had a magnificent temple of Artemis. Its people were idolaters and worshipped the mother goddess, Cybele, which included orgies during festivals held in her honour (Walvoord). Sardis thought it was secure but twice in the history of Sardis the acropolis had fallen to the enemy due to lack of vigilance of its defenders (Mounce).

v1 - *"To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.* - There is no commendation because there was nothing to commend. In 1:16 we see that he holds the seven stars in his right hand, which are the seven angels of the seven churches. In 5:6 he is described as having seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the world, the number seven indicating completeness. He is the one who knows the state of his church, he knows his sheep, John 10:14. The one who holds the seven spirits of God knows their heart and he sees them as dead while the world saw them as alive, see comments on 1:4. The contrast of the word alive and dead is a stinging rebuke, intended to wake them up. They had the outward form of religion but had lost the

inward reality of Christ in them. The next verse shows them not to be completely dead, but rather asleep.

v2 - *Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God.* - Spiritually they were asleep, Christ saw them as dead and so he commands them to Wake up! A better translation is 'show yourself watchful' (Mounce). They were like the five virgins who took their lamps with them to meet the bridegroom but did not take any oil (which stands for the Holy Spirit), when the bridegroom arrived they were not ready, Mat 25:1-13. We must be ready for Christ's return, which is referred to in the next verse (see also Mat 24:42 ff.). Their deeds were not complete, i.e. perfect, in God's sight, they failed to come up to God's standard, the implication in verse 4 of the soiled clothes is that sin was involved, it could more simply be that of neglect.

v3 - *Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent.* - They were to remember the word of the gospel that gave them salvation obey it and repent (1 Cor 15:2). Clearly they had forgotten what the gospel meant, and had stopped growing and bearing fruit (Col 1:4-6). They needed once again to hear the gospel of their salvation and to respond to its message afresh. The historicist interpretation would point to Luther as an example of one who heard the gospel afresh and a new vibrant church was formed. The key to their state is to hear the word of God afresh. cf. 2 Pet 1:9. They also need to obey the word, they need to be doers of the word and not just hearers only (Jam 1:22). They also need to repent of their previous attitude, they must change their attitude, wake up and strengthen what remains.

v3 - *But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.* - 'I come like a thief' is a reference to his unexpected second coming (cf. 16:15, 1 Thess 5:2-4, 2 Pet 3:10), he warns his church to keep watch, see the warning in Mat 24:42 to keep watch, 'because you do not know on what day your Lord will come'. This is a reminder to them of the lack of vigilance of those in Sardis who were twice unexpectedly overcome by the enemy. It can also be taken to be a reference to his unexpected coming upon them in judgement (Mounce), but it is more likely the second coming he has in view (see the warnings in Mat 24:36-25:46). We should see this as a warning to the church to be awake at His return, this is in line with the message of Revelation which is to ensure that the church is ready for his return (1:3, 16:15, 18:4, 19:7, 22:7, 12-14).

v4 - *Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy.* - These few people in Sardis had not compromised with the world. White garments indicate holiness, white robes are worn by the great multitude in heaven, 7:9, white clothes are worn by the armies of heaven who accompany Christ at his return. The Laodiceans are counselled to buy white clothes to wear to cover their shameful nakedness, 3:18. In 19:8 fine linen, bright and clean, stands for the righteous acts of the saints. Therefore soiled clothes refer to sin. In connection with his Second Coming Jesus says 'Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed' (16:15).

v5 - *He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels* - He will be dressed in white, i.e. forgiven or holy or clean, as were the twenty four elders. For book of life see Psa 69:3, Phil 4:3, Mat 10:32, Luke 12:8-9, Rev 13:8, 17:8, 20:12, 20:15, 21:27. As early as Exo 32:32 Moses asks to be blotted out of God's book if God does not forgive the sin of Israel. Revelation is about two groups of people those whose names are written in the book of life and those who are not. Lang remarks that Sardis was defiled and dying. Each who kept himself undefiled now shall walk in pure white garments in the day of glory. He that triumphed over spiritual death shall never lose spiritual life: his name shall be retained in the book of life. The threat here is that if they do not wake up their names will be blotted out of the book of life.

v6 - *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.* - Note the formula: 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches', we all need to heed what is being said here.

13.6. Philadelphia (3:7)

Rev 3:7 "To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:

These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. 8 I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. 9 I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars--I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. 10 Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.

11 I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

12 Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name.

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

Key phrase: I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name

v7 - *"To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.* - The martyrs in 6:10 also call the Lord by the title 'Sovereign Lord, holy and true'. Jesus holds the key of David, quoted from Isa 22:22, that is absolute power and authority over who enters his kingdom, see Rev 1:18. Eliakim the palace administrator, was to be robed with authority and given the key to the house of David (Isa 22:20-22, 36:3), he is the one who decides who will see the king. The strength of Christ contrasts with the little strength of the Philadelphians. The city's name means 'brotherly love'.

v8 - *I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.* - Commendation, there is no rebuke. Jesus is the one who walks among the churches and sees. Philadelphia, meanwhile, was on the main trade route between East and West, a situation that presented the believers with an open door for

the gospel into the region beyond. Although they were a tiny group with little strength, theirs was a door that God had provided and therefore no one could shut (Hill). They had kept his word and not denied Jesus, therefore he will acknowledge them before their enemies.

v9 - *I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars--I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you.* - A synagogue of Satan is also referred to in the letter to Smyrna (2:9), the Jews follow Satan, whose name means slanderer, in slandering God's people, clearly the Jews in particular were troubling these early churches as Acts demonstrates, Acts 13:45, 14:2, 17:5, 18:6, 25:7.

v9 - *acknowledge that I have loved you* - This wonderful fact of Christ's love for us is central to our faith, (Rev 1:5, 3:19, Eph 5:2). These Jews considered themselves and themselves only to be God's people and therefore loved by God, they despised the Philadelphians who they considered to be Gentiles and therefore out of Gods covenants. Jesus is saying that he will vindicate his elect and demonstrate to these slanderers who are really his beloved people. Note that Philadelphia in Greek means brotherly love, Jesus will demonstrate who are really his brothers. The word for Jesus' love here is *agapao* that refers to a self-giving love Jesus has for his people, which he demonstrated by dying for them. There are a number of OT references to God vindicating his people in front of their enemies (Isa 43:4, 45:14, 49:23, 60:14).

v10 - *Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.* - The hour of trial is mentioned in Dan 12:1, Mark 13:19 and it is likely that it is depicted by the seven trumpets and Ch 7-19 later in Revelation. The hour of trial is for the world not for the church, which will be spiritually but not physically protected from it. The spiritual protection of the church is indicated in the sealing of the 144,000 (7:3), see also God's care of the woman in the desert (12:6, 14). The best example of this is the fifth trumpet in which the locusts are specifically told only to harm those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads (9:4 cf. Isa 18:3). The term 'the inhabitants of the earth', which is similar to 'those who live on the earth' (see 11:10, 14:6) always refers to the world not to the church (Rev 6:10, 8:13, 11:10, 13:8, 13:14, 17:8). This promise is not just for the church at Philadelphia but for all that fulfil the requirement of the promise, which is to endure patiently (see 1:9, 13:10, 14:12). Just as Satan tests the church in Smyrna through persecution (2:10), so God tests the world through trial or adversity. The meaning of the word 'keep' (Gk.

tereo) is to guard, to watch over, so that the idea of this verse is preservation through the hour of trial.

v11 - *I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.* - 'I am coming soon' is a reference to His Second Coming, see also Rev 3:3. As with Thyatira he imposes no further burden on them except to hold on to what they have, Rev 2:24-25 cf. 2 John 8. The word for crown used here is the victors crown (*stephanos*), rather than the royal crown (*diadema*), so they are to hold on to what they have so that no one will take their victory.

v12 - *Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name.* - Here we have an abundance of promises to those who overcome. Four times Jesus refers to something belonging to or coming from 'my God' a rare expression in the scriptures (cf. John 20:17, Rev 3:2). The church is the pillar of truth, the temple of my God is the church. The 144,000 in Rev 14:1 have the name of Christ and of God on their foreheads. The New Jerusalem, is the church, coming down from heaven, see Rev 21:2, in Ezekiel's vision the name of the city is 'THE LORD IS THERE' (Ezek 48:35) cf. Rev 21:3, 22:3. The temple of God will be the New Jerusalem because that is where God will dwell. What is being said here is that he who overcomes will be permanently part (i.e. a pillar) of the New Jerusalem, he will belong to God and to Christ, and he will be intimately known. Lang remarks that a synagogue of Satan opposed Philadelphia, but each who stood aloof should be given a permanent place in the *temple* of God. He who did not deny Christ's name on earth shall bear His new name for ever.

v12 - *and I will also write on him my new name.* - New name, this is the same as the new name written on the white stone (Rev 2:17), it indicates a special intimacy (Rev 22:4). Just as there is a new Jerusalem, and a new heaven and new earth so they have a new name. After the destruction of the city Philadelphia by an earthquake in AD 17 it was given aid by the emperor Tiberias. In appreciation it changed its name to Neocaesarea (the new city of Caesar), thus the church knew what it was to be given a new name, only their new name will be named after their king not Caesar.

v13 - *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.* - Note the formula: 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches', we all need to heed what is being said here.

13.7. Laodicea (3:14)

Rev 3:14 "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. 15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! 16 So, because you are lukewarm--neither hot nor cold--I am about to spit you out of my mouth. 17 You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. 18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. 19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. 20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. 21 To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. 22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Key phrase: Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

The church at Laodicea were to read Paul's letter to the Colossians, Col 4:16, they had not met Paul personally, Col 2:1. The city had a profitable business from the production of wool cloth and when it was destroyed by an earthquake in AD 60 it was able to rebuild itself without outside help (Walvoord). It had a widely known medical school and produced an eye-salve (Mounce). It got its water from hot springs almost 6 miles away and by the time it got to Laodicea it would have been luke warm. It was also a centre for banking. The church lived within this affluent society and the attitudes of its citizens rubbed off onto the church.

v14 - *"To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. - Jesus Christ is the Amen for in him is the certainty of the fulfilment of God's promises, 2 Cor 1:20. It is frequently used as a refrain of agreement by God's people to a doxology, 'so shall it be', Rev 1:6-7, 7:12, 19:4. For faithful and true witness see 1:5, see also Rev 19:11, the rider on the white horse is Christ whose name is Faithful and True. Revelation shows us that Christ is the ruler of God's creation, in 1:5 He is the ruler of the kings*

of the earth and this is demonstrated later in the book, 6:15, 19:19-21. The NASB version has instead of 'the ruler of God's creation', 'the Beginning of the creation of God', this is more in line with the book, see Col 1:16, Rev 13:8, 21:6, 22:13.

v15 - *I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!* - He who walks among the churches sees their deeds. The water supply for the city of Laodicea came from hot springs some distance away so that it was lukewarm. There is more hope for the cold anti-Christian, such as Saul, than these lukewarm Christian who has lost his hunger for God.

v16 - *So, because you are lukewarm--neither hot nor cold--I am about to spit you out of my mouth.* - Literally he is about to vomit them out of his mouth. This shows his revulsion of these lukewarm Christians. The remedy is shown in verse 18 in which he counsels them to buy gold, white clothes and salve.

v17 - *You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.* - Their material wealth had blinded them to their true spiritual bankruptcy. The world had invaded this church, compare the similarity of her attitude with that of the harlot who said 'I sit as queen; I am not a widow, and I will never mourn' (18:7). It is frequently noted that Laodicea prided itself on three things: financial wealth, an extensive textile industry, and a popular eye-salve, which was exported around the world (Mounce). The church thought it was rich in her own eyes, but in the eyes of Christ it was poor. In Hosea 12:8 Ephraim boasts, 'I am very rich; I have become wealthy. With all my wealth they will not find in me any iniquity or sin'. Compare the Laodiceans with the church in Smyrna who were afflicted and poor but in the Lord's eyes were rich. Their attitude was similar to that of the Pharisees who thought that they were healthy but were in fact sick (Mat 9:10-13), they thought that they could see but were blind (John 9:40-41, Mat 15:14). While they were not Pharisees their condition is similar which is why the Lord rebukes them. Their condition is dangerous because they do not realise it.

v18 - *I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.* - Christ's counsel to them is in three parts: to buy gold so that they become rich instead of being wretched, pitiful and poor; white clothes to cover their nakedness and salve for their blind eyes so that they can see.

v18 - *I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire* - This is gospel buying without price (Isa 55:1, Rev 21:6), true riches without price, i.e. salvation that is free. In 22:6 God offers freely to the thirsty to drink from the spring of the water of life, in 22:17 the invitation to the thirsty is given by the church to take the free gift of the water of life. The Laodiceans were relying on their own riches without faith in Christ. The gold represents faith in Christ, see 1 Pet 1:7, rather than trusting in their own wealth which perishes. They can only get this gold from Christ. They cannot take their wealth with them after death, but their labour of faith follows them (14:13).

v18 - *white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness;* - Originally Adam and Eve were naked but felt no shame (Gen 2:25), but then after they sinned they were ashamed of their nakedness and sewed fig leaves to cover their nakedness (Gen 3:7). In 16:15 at the Second Coming Christ calls blessed is 'he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed.' In 3:4-5 those in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes will walk with Christ dressed in white because they are worthy. Those in Laodicea did not even have any clothes, they were naked, and they have to come to Christ to get clothes to cover their sins. Joshua the high priest was dressed in filthy clothes in Zec 3:3-4, he was given new rich garments after his sin was taken away. These clothes are the white clothes of righteousness (Isa 61:10). Throughout Revelation white garments stand for righteousness (6:11, 7:9, 7:14, 19:8, 19:14), in 7:14 they are said to have 'washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'

v18 - *and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.* - They do not even realise their nakedness and need their spiritual eyes opened so that they can see their condition. Laodicea was famous for its eye salve. Once again they must buy this from Christ.

v19 - *Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent* - One of the tenderest lines in Revelation. Those whom I love... the Lord disciplines those he loves, who are his children, Prov 3:12, Heb 12:5-8. Note that despite their pitiful condition they had not ceased to be part of the church of Christ, the same applies to the other churches. The Greek word or love used here is *phileo*, in all the other references to love *agapao* is used (1:5, 2:4, 2:19, 3:9, 12:11, 20:9) the only exception being 22:15.

v20 - *Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.* - The tense indicates a continual knocking. The 'anyone' indicates a universal but individual appeal. An individual needs to hear Christ knocking, that is His voice, and then open the door of

his heart to let Christ come in. The meal indicates fellowship with Christ (John 14:23) and anticipates the heavenly banquet later, the wedding supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:9). Jesus said that whoever hears his voice and believes God has eternal life and will not be condemned, he has crossed over from death to life (John 5:24). He who belongs to God hears what God says (John 8:47).

v21 - *To him who overcomes. I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne* - This verse emphasizes one of the key points in Revelation, Jesus overcame as the Lamb by being obedient even to death on a cross and he gives himself as an example of one who overcame. He obtained victory by being obedient to death on the cross (Phil 2:8-9) and hence is exalted as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Revelation demonstrates that the same obedience to death is required by the saints, who are conquered by the beast (13:7) and are martyred because they refuse to worship the image of the beast (13:15) but who we see later in 15:2 as victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name. Peter points to Christ as our example of one who suffered unjustly even to die on the cross (1 Pet 2:13-25, 3:9 ff.) but who has now gone into 'heaven and is at God's right hand--with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him' (1 Pet 3:22). Those who suffer with him will reign with him (5:10, 20:4-6, 22:5). Lang remarks that Laodicea was a poor lunatic, sitting in squalor, but boasting of fancied riches. He who, by humbling himself, overcame this pitiful pride, shall sit at table now with the Lord, and hereafter shall sit with Him in glory on His throne.

v22 - *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*" - Note the formula: 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches', we all need to heed what is being said here.

Scene 2: A vision of heaven and the seven seals.

The vision of heaven: (4:1)

Twenty four elders (4:4)

The scroll and the Lamb (5:1)

The seven seals (6:1)

The 144,000 sealed (7:1)

The great multitude in white robes (7:9).

14. The vision of heaven (4:1)

4:1 After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." 2 At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. 3 And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne.

John sees a door standing open in heaven and is invited to come up to heaven to see what must take place after the letters to the seven churches. This introduces a new section that shows the future from heaven's perspective, the previous section concerned the current situation of the churches. Human history is now viewed from the point of view of Him who is the beginning and end of history. It shows history as it affects the church, which is the people of God, and the world. We find God on his throne at the very centre of heaven surrounded by the living creatures and elders giving him his rightful worship as creator, it is fitting that our view of the future should start with a view of God in control. The purpose of this vision is to show that God is in control of human history and in particular the history of the church. Like the prologue to Job, Revelation permits us to see into the invisible realm of heaven and we find God seated on his throne; later we find the conquering Lamb on the same throne receiving the adulation of the universe; later we see Satan cast out of heaven to the earth making war on the saints through his henchmen the two beasts. Revelation answers the question most often asked during periods of persecution, 'where is God in all this?' when His enemies appear to be triumphing over the church. Thus at the start of these heavenly visions we see God firmly in control of the universe. Some authors postulate that from now on until chapter 21 the church is not in view (see Walvoord).

For background see: Exo 19, 25-27. For the tabernacle and its furnishings and articles, see also Heb 9:1-8

Comparison of earthly temple with heavenly sanctuary:

OT	Rev
Holy of Holies (Exo 26:30-35)	The throne of God (4:2)
Seven branched lampstand Exo 25:31-40	Seven lamps of fire before the throne (4:5)
Bronze basin Exo 30:18	Sea of glass (4:6)
Cherubim over mercy seat Exo 25:17-21	Four living creatures (4:6)
Priests	Elders (kings and priests) (4:4)
Altar of burnt offerings Exo 31:9	Altar (6:9-11)
Incense altar Exo 31:8	Incense altar (8:3-5)
Ark of covenant	Ark of the covenant (11:19)

v1 - *After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."* - This section opens in a similar way to Ezekiel's visions, '... the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God' Ezek 1:1, he too was in exile. Likewise in 19:11 John saw heaven opened. 'After this' refers to the vision of the risen Christ and the letters to the seven churches. The voice he had first heard speaking like a trumpet, 1:10, was that of Christ or an angel, but clearly he is invited by Christ to come up to heaven to see, from heavens perspective, what must soon take place.

The words 'come up here' have been linked with the rapture of the church and it has been pointed out that the word for church (Gk. *ekklesia*) does not appear elsewhere in Revelation until 22:16. However only John is told to 'come up here', and the elect of God and his saints are certainly referred to later in Revelation (7:3, 13:7, 10, 14:12) even if the word *church* is not used. For example the two witnesses are described as two lampstands (11:4) and we have already seen that a lampstand is a symbol of a church, they are also told to 'come up here' (11:12) and is much more likely to refer to the rapture. While the word church does not occur until 22:16 the word *saints* occurs twelve times between 5:8 and 19:8. Strauss points out that John heard the voice of the Lord speaking to me like a trumpet, and compares this with the last trumpet of 1 Cor 15:52. However John's invitation is to receive revelation but that of the church is to accomplish final salvation (Thomas). Johnson comments that the word 'church' or 'churches' always stands in Revelation for the historic seven

churches in Asia and not for the universal body of Christ. Since 4:1-22:15 concerns the believing community as a whole, it would be inappropriate to find the narrower term 'church' in this section (cf. 3 John 6, 9-10).

v1 - *"Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this* - John now sees the future from heavens perspective, which is how the rest of the book is seen. We should note that Jesus (I will show you) will show John the future, it is appropriate that Jesus, who is the First and the Last (1:17), the Beginning and the End (22:13), should show John the future for only He can know it with certainty. We are also reminded that this book comes from Jesus to show His servants what must soon take place as the first verse says (1:1). The previous section, the letters to the seven churches, was written to the church in John's day, 'what is now', this section introduces 'what is to come' (Rev 1:19). This type of introduction is used elsewhere to introduce the opening of the seals (Rev 6:1), introduce the punishment of the great prostitute (Rev 17:1), and the wife of the Lamb (Rev 21:9). Amos says that the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets (Amos 3:7). The book of Revelation is partially a prophecy about the future (Rev 22:6).

v2 - *At once I was in the Spirit* - He could only be in heaven in the Spirit because heaven is not a material place so he could not be there in the body. He was also in the spirit on the Lords day when the vision started (1:10). Paul also went to the third heaven, he does not know whether it was in the body or out of the body (2 Cor 12:2).

v2 - *and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it* - The person on the throne is not named but in v11 he is called 'our Lord and God'. God is on his throne in heaven and is therefore in control of the future. This vision of the future starts with God in control, the rest of the book demonstrates this. God's enemies are finally punished and His people vindicated. God is not described because this is impossible, because he lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see, 1 Tim 6:16. The image of God on his throne comes from Isaiah 6:1 and Ezekiel 1:26. There are many psalms that speak of God on His throne. It is no coincidence that both the psalms and Revelation are full of praise to God, because they both see God enthroned in splendour Ps 9:7, 11:4, 45:6, 47:8 etc.

v3 - *And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian* - There is no description of the one who sat on the throne. Paul reminds us that God 'lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see' (1 Tim 6:16) therefore the description in terms of precious jewels and rainbows is an apt one. The appearance of

Jasper which is the glory of God, as in the new Jerusalem which 'shone with the glory of God, like Jasper', 21:11.

v3 - *A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne.* - The rainbow is a reminder of God's covenant with Noah and man (Gen 9:11), this shows his mercy. In Ezek 1:28 the rainbow shows the glory of the Lord. Ladd comments that 'The throne with its brilliance was surrounded by a rainbow which, instead of containing the colours of the prism, was emerald green'.

14.1. Twenty four elders and four living creatures (4:4)

Rev 4:4 Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. 5 From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. 6 Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.

In the centre, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. 7 The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. 8 Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come."

Rev 4:9 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honour and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

v4 - *Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads.* - Part of the background is found in Dan 7:9-14 in which there is a heavenly court and thrones were set in place and the Ancient of days took his seat. This verse introduces the twenty-four elders, they were dressed in white indicating their purity and they had crowns on their heads indicating their kingly role, which is appropriate to their thrones. They reign with Christ as does the church 2 Tim 2:12. These elders could represent the OT and NT church, as indicated by the number twenty-four, i.e. twelve tribes + twelve apostles. The following reasons are given:

- i. Elder is a church office rather than an angelic office. Chilton points out that nowhere else in the bible is the term elder given to anyone but men, and from the earliest times it has stood for those who have rule and representation within the Church (see Ex 12:21; 17:5-6; 18:12; 24:9-11; Num 11:16-17; 1Tim 3:1-7; Tit 1:5-9; Heb 13:17; Jam 5:14-15).
- ii. They are dressed in white, as is the Church (3:5, 7:14).
- iii. They are described later as having harps (5:8) as does the church (15:2).

- iv. And as having a new song (5:9) as does the church (14:3).
- v. They are seated, as is the church, Eph 2:6 'And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus'.
- vi. The number twenty-four coming from both OT and NT church, see the New Jerusalem Rev 21:12-14.
- vii. They are seated on thrones. The twelve apostles will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Mat 19:28). Chilton points out that we have already been told in this prophecy that Christians are reigning with Christ (1:6), that they wear crowns (2:10, 3:11), that they have been granted kingly authority with Him over the nations (2:26-27), that apostates will be forced to bow down before them (3:9), and that they are seated with Christ on His throne (3:21).
- viii. See also the twenty four divisions of priests and the twenty four divisions of singers who ministered in the Lord's temple (1 Chr 24 and 25). The concept of twenty four leaders of worship is a known feature of OT worship (Chilton).
- ix. They have crowns on their heads indicating their kingly role, the saints will also receive a crown 2:10, 3:11, 1 Pet 5:4. The word for crown used here is the victors crown (*stephanos*), rather than the royal crown (*diadema*), this is used of the saints in 2:10, 3:11 cf. 12:1 and 1 Cor 9:25. They are also worshippers as is the church (Rev 11:1). The high priest also wore a crown (Zech 6:11), but in the new covenant all believers are priests and therefore all wear a crown.
- x. Chilton argues that John has brought together two images (i) the elders sit on thrones and are therefore kings and (ii) they are twenty four in number and are therefore priests cf 1:6.

However the principle thing that goes against this argument is that in Rev 19:1-7 the elders and the saints are found together, although after that we hear nothing more from the elders. It is therefore more likely that they are a heavenly council. Lang gives some of the following reasons why the elders do not represent the church:

- i. One of the elders speaks individually to John if the elders symbolise the church this would not make sense.
- ii. The bride would be enthroned before her marriage.
- iii. The bride is seen enthroned before the Lamb has taken his throne.
- iv. The elders appear in visions together with and therefore distinct from: John (5:5, 7:13), The living creatures (4:9, 10 etc.), Angels (5:11, 7:11), the saints (5:8, see also 19:1-7).

- v. The elders clearly distinguish between themselves and the redeemed and therefore cannot be redeemed men themselves. Rev 5:10 in which the elders sing a new song uses the term *them* to describe to describe the redeemed instead of *us*. Note the KJV is wrong in using *us*, see also NASB which uses *them*.
- vi. The elders are mentioned separately to the firstfruits, 14:1-5.
- vii. The elders are not those who come out of the great tribulation because an elder describes these and they are enthroned before the great tribulation (7:13).
- viii. They are not part of the company who take part in the first resurrection because they speak to God regarding these (11:16-18).
- iv. In 19:1-10 the elders are distinct from the wife of the Lamb because they worship God before the wedding of the Lamb has been announced.

The elders are therefore more likely to be the council of heaven (Jer 23:18-22, Psa 89:6-7, 107:32) the council being a body of advisers that the king would consult with (Acts 25:12) and whom God would use in his heavenly government. In the bible there are clearly Satanic rulers, powers and authorities in the heavenly places (Eph 6:12, 1 Pet 3:22, Col 2:15) and therefore it is likely that there are similar governmental authorities in heaven to carry out God's rule (Eph 3:10). Col 1:16 refers to thrones in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible which were created by and for Christ.

v5 - *From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder.* - These flashes and peals of thunder are associated with God's presence, see for example when the Lord came down onto Mt. Sinai (Exo 19:11-20) and 2 Sam 22:13, they are seen also in Rev 11:19 when God's temple was opened. When the angel hurled the censer filled with fire from the altar there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake (8:5). With the seventh bowl there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake (16:18).

v5 - *Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God* - In the OT a lampstand with seven lamps was used to illuminate the table in the holy place with the bread of the Presence on it, Exo 26:33-35, 25:37, 40:22-25, Num 4:7, 8:2, 2 Chr 13:11, Heb 9:2. The lamps use oil which is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, Num 4:9, 1 Sam 16:13. There is a similar picture in Zec 4:2 ff., which has a lampstand with seven lights on it, and there are seven channels, which feed the lights, on either side are two olive trees that supply the oil for the lights. In response to the question what are these? The Lord answers 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit'. In verse 10 the seven lamps are said to be "(These seven are the eyes of the LORD, which range throughout the earth.)". The seven spirits are also mentioned in

Rev 1:4, 3:1, 5:6. Seven is the term for completeness. There is a seven fold description of the Spirit of Christ in Isa 11:1-4. Prov 20:27 states that 'The lamp of the LORD searches the spirit of a man; it searches out his inmost being'. The Holy Spirit illuminates the things of God (indicated by the articles on the table, Exo 31:8) and makes them real to us, 'the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you' (John 16:15), and especially he reveals Jesus to us who is the real bread that comes from heaven, John 6:41, 58.

v6 - *Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.* - This sea separates God from the rest of creation, see also Exo 24:10 when Moses and the leaders saw God, 'under his feet was something like a pavement made of Sapphire, clear as the sky itself'. Ezekiel also saw an expanse sparkling like ice above the heads of the creatures, above which was the throne, Ezek 1:22. A sea of glass occurs in 15:2 but this time mixed with fire. The earthly equivalent in the temple was the bronze basin for washing the hands and feet Exo 30:18, it is also the bronze Sea, in Solomon's temple, used by the priest for washing (2 Chr 4:6). This indicates that nothing unclean is able to approach God but must first be washed. The purity of this washing is indicated by its clarity like crystal, which means that there are no blemishes allowed near the throne. The picture heightens the holiness of God, his purity and separateness from his creation and creatures.

v6 - *In the centre, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back.* - These creatures guard the things of God (Gen 3:24), they are Seraphs, Isa 6:1-3, they are a very high order of angels who are close to God and his throne, they see his holiness and therefore glorify him, see Exo 25:18, Ezek 1:5, 13, 18. Some argue that these represent creation generally, this is possible from their name 'living creatures' and their description, also there are four of them indicating the four directions of the compass, the first four trumpets and bowls all affect the earth, sea, rivers and universe.

v7 - *The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle.* - Ezek 1:10 and 10:14 gives a similar description of four living creatures. The description probably refers to their characteristic qualities. They are in strength like a lion, in service like an ox, in intelligence like a man and in swiftness like an eagle (Hendriksen). The Greek word used is *zoon* while that used for the beast in chapter 13 is *therion* who resembled a leopard, bear and a lion but it blasphemes God while the living creatures worship God.

v8 - *Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come."* - The six wings refer to swift obedience and eyes refer to vigilance. They are close to the throne and so they see his holiness. They also declare his eternal existence, 'who was, and is, and is to come', which is unique to God alone. All creatures in heaven and earth owe their existence to the fact God created them at some point in time, but God has always existed from eternity past. The Seraphs continually declare the holiness of God, thrice Holy, God's greatest attribute, see Isa 6:2-3. His holiness is his separateness from his creatures, his total purity and perfection of all his attributes. This is the first of many hymns in Revelation. The living creatures appear elsewhere in Revelation.

The four living creatures introduce the first four seals, Rev 6:1:

One gives the seven angels the seven bowls, Rev 15:7.

The living creatures and the elders act together to worship God, Rev 4:9, 5:14, 19:4.

v9 - *Whenever the living creatures give glory, honour and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: 11 "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.* - The elders always join in worship with the four living creatures (Rev 5:8). They worship God who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, they lay their crowns before him to acknowledge him as supreme ruler. They acknowledge that He is worthy to receive glory, honour and power because he is the Creator. The elders as representatives of the church worship God as Creator, the very thing the inhabitants of the world refuse to do, they prefer idolatry instead, see Rev 9:20-21, 14:7, 16:9. Who we worship is one of the key themes of Revelation see 5:14, 9:20, 14:7, 14:9, 19:10, 22:9, here we see that in heaven it is God who is worshipped because He is the eternal Creator, He should also be worshipped by those on the earth as well 14:6-7. He who made the world is in control of the world, he is on the throne. Jesus is also described as the ruler of God's creation (Rev 3:14). God is referred to as Creator again in Rev 10:6, and in 14:7 where the angel announces the time of God's judgement has come and commands men to fear and worship God because he is the Creator, this is the gospel at its simplest (Acts 14:15, 17:24). Isa 57:15 talks about the high and lofty one that inhabits eternity, and in his eternal plan God chose to create the heavens and the earth and everything in it. Every created

thing owes its existence to free will and pleasure of God. Col 1:16 also emphasises the fact that we were created by him and *for* him.

14.2. The scroll and the Lamb (5:1)

5:1 Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. 2 And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" 3 But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. 4 I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. 5 Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

Rev 5:6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the centre of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. 7 He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. 8 And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sang a new song:

"You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. 10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

11 Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. 12 In a loud voice they sang:

"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!"

Rev 5:13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing:

"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honour and glory and power, for ever and ever!"

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

This section should be read with Phil 2:5-11 in mind.

(Phil 2:5-11) Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: {6} Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, {7} but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. {8} And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross! {9} Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, {10} that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, {11} and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Some authors have pointed out that there are parallels between chapters 4 and 5.

God on the throne (4:2)	The Lamb on the throne (5:6)
Seven spirits of God (4:5)	Seven spirits of God (5:6)
Living creatures circle throne (4:6)	Living creatures circle the throne (5:6)
Twenty-four elders worship God (4:11)	The elders worship the Lamb (5:9)

It should be noted that the worship of both God in the previous chapter and the Lamb in this chapter is proof of the divinity of the Lamb. Worship is one of the themes of the previous chapter and this chapter and is included to demonstrate that only God and the Lamb are to be worshipped. God because he is the creator and the Lamb because he is the redeemer. Neither the beast nor angels are to be worshipped only God (see 14:7, 9, 19:10, 22:9).

v1 - *Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals.* - The scroll reveals the will of God for the world; in the Roman world a will was witnessed by seven persons and each person attached his seal to the document. The seals show the secrecy of the document. The scroll with seven seals had writing on both sides (Rev 5:1) it contains a great deal of writing. The scroll reveals the complete redemptive plan of God through human history from the cross to the end of time into eternity. The redemptive plan of God is fulfilled finally in 21:6 when God announces 'it is done'. Having created a new heaven and new earth, we see the New Jerusalem, the bride, God announces that he will dwell with men, the old order of things has passed away and then he finally says it is done. The seven seals refer to the divine completeness of his plan. In Ezek 2:9-10 we also find that when Ezekiel was commissioned by God he was given a scroll with words of lamentation, mourning and woe written on both sides of it which he was to prophecy. In 10:2 ff. a mighty angel holds a little scroll which John is told to eat and then prophesy again (10:8-11) the little scroll refers to the prophecy of this book. To the

prophets God's plan of salvation remained sealed, but once Jesus died and rose again God's plan is now fully revealed to his servants, especially to Paul and then to all people especially the saints (Rom 16:25-26, Eph 1:9-10, 3:1-6, Col 1:25-27). But here we find that the scroll is sealed with seven seals, the seals must be removed in order for the contents to be revealed and fulfilled. The rest of Revelation is concerned with the opening of the seals and revealing the contents of the scroll. This section deals with the qualifications and fitness of the only one who can open the seals and reveal its contents.

One of the key questions to be answered is whether the contents of the scroll follow in chronological order when the seals have been opened or whether the contents gives more detail to what is described as the seals are opened.

v2 - *And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?"* - Who is worthy to break the seal and reveal man's destiny in God's plan, not just any man can do this. This is an introduction to the One who is worthy. However God does not open the seals, man's destiny must be achieved by man, but what man is worthy of this honour? There is one man in human history who is worthy. He who overcame, as our representative man, the forces of evil; who pleased God in every aspect of his life, even death on a cross. In 22:10 John is told not to seal up the words of the prophecy of the book because the time is near (for their fulfilment), in the same way someone must break open the seals and open the scroll for its contents to be fulfilled in reality.

v3 - *But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it.* - No one was found in the entire creation (in heaven or on earth or under the earth, compare with Phil 2:10) who was worthy to open the scroll. Later all creation from 'every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea' praises the one who can open the scroll, Rev 5:13. It cannot be read until the seals are broken, see Isa 29:11.

v4 - *I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside.* - He wept because God's plan would remain unfulfilled, unless someone could be found to open the scroll and reveal its contents so that they could become a reality and be fulfilled.

v5 - *Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."* - The elder introduces the one who can open the scroll i.e. the executor of the purposes of God and the heir of the inheritance of the world (see 11:15, Johnson). The

Lion of the tribe of Judah refers to Gen 49:9 and is a title of Jesus who descended according to the flesh from the tribe of Judah. Jesus is the root of David, as well as descendant of David, Isa 11:1, 11:10, Jer 23:5, Zec 3:8, 6:12, Mat 22:41, Rev 22:16 this probably emphasises his human and his royal ancestry. Jesus has triumphed as a man, i.e. has overcome, see Rev 3:21, (Note triumphed is same word in Greek as overcome) therefore he is worthy to open the scroll, see v9. He triumphed as a man (Phil 2:8), especially at the cross where he disarmed the powers and authorities (Col 2:15), he was slain, v9, and is now seated with God 'far above all rule and authority, power and dominion' (Eph 1:20-21) and therefore he is able to open the scroll of mans' destiny. We see later in verse 13 the result of this triumph when 'every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them', sing praise to the God and the Lamb. He is the second Adam, after the first Adam failed. It is appropriate that the Lamb is introduced as the one who can open the scroll and its seven seals because in 1:1 we find that God has given this revelation to his Son, see verse 7 'He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne'. This book is an unveiling and so the Lamb can open the scroll and its seven seals to reveal its contents for the benefit of the church. Chilton points out that Jesus is the Lamb because of his work rather than his person.

v6 - *Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the centre of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders.* - He looks expecting to see a lion and instead 'I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain', this is the first mention of the Lamb, the Lamb occurs 30 times in the book. This is a clear reference to Jesus, both John and Peter refer to Jesus being the Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36, 1 Pet 1:19), 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29). Paul call Jesus our Passover lamb who has been sacrificed (1 Cor 5:7). The Lamb looked as if it had been slain, this is a reference to the crucifixion, but he is standing because he rose again. In one brilliant stroke John portrays his central theme of NT revelation--victory through sacrifice (Mounce). The Lamb of God is alluded to in Genesis 22:7 when Abraham is about to sacrifice Isaac, Isaac asks where the lamb for the burnt offering, and Abraham replies 'God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering my son'. He is the Paschal lamb of the Passover, Exo 12:3-21, when the destroying angel saw the blood of the Lamb on the lintels of the doors he passed over the Israelites and killed the first born of the Egyptians instead. Isa 53:3 ff. is one of many Messianic mentions of the lamb in the OT but it is probably the greatest, he describes the Messiah as 'like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth'. In Rev 13:8 we have the phrase 'the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world'. That is, that the death of Christ

was a redemptive sacrifice decreed in the counsels of eternity (Mounce). The sin of Adam did not take God by surprise.

Jesus is standing in the centre of the throne, the centre of heaven, this is also referred to in 7:17. Stephen, the first martyr, saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God, Acts 7:55. Rev 3:21 refers to Jesus seated on his Father's throne after he had overcome. The Lamb here is symbolic of Jesus, no author questions that the Lamb is Jesus. Johnson notes that slain literally 'throat cut' and links the Messiah to the OT Passover Lamb. Here John joins the OT royal Davidic Messiah with the Suffering Servant of Isaiah (Isa 42-53).

The image of a Lamb refers to the life and death of Christ during his first coming, when he came as a helpless baby into the world and died a tortuous death on a cross. He died an early death and hence Lamb rather than sheep is used, the Lamb also speaks of his innocence. It speaks of his humility (Phil 2:5-8), later in the next few verses it shows his exaltation (Phil 2:9-11), and when he comes again to the earth it will be as the lion, the Lord of lords and King of kings. Goldsworthy makes the point that if we want to see the Lion as our Saviour rather than as our judge we must first find Him in the Lamb, i.e. as our substitute for our sin on the cross. Then when He comes again in His glory, which he has now and is described in Revelation, we will be like Him for we shall see Him as He truly is (1 John 3:2). In Revelation here and elsewhere (1:13-18), the exalted Christ is revealed, this has to be accepted by faith now, but he will be openly revealed to world when he comes again (1:7, 6:12-17, 19:11-21).

In the previous verse the elders say that the lion of the tribe of Judah has triumphed and yet we see a lamb bearing the marks of slaughter. This illustrates one of the lessons that God wants to teach his people through this book, that victory is achieved through sacrifice and death. Thus we find later that the beast is *allowed* to wage war against the saints and to *defeat* them, 13:7, just as Jesus was crucified by wicked men it spelt apparent defeat, but he rose again, death could not hold him. We find that the saints overcome the devil by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death (12:11). Those in Smyrna who are faithful to the point of death will receive the crown of life (2:10). Just as Christ was obedient to death on a cross, therefore God has exalted Him, so those who are obedient to death will reign with Him (Mat 10:22, 2 Tim 2:12, Rev 2:26, 20:6). As Rom 8:36 indicates, Christians follow their Lord being sheep to be slaughtered, but this does not separate us from the love of Christ, Revelation is a commentary on this.

v6 - *He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.* - This is no ordinary Lamb. The seven horns are a symbol of complete, full strength (Deu 33:17), seven meaning complete and the horn meaning strength or power (1 Sam 2:10, Psa 18:2, Zec 1:18-21). Compare with the dragon (Rev 12:3) and the beast with ten horns (Rev 13:1), see also Daniel's beast with ten horns (Dan 7:7 ff.). Also the beast out of the earth having two horns like a lamb (Rev 13:11). The seven eyes which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth, meaning the Holy Spirit who searches the spirit of a man (Prov 20:27). Compare with 'the seven spirits before his throne' (1:4), and the seven lamps blazing before the throne which are the seven spirits of God (4:5). This image comes from Zec 4:2, 10. The same passage is used of the two witnesses in 11:4 to demonstrate that they operate in the power of the spirit. The gold lampstand with seven lights on it represents the Holy Spirit, the seven lights are the seven eyes of the Lord which range throughout the earth, Zec 4:10. The lampstand with seven lamps was placed opposite the table with the bread of the Presence on it, outside of the Holy of Holies in the Holy place (Exo 26:35) and represents the Spirit of God. In 1:14 and 19:12 Christ's eyes are described as like blazing fire. Jesus received the Spirit without limit (John 3:34). Johnson sees 'the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth' as probably a symbolic reference to the Holy Spirit who is sent forth by Christ into the world (1:4, 4:5, cf. a similar view of the Spirit in John 14:26, 15:26, 16:7-15).

v7 - *He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.* - The Lamb is the only one who can have such intimate access to God, he is worthy to take the scroll, v9. As the perfect sinless man and as God he is able to approach God on our behalf, 1 Tim 2:5. He would take the scroll from God's right hand because he would be standing 'at God's right hand -- with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him' (1 Pet 3:22). Stephen when he was martyred saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:55-56 see also Eph 1:20-22, Col 3:1, Heb 1:3). Heb 1:13 says "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet". We find in Revelation first a vision of Christ at the right hand of God, then a description of his enemies then the destruction of his enemies. This event here mirrors the origin of Revelation itself 'which God gave him (Jesus) to show his servants what must take place soon' (1:1). See also John 3:35 'The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands', and John 5:20-23, 17:2, Mat 11:27. God has given to Christ the work of executing His plan of salvation, the work of redemption on the cross is complete, but his enemies have not been defeated, and he must reign until they are defeated (1 Cor 15:24-28, Heb 10:13) and hands the kingdom to his Father.

The rest of Revelation shows his enemies at work fighting against the church and their defeat.

v8 - *And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.* - They fall down before the Lamb who is worthy to take the scroll from God and open it. They worship the Lamb as they worshipped him who was seated on the throne in 4:9-11, this indicates the divinity of the Lamb; worshipping God is one of the messages of Revelation. As representatives of the church the elders have harps as do the saints (Rev 15:2). The harp is a symbol of praise (Ps 33:2). As representatives of the church they present the prayers of the church before God.

v8 - *they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.* - The elders representing the church were also holding the golden bowl full of incense (Lev 2:1-2, 16:12-13), which are the prayers of the saints (Psa 141:2). In the tabernacle the altar of incense was in the Most Holy place together with the gold covered Ark of the Covenant (Heb 9:3-4). The prayers of God's people are linked to God's purposes on the earth that unfold with the opening of the seals. See also the seventh seal with the golden censers, in which an angel was given incense to offer, with the prayers of the saints, on the golden altar before the throne, 8:3. There, a direct link is established between the saints' prayers and God's response, which are the seven trumpets, in that the golden censer holding the incense is also used to hurl fire to the earth, Rev 8:5. The trumpets and the seven bowls (15:7) are God's answers to the prayers of his people, he will vindicate his elect, Luke 18:6, see the third bowl (16:5-6).

v9 - *And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. {10} You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."* - The elders sing a similar new song that the 144,000 sing, see Rev 14:3, in praise of the one who became a man and purchased men for God. It is a new song because Jesus had only recently ascended to heaven having lived on the earth and was crucified, arose and ascended to heaven. This is an entirely new event in the history of heaven, prior to the incarnation this song could not have been sung. A new song is mentioned in Psa 33:3, 96:1 and 144:9. The elders clearly distinguish between themselves and the redeemed and therefore cannot be redeemed men themselves. The elders use the term *them* to

describe the redeemed instead of *us*. Note, the KJV is wrong in using *us*, see also NASB which uses *them*.

v9 - "*You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain* - He is worthy to open the scroll because he obeyed God's will to the death, even death on a cross, Phil 2:8. The elders answer the angels cry in v2 "*Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?*", The angels answer in v12 that He is worthy, all creatures answer in v13, he is 'now crowned with glory and honour because suffered death', Heb 2:9.

v9 - *with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation* - This starts with the phrase 'with your blood you purchased men for God' he himself has done this, he shed his own blood and in doing so has redeemed men for God out of Satan's kingdom, Rev 14:4. The church has been bought by the blood of Christ (1 Cor 6:19, Acts 20:28, 1 Pet 1:18). They are purchased 'from every tribe, language, people and nation' this is one of the great keys to evangelism, to spread to gospel to each of these four groups (see Dan 7:13). Note the all inclusive nature of the redeemed in this fourfold description of the redeemed from the four corners of the earth. This phrase is also used of the inhabitants of the earth (Rev 11:9, 13:7, 14:6) and yet we see here that some of these are eventually saved. We see here that because Jesus purchased (ransomed) men for God by his own blood he is also entitled to reveal and fulfil God's plan for mankind by opening the seals. Johnson notes that Jesus' death secured a salvation universally applied to all classes and peoples of the earth (cf. 7:9).

v10 - *You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.*" - This is a repetition of 1:6, it is Jesus who has made the saints to be a kingdom and priests to serve God by his death on the cross. They have been rescued from the kingdom of darkness and brought into the kingdom of the Son, Col 1:13. Their reign on earth could also refer to the millennial reign of Jesus and his saints. They will serve God, His people are His servants, see 1:6, 7:15, 22:3. For other references to reigning with Christ in Revelation see also Rev 1:6, 7:15, 11:15-17, 22:3, 22:5. In Rom 5:17 those who receive God's gift of grace and righteousness will reign in life through Jesus Christ, this is reigning in life now, not in the future.

v11 - *Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders.* - It is now the angels turn to praise the lamb, they have less importance than the living creatures and the elders who are closer to the

throne. Compare with the description in Dan 7:10 'Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him'.

v12 - *In a loud voice they sang: Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!* - In 4:11 the elders worship God as being worthy, now the angels worship the Lamb as being worthy. After the elders and the living creatures the angels join in praise to the Lamb with a sevenfold doxology. In verse 4 He is worthy because He triumphed as a man, the representative man in heaven, the second Adam. He fulfilled God's will on earth and in doing so made it possible that men could enter heaven. He now receives his reward, he is now crowned with glory and honour (Heb 2:9). The angels worship Christ as God, note that John is told to worship God not the angel giving him the revelation.

v13 - *Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing:* - Then the rest of creation on the earth and under the earth, meaning the dead, join in praise to the Lamb. Every creature not just the redeemed will in the end acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord. Thus is fulfilled Rom 14:11 (quoted from Isa 45:22) and Phil 2:10. This helps demonstrate the unity of scripture and in particular the book of Revelation with the rest of scripture. Revelation has to be read with both the OT and NT in mind. The point being made is that it is the Lamb, unlike the beast, who is worthy of praise and honour.

v13 - *"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honour and glory and power, for ever and ever!"* - The praise will last for ever and ever because God and the Lamb live for ever and ever. The praise is fourfold, wealth, wisdom and strength are missed out from the angels doxology. Notice that God and the Lamb are linked together here in praise and they are linked elsewhere in Revelation.

The wrath of him who sits on the throne and of the Lamb, 6:16.

The Lamb will be their shepherd and God will wipe away every tear, 7:17.

The reign of God and the wedding of the Lamb, 19:6.

As the temple and as its light, 21:22.

Source of the river of life, 22:1.

The throne of God and of the Lamb, 22:3.

v14 - *The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshipped.* As in 5:8 the elders fall down before the Lamb in worship, who is supremely worthy of worship, unlike the beast of 13:4. They fell down to worship the Lamb in the same way as they had worshipped God in 4:10 indicating the Lamb's divinity for only God is to be worshipped (14:7, 19:10, 22:9). The worship of the elders represents that of the church, see Rev 5:8 where the elders hold the golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. Following the praise and worship the Lamb opens the seals, Rev 6:1.

15. The seven seals (6:1)

After taking the scroll from God and being worshipped by all creation the Lamb now opens the seven seals to reveal its contents. The seals as with the trumpets are in a group of four, two and one. The opening of the first four seals is introduced by each of the four living creatures in turn. Each one of the four living creatures reveals a horseman, the fourth horseman sums up the first three, 'They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth'. The power of these horsemen is limited to a quarter, with the trumpets later it is limited to a third. The fifth seal reveals those who had been slain because of the word of God and their testimony, which is the persecuted church. The sixth seal reveals the day of the Lord, which brings the Lamb's wrath to those on the earth. The opening of the seventh seal reveals silence. The seven seals sum up human history from the viewpoint of heaven and the church. There is war, famine and pestilence in general and on the church in particular there is persecution, then the end will come bringing terror to the world, this probably accounts for the silence of the seventh seal. What the seals describe is similar to the signs of the end of the age as described by Jesus in Matthew 24. There will be wars, famines and earthquakes (Mat 24:6-8), persecution (24:9-14), the heavenly bodies are shaken (Mat 24:29) and 'at that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn' (Mat 24:30). After the opening of the seven seals the scroll can be read and we find more detail, but this starts in chapter 8. The seven seals describe tribulation that is largely man made (wars, famine and persecution) but under the control of God, the seven trumpets are disasters sent by God with the aim of persuading man to repent, the seven bowls are the final outpouring of God's wrath on impenitent mankind. The fact that Christ opens the seven seals indicates his sovereignty over the future.

15.1. First seal (6:1)

Rev 6:1 I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, "Come!" 2 I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.

v1 - *I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals* - Jesus opens the seals following the worship of all creation but especially that of the church. John watches with anticipation as the Lamb opens the first seal. Jesus opens the seals but not the book, the opening of the seals is preliminary to opening the book. Jesus opens the seals to permit us to see the future course of history which is not hidden from the saints (1:1, 22:6, 10). God has entrusted Jesus to reveal the future course of history to His church cf. 1:1, 'the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy' (19:10). We should note that the fact that the Lamb opens all the seven seals, which means that he is in overall control of the events signified by the seven seals, which should be of tremendous comfort for the church.

v1 - *Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, "Come!"* - Each one of the four living creatures introduces the first four seals. The thunder emphasises the command, Come! Which calls the first horse onto the stage. Note that the opening of the seals by the Lamb is not passive but it brings events onto the stage of human history.

v2 - *I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest* - The first of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse: this image is taken from Zechariah (*Zec* 1:8, 6:1-8) in which there are four chariots pulled by different coloured horses, these are the four spirits of heaven going out from standing in the presence of the Lord of the whole world. The four horses cover each direction of the compass, that is, they affect the whole earth. Some see the rider on the white horse as the same rider as in Rev 19:11 i.e. Christ, see Hendriksen. This is not certain, the rider in Rev 19:11 had a sword, and this one has a bow. The bow is more likely to be that of the Parthians who were the only mounted archers in the ancient world. He was given a crown, is this likely to refer to Christ who had many crowns (see Rev 19:12), but see comment on 14:14. The crown is a victor's crown (Gr., *stephanos*) as distinguished from a royal crown (*diadema*), the victor's crown is appropriate for someone going forth to conquer. The

crown is not the same type of crown that the beast wears (13:1) or Christ wears in 19:12 who both wear the royal crown (*diadema*) although the 'son of man' in 14:14 wears the victor's crown.

The fourth horse summarises the first three and is distinctly evil, the first horse signifies the lust for conquest which is commonly the cause of war, which is the next seal and famine (third seal), the fourth seal describes death by sword, famine, plague and wild beasts. It should also be noted that in the sixth seal the wrath of the Lamb falls on the kings, princes, generals and mighty (men) among others who are responsible for war. Rev 19:18 also describes the kings, generals, mighty men, horses and their riders and the rest whose flesh the birds flying in mid-air eat. The four horses cover the four directions of the compass, they are of a unity, just as the first four trumpets and bowls affect the whole earth. The first four seals are introduced by the living creatures, the rest are not. The first rider representing conquest is the most straightforward reading of the text, although the fact that he is riding a white horse raises problems for this interpretation, although John may simply be thinking of Zech 1:8, 6:3 which have a white horse. Others argue that Christ cannot be commanded by heavenly creatures therefore the horseman must be the conquest of the word of God as prophesied by Christ (Mark 13:10), however see 14:15 where someone 'like a son of man' is told to reap. There is at least one verse in which an arrow is likened to the word of God 'He made my mouth like a sharpened sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver', (Isa 49:2).

Grimsrud argues that the white horse signifies triumphant warfare because the four horsemen represent war and its attendant evils: war, strife, famine and disease, and makes the following observation: 'Conquer is used 11 times in the book to allude to conquest by a faithful witness (once in each of the seven letters, in 5:5 of the Lamb, and in 12:11 and 15:2 of the faithful servants). Three times it refers to conquest by violence (here, in 11:7 where the beast kills the two witnesses, and in 13:7 where the beast wars against and conquers the saints). In all 'conquering' passages, Christ and his followers conquer by dying; Satan and the evil powers by killing'.

Johnson identifies the rider on the white horse with the antichrist and his forces that seek to conquer the followers of Christ. Each of the first four seals, then, represents conflict directed at Christians to test them and sift out false disciples (v.10). He goes on to say that this interpretation need not necessarily eliminate the fact that the seals may also refer to judgements on humankind in general. Yet since the fifth seal stresses the cry of the martyred Christians, probably the thought of Christian

persecution belongs also in the first four seals. Each of them unleashes events that separate false belief from true. The destruction of Jerusalem is a case in point (Lk 21:20 ff.). The white horse goes forth to conquer, and as he does so, judgement falls on the unbelief of Israel (Lk 21:22-23), while at the same time there is testing of believers to separate the chaff from the wheat (cf. Lk 21:12-19).

There are some who see the first horseman as conquest in general, the antichrist in particular (Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible) and who argue:

- i. He is the deceiver; therefore he appears in white (Mat 24:5, 2 Thess 2:11).
- ii. The crown he wears is different from the crown worn by Christ in Rev 19. It is the crown of the conqueror (*stephanos*) not the royal crown of a king (*diadema*), however note that the one 'like a son of man' seated on a cloud wears a crown (*stephanos*) of gold on his head, 14:14.
- iii. The bow symbolises conquest. In the OT it is always the symbol of military power (Ps 46:9; Jer 51:51; Hos 1:5).
- iv. To be consistent one must relate this horsemen to the other three who appear destructive.
- v. Note that this rider already possesses a bow but the crown is given to him and goes forth to conquer and hence is a counterfeit Christ.
 - a. This rider possesses a bow but Christ possesses no bow; a weapon of war is not part of his being.
 - b. This rider is given a crown but Christ is not given a crown. He was either crowned throughout eternity or at his ascension.
 - c. This rider sets out to conquer but Christ has always been conquering men's hearts. This horseman who sets out to conquer is one who already possesses a bow and is given a crown at some point in time. From that point, he goes forth to conquer (cf. The little horn of Dan 7; The man of sin and the beast and the ruler of the restored Roman Empire of Rev 13; the abomination of desolation of Mat 24:15).

However the first horse being Christ conquering the nations is more in harmony with the whole book. If the rider is Christ then the conquest is the gospel, the martyrs we see in the fifth seal are there due to the resulting persecution that breaks out because of the conquest of the gospel. Hendriksen's argument that the rider is Christ is as follows:

- i. In 5:5 Christ is portrayed as one who has triumphed.

ii. The horse is white, this colour is associated with the holy and heavenly, e.g. white robe, white cloud, white throne, white stone etc., therefore the rider cannot be the devil or the antichrist.

iii. The rider wears a crown, which harmonises with 14:14 where Christ wears a crown of gold.

iv. The word conquers or overcome (Gk. *nikao*) refers with two exceptions (11:7, 13:7) to Christ or believers, see 3:21b. Compare John 16:33 with Rev 3:21b, see also Rev 5:5 and 6:2.

v. Compare the rider on the white horse here with the rider on the white horse in 19:11 who is clearly Christ. In 5:5 Christ conquered at the cross, in 6:2 is now conquering through the gospel, and in 19:11 he is going to conquer on the great day of judgement which is why he wears many crowns.

vi. The idea of a conquering Christ is in harmony with the purpose of the book, see above (v) and 1:13 ff., 2:26,27, 3:21, 5:5, 6:16, 11:15, 12:11, 14:1 ff., 14:14 ff., 17:14, 19:11 note especially 17:14.

(Rev 17:14) They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings--and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers."

vii. The rider on the horse in 6:2 is in harmony with Mat 10:34 in which he says that he has not come to bring peace on earth but a sword, referring to persecution. The rider on the white horse is followed by the rider on the red horse who carries a sword, and the fifth seal sees the souls of the martyrs under the altar.

viii. Compare with Psa 45:3-5 see also Heb 1:8 which quotes this psalm in which the rider is the Son.

ix. Compare with Zech 1:8 ff. See also Hab 3:8,9; Isa 41:2.

To sum up the first rider and his relationship to the other seals, there are four views:

a. The first rider represents the lust for conquest and as such forms an integral part of the four horsemen who are all evil and are summed up by the fourth horsemen. Conquest brings with it war, famine and death. However the colour white is usually associated with good not evil, but it can indicate victory (Lenski), the rider wears the victory crown.

b. A step further is to say that the rider is the antichrist who brings havoc and misery on the world as indicated by the second, third and fourth horsemen and the fifth seal shows the resultant persecution of Christians by the antichrist followed by the sixth seal representing the end when Christ returns.

c. The first horsemen is Christ conquering by the power of the gospel and the other seals 2 to 5 represent various forms of persecution resulting from the proclamation of the gospel of the first seal. It is perhaps appropriate that Jesus who is the beginning and the end should appear on a white horse at both the beginning and end of the visions about the future.

d. The first rider is the word of God (see Lenski). This again harmonises with the rider on the white horse in chapter 19 whose name is the Word of God and also with Matthew 24:14 and the Matthew 24 model for the interpretation of all the trumpets (see comments after 6:8). The gospel is preached and during the same time there is war, famine and death from various causes. This view makes the best sense in terms of the purpose of Revelation because persecution arises because of the word of God as indicated by the martyrs of the fifth seal who had been slain because of *the word of God* (5:9). Consider the two witnesses who are slain because they prophesy (11:7) and those beheaded because of the word of God (20:4). In Isa 49:2 the prophet Isaiah compares himself to a polished arrow concealed in the Lord's quiver which in the context of the verse, which also refers to his mouth as a sharpened sword, must be the word of God. Consider that the armies of the Lord, who are the saints (see 17:14), as well as Christ, also ride white horses (19:14) and it is through these that the gospel is preached. Finally consider that the gospel also goes throughout the earth in the four directions of the compass just as do war, famine and death.

15.2. Second seal (6:3)

Rev 6:3 When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" 4 Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other. To him was given a large sword.

v4 - *Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other. To him was given a large*

sword. - War or persecution? In the light of Mat 24:6-7 and in light of the fourth horse that sums up the other three the balance would be in favour of war. Make men slay each other not make men slay the saints, in the light of the rest of the book the author is quite capable of indicating persecution as such. Some commentators quote the following scripture in support of persecution (Mat 10:34), 'I did not come to bring peace, but a sword'. Compare this with the sixth trumpet (Rev 9:15) in which a third of mankind is killed by mounted troops. The colour red corresponds to its mission of bloodshed. The sword is the Roman short sword (*machaira*). Note that its rider was given power to make men slay each other, 'was given' indicates God's permissive approval. Hendriksen however persuasively argues that the slaughter is of believers and not warfare in general.

- i. In the context persecution follows the first horse who is Christ and the gospel.
- ii. Quotes Mat 10:34 'I came not to send peace, but a sword' (*machaira*)...
- iii. The word slaughter when used by John refers to the slaughter of believers except in 13:3 where the slaughtered head belongs to the beast, cf. 1 John 3:12 (Abel slain), Rev 5:6, 5:9, 5:12 (the Lamb), 6:9 (the martyrs under the altar), 13:8 (the Lamb), 18:24 (the saints).
- iv. When the fifth seal is opened it reveals the souls of the slaughtered saints which ties in with the slaughtering of the saints in the second seal.
- v. The *machaira* when used in scripture refers to a sacrificial knife as in the sacrifice of Isaac.
- vi. The book is being written to believers who were being killed so that persecution not warfare is the issue. Whenever the rider on the white horse appears (Christ and the gospel) the rider on the red horse always follows (see Mat 5:10,11; Luk 21:2; Acts 4:1; 5:17 etc.). Consider Stephen and Paul, Publius and Polycarp etc.

15.3. Third seal (6:5)

Rev 6:5 When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. 6 Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, "A quart of wheat for a day's wages, and three quarts of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!"

v5 - "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. - Black could indicate dried up vegetation or even burned vegetation, see Lam 5:10. Scales are used to weigh food (Ezek 4:16). The scales can also be thought of as representing injustice since the rider only affects those who are poor.

v6 - Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, "A quart of wheat for a day's wages, and three quarts of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!" - This indicates famine or shortage, a quart of wheat is enough good food for one person not his family, poor food (barley) is available, luxurious items such as oil and wine are not hurt. Olives and vines are deeper rooted and are therefore able to withstand drought. Walvoord comments that famine is the aftermath of war. This is the situation with the western and third world today which takes the luxurious food for itself leaving hardly enough basic food for the third world (famine and justice). Babylon is condemned for her excessive luxury Rev 18:3. The merchants traded oil, wine and wheat with Babylon (18:13), but Barley is not mentioned because it is poor mans food and not a luxury. Famine is also one of the conditions leading to the end times, Mat 24:7. Famine can also lead to political instability, which is also a cause of war. Hendriksen argues that the poor people who could only afford barley are Christians. From Revelation we learn something of the conditions of the believers at that time:

- i. They could not remain a member of a trades guild which would involve eating food sacrificed to idols and sexual immorality (cf. Pergamum and Thyatira) and it would therefore be difficult to earn a living.
- ii. Those who did not have the mark of the beast could not buy or sell (13:17).
- iii. Generally the poor would tend to become Christians (Jas 2:5, cf. 1 Cor 1:26)

The second and third riders belong together in their mission to persecute God's people as they spread oppression, injustice and economic hardship throughout the centuries of the churches existence.

15.4. Fourth seal (6:7)

Rev 6:7 When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" & I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

v8 - *I looked, and there before me was a pale horse!* - The horse is sickly yellow green (Greek *chloros*, from which the word chlorine comes from) like a dead person. This horse sums up the work of the other three i.e. kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth. This verse is also similar to Rev 13:10 where the clear indication is to persecution by the beast in the form of captivity, or being killed with the sword.

v8 - *Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him.* - Hades is the abode of the spirits after death and therefore always follows closely behind death. Death and Hades, the abode of the dead, are personified here, as in Rev 20:13. But Jesus has authority over both, see Rev 1:18.

v8 - *They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.* - They were given power over a quarter of the earth so it was not universal it was limited power. Compare with the trumpets, one third of the earth is affected, and the bowls which have a total effect. See also Jeremiah's four kinds of destroyers, Jer 15:2, and Ezekiel's four dreadful judgements, Ezek 5:12, 17, 14:21 (in the LXX the same word *rhomphia* is used for the sword). Note the fact that they were given power, indicating the sovereignty of God. The word kill used here is not (sacrificial) slaughter as in the second seal, the sword here is *rhomphia* not *machaira*, it is a great long and heavy sword, it refers to war in general (Hendriksen). These are general in character and affect all mankind and are symbolic of all universal woes that affect believers and the rest of the world throughout this current dispensation. For the church these woes are used by Christ for sanctification of the church and the extension of the kingdom (Hendriksen), compare with Rom 8:35.

What is the interpretation of the four horsemen? There is no easy interpretation of the four horses of the apocalypse, however (according to Billy Graham) they have a striking relationship to Mat 24, especially when compared with the opening of the fifth seal which speaks of the persecution of the saints and the sixth seal which parallels Mat 24:29. The seals of Revelation can be considered as a comment on and expansion of Mat 24, which is a history of the world from heavens viewpoint.

This section and in fact the rest of Revelation is also a commentary on Rom 8:28-39..

(Rom 8:28-39) And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. {29} For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. {30} And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. {31} What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? {32} He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? {33} Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. {34} Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. {35} Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? {36} As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." {37} No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. {38} For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, {39} neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Birth pains (Mat 24:8)- This is a key verse, with a woman in labour the birth pains become more rapid and more intense as birth approaches i.e. earthquakes, wars, famines, false prophets (ending with the antichrist) followed by Christ's coming. The visions in Revelation become more detailed and more intense as they go along. The seals therefore are the unfolding of God's plan in Church and human history.

The four horsemen can be used to show that Christ is sovereign over contemporary events that John would be familiar with (Caird):

AD 60 Earthquakes.

AD 62:	Defeat of Roman army by Parthian Vologeses on eastern frontier.
AD 64:	Persecution of Christians following the fire of Rome.
AD 70:	Four year war of Jews and Romans ending with Jerusalem in ruins.
AD 68	Suicide of Nero, followed by political chaos.
AD 79	Eruption of Vesuvius which obliterated Naples and created a pall of darkness so widespread that men feared that the end of the world had come. When volcanic dust covers the sky the moon would appear red.
AD 92	Serious grain famine.
AD 81-92	Reign of Domitian, institutes emperor worship, persecution.
AD 95	Writing of Revelation.

As with the seven trumpets and seven bowls the first four affect the earth, the last three have a more spiritual significance they affect man directly in his spirit rather as well as his body.

15.5. Fifth seal (6:9)

Rev 6:9 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. 10 They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" 11 Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.

v9 - *When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained.* - Earlier we have seen the Lamb looking as if it had been slain (5:6, 9, 12), now we see those who follow the Lamb and who are slain because of their obedience to the word of God and the testimony they had maintained to death (cf. Smyrna and Antipas, see also 11:7, 12:11, 17:6). The same Greek word for slain (*sphazo*) is used of both Christ and these martyrs which means literally 'butchered', they follow in the footsteps of their master. Later we also see the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God (20:4). The sequence of four seals is interrupted by a picture of the martyrs because by their martyrdom some might repent of the error of their ways (Caird) this scene of the martyrs intervenes

prior to the sixth seal when Christ comes in judgement and it is too late to repent. See also the two witnesses who intervene between the sixth and seventh trumpet. Where is the altar? It is before the throne of God in heaven (Rev 8:3), in the OT the blood was poured under the altar of burnt offering (Lev 4:7). This indicates that their death by martyrdom is viewed as a sacrifice on the altar in heaven (cf. *machaira* of the second seal). They had offered their bodies as a living sacrifice, Rom 12:1. He saw their souls, they were thus alive demonstrating that although man can destroy the body he cannot destroy the soul, Mat 10:28.

v9 - *slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained* - This is one of the themes of the book that whenever men are obedient to the word of God and testify about Christ with their words and their deeds, persecution will follow. The main thrust of the book is to be obedient to the death and that in doing so they will be victorious over the powers of evil and will gain their (eternal) life. The Greek word for martyr, *martus*, means 'a witness'. See also Rev 11:7 in which when the two witnesses have finished their testimony the beast from the Abyss attacked them, and overpowers and kills them. We find that the beast makes war on the saints and kills them 13:7, the beast out of the earth set up an image of the beast out of the sea and killed all who refuse to worship the image, 13:15, and we find that the woman (Babylon) is drunk with the blood of the saints, 17:6. Those who worship the beast and his image and receive his mark are destined for eternal torment, 14:9 ff. In Rev 20:4 we also find 'the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands'. This persecution and martyrdom is in accordance with the words of Jesus in Matthew, 'then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death', Mat 24:9, 'this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come' Mat 24:14, see also Mat 10:21, Mat 5:11, John 15:20. The testimony of the martyrs by their words, deeds and death is part of God's plan.

v10 - *They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?"* - This cry occurs several times in scripture, Ps 79:10, 119:84. It is God who will avenge their blood, vengeance is not to be theirs, Deu 32:43, Rom 12:19. Their cry is a cry for justice, not retribution, just as Abel's blood cried out to God for justice, Gen 4:10. This cry is answered in Rev 16:5-7 when the third bowl is poured out as the just penalty for killing the saints and prophets and in Rev 19:2 when he condemned the great prostitute, in her was found the blood of the martyrs and all killed on the earth, see

Rev 18:24. In 19:2 the same Greek word for *avenge* is used (*ekdikeo*, cf. Luk 18:3, Rom 12:19, 2 Cor 10:6).

v11 - *Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.* - The white robe is the robe of righteousness, Isa 61:10, see also Rev 7:13. The idea of waiting 'until the number of their fellow servants and brother who were to be killed as they had been was completed' is that the persecution is all under God's control, he knows and has ordained the number to be killed, just as he knows the number of hairs on their head. There is a number that is fixed under the perfect will and foreknowledge of God, see Rev 7:4. The NASB has that they were told to *rest* for a little while longer, rather than *wait*, in 14:13 we are told that 'they will rest from their labour, for their deeds follow them'. Martyrdom seems like a setback for the church but in fact it progresses the gospel hence Tertullian's famous dictum, that 'the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church' (Hughes).

15.6. Sixth seal (6:12)

Rev 6:12 I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, 13 and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. 14 The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. 15 Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. 16 They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! 17 For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

v12 - *I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake.* - A great earthquake will accompany the Second Coming, (Isa 29:6, Ezek 38:19, Zec 14:4).

Other occurrences of earthquakes in Revelation:

Seventh seal, 8:5:

Two witnesses go to heaven, 11:13.

Seventh trumpet, 11:19.

Seventh bowl, 16:18.

v12 - *The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red,* - This passage is a clear reference to the second coming of Christ in judgement against the nations, as prophesied by Joel 2:30-31 and Mat 24:29.

v13-14 - *and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.* - Quoted from Isa 34:4, see also Hab 3:6, Mic 1:4. These signs herald the end of the age, Mat 24:29, 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken'. There can be no doubt that this refers to the Second Coming of Christ. Notice the similarity with the seventh bowl, 16:20, 'Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found'. There is also a similarity with judgement day when the earth and sky fled from his presence (20:11). In the same way when Christ returns He will 'make the heavens tremble; and the earth will shake from its place at the wrath of the LORD Almighty, in the day of his burning anger' (Isa 13:13).

v15 - *Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains.* - There is great terror, the day of the Lord affects all men from the highest to the lowest, see the similar description of those in Rev 19:17, who are gathered for the great supper of God, which clearly depicts the second coming. They flee to the caves to hide from his wrath, Isa 2:10, 19, 21 see also Isa 13:6-8, 24:21, 34:12, Zep 1:14. This sevenfold description covers all men from the greatest to the least.

v16 - *They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!"* - All the nations will mourn when they see the Son of Man appear, Mat 24:30. Being buried by a mountain is preferable to seeing God and experiencing the wrath of the Lamb, quoted from Hosea 10:8 see also Isa 2:19-21. Both God and the Lamb are here linked to wrath, see also Rev 14:10. This is also similar to a saying of Jesus to the woman of Jerusalem as he was being led to the cross (Luke 23:28-31) when he was alluding to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, but this also prefigures the last day (see Mat 24), it is clear from the context that here in Revelation it is the last day being referred to.

(Luke 23:28-31 NIV) Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. {29} For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' {30} Then "they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!" {31} For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

Chilton takes this to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. While many scholars link Mathew 24 with the seven seals, few also make the connection with the destruction of Jerusalem, which is also clearly portrayed in those verses (Chilton).

v17 - *For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?*" - When Jesus comes again he will come with wrath for the world, it is 'the great day of their wrath', Psa 110:5, Isa 13:9, Zep 1:14 ff., Rom 2:5. It is a unique day, (Zec 14:7), who can stand on the day of his wrath? Malachi and Joel posed the same question: Mal 3:2 'But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears?' Joel 2:11 'The day of the LORD is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it?' So does Nahum 1:16. The answer to 'who can stand' is given in the next section of the 144,000 sealed, (especially 7:9) see also 1 Thess 1:10 in which it is Jesus who rescues us from the coming wrath. God's wrath also occurs in the seventh trumpet, Rev 11:18; on those who worship the beast, 14:10; when the grapes are harvested into the winepress of God's wrath, 14:19; with the seven bowls, 15:1; the destruction of Babylon, 16:19; the rider on the white horse, 19:15.

16. The 144,000 sealed (7:1)

7:1 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree. 2 Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: 3 "Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God." 4 Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.

*Rev 7:5 From the tribe of Judah 12,000 were sealed,
from the tribe of Reuben 12,000,
from the tribe of Gad 12,000,
6 from the tribe of Asher 12,000,
from the tribe of Naphtali 12,000,
from the tribe of Manasseh 12,000,
7 from the tribe of Simeon 12,000,
from the tribe of Levi 12,000,
from the tribe of Issachar 12,000,
8 from the tribe of Zebulun 12,000,
from the tribe of Joseph 12,000,
from the tribe of Benjamin 12,000.*

This vision of the 144,000 and the vision of the great multitude (7:9 ff.) form an interlude between the sixth and seventh seals. Just as in the interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets we see a description of the witnessing church so here we get a description of the church. There is no such interlude between the sixth and seventh bowl. Before the seven trumpets are to be sounded which serve as warnings to mankind, the church is first sealed to protect them from these disasters that come upon mankind. The number 144,000 is a symbolic number (cf. 21:12 ff.) and the description of the 144,000 sealed, symbolically describes the NT + OT church not just the OT tribes of Israel. Neither are they a select group of Jewish missionaries who arise in the last days. It should be noted that the list of the twelve tribes is not just a *list* it is a *census* (Malcolm Smith). The reasons why the 144,000 represent the church are summarised below:

- i. They are described as the servants of our God in verse 3, a term that refers to the church, and is used more than 11 times in Revelation, see 1:1, 1:6, 5:10,

- 6:11, 7:15, 19:2, 19:5, 19:10, 22:3, 22:6, 22:9. The book of Revelation was written to God's servants (1:1, 22:6).
- ii. The NT Church is called the Israel of God (Gal 6:16). Both Jews and Gentiles are members of Christ's body and share the same promises, the church is Abraham's offspring (Eph 3:6, Gal 3:6-9, 28-29). See also James 1:1.
 - iii. Judah is the firstborn instead of Reuben. Jesus is the firstborn of the dead (Col 1:15) and he is descended from Judah (Heb 7:14). Note while Jesus was on earth he went through the initiation rights of both Jews (circumcision) and Christians (baptism). Judah offered himself as a substitute for his brother Benjamin (Gen 44:33) and is therefore a type of Christ.
 - iv. Levi the tribe of priests is included in the census, they are normally excluded from a census (Num 1:47), the saints are described as priests in 1:6, 5:10 and 20:6.
 - v. Joseph, who is a type of Christ is included (instead of Ephraim), there is nothing wrong spoken about him, see verse eight for more detail.
 - vi. Dan and Ephraim who went off into idolatry are excluded, and Levi and Joseph replace them, there are no idolaters in the church, 21:8, 22:15. Irenaeus thinks that the antichrist will come from Dan and quotes, Jer 8:16.
 - vii. Malcolm Smith pointed out that those in an OT census are ransomed people (cf. Exo 30:12).
 - viii. The number 144 (12*12 i.e. OT * NT) and 12,000 occur again in the description of the New Jerusalem, Rev 21:12-17, which is clearly both OT (twelve tribes and 12 gates) and NT church (twelve apostles and 12 foundations). This could also be a description of the Jewish and Gentile church, but the emphasis is that it is the complete church.
 - ix. The 144,000 are found again in 14:1 where they have the name of the Lamb and the Father written on their foreheads. In the description of the new Jerusalem, 22:3-4, we also find God's servants with his name on their foreheads. The 144,000 in 14:1-5 are described as followers of the Lamb, they sing a new song, they are pure and blameless, they are redeemed from the earth.
 - x. Milligan points out that if the seal is the antithesis of the mark of the beast which is on all his followers then the seal of God will be on all His followers and not just a part.
 - xi. God is sealing *all* of his people against the coming trumpets not just a part just as all God's people escaped the plagues on the Egyptians. All those who put the blood of the lamb on the door posts and lintels escaped from the destroying angel.
 - xii. Chilton points out that 1000 is the military unit of Israel (Num 10:2-4, 35-36, 31:1-5 etc.) so that it is also a military census of those ready for battle. See the armies of heaven following the Rider on the white horse in 19:14 . cf. Phil 2:25, 2 Tim 2:3, Philemon 1:2.
- John's theology clearly sees the church as being composed of OT and NT saints, the OT continues into the NT, both Jews and Gentiles are saved on the same basis of faith (Gal 3:6-14). This is made amply clear in his description of the New Jerusalem whose gates have the names of the twelve tribes of Israel on them and whose foundations have the names of the twelve apostles on them. Even where he does describe the OT church as 'the woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head', Rev 12:1, after she gives birth to the Christ she becomes the NT church, 12:13. It should be clear from NT scripture that as far as the church is concerned there is neither Jew nor Gentile, we are all one body (Eph 3:6). The Gentile believers by following the faith of Abraham are spiritually children of Abraham and inheritors of the same promises (Gal 3:6-9, 28-29). The church is a continuum from OT to NT but as they are here sealed prior to the trumpets being sounded this would reduce this group to the NT church rather than both OT and NT. Our Lord only has one body on the earth, John no doubt has our Lord's words in mind "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me." (John 17:20-21 see also John 17:11).
- There is a modification to this view in which rather than considering the 144,000 to be OT and NT saints they could be the Jewish and Gentile church. The Jewish line extends into the NT period in so far as the Jews accept Jesus as the Messiah, fortunately many are doing so. Just as in the OT period there were Gentile converts,

e.g. Ruth, so in the NT period there will be Jewish converts. Either way the 144,000 should be considered to be the *complete* church and not just a portion of it. There are a number of commentators that consider the 144,000 to be Jewish converts to Christianity in which case most of the analysis aforementioned would also fit these Jewish Christians since by definition they would be part of the church and would therefore share its characteristics. However the use of the term 144 would seem to link this group with the new Jerusalem which clearly depicts the whole church of all saints either OT or NT, Jew or Gentile and therefore it is more likely that this is referring to the complete church.

(Rom 11:25-32) I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. {26} And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. {27} And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins." {28} As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, {29} for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable. {30} Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, {31} so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God's mercy to you. {32} For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

v1 - *After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree* - This section is the answer to - 'who can stand?' - coming from Rev 6:17 and it now shows us those who will be able to stand on the day of God's great visitation. Only those sealed will be able to stand on the day of his wrath, 1 Thess 1:10. 'After this I saw' refers to John's chronology and refers to a new vision that he saw and not that the events now depicted follow on from those in the previous section. This verse refers to the angels with the first four trumpets which affect the whole earth (the four winds of the earth, the four directions of the compass i.e. they affect the whole earth geographically showing the universality of the judgement), in particular the first two trumpets (Rev 8:7-8) which affect the earth, trees, grass and sea.

First trumpet:

Rev 8:7 The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down upon the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

Second trumpet:

Rev 8:8 The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood,

v2 - *Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea:* - The angel comes from the east (sun rising) God's deliverance was expected from that direction, Ezek 43:1. The angels had been given power to harm the land and the sea indicating the sovereignty of God. The seal (Gr. *sphragis* (n)) of the living God, the verb form of seal is the Greek *sphragizo*. The same word is used of Jesus on whom the Father has placed his seal of approval (John 6:27); of Abraham who received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised (Rom 4:11); the seal of ownership (2 Cor 1:22); marked in Jesus with the seal of the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13, 4:30); the seal of ownership (2 Tim 2:19). The same word is also used of the seven seals, the sealing up of the bottomless pit (20:3), sealing up the seven thunders (10:4) and not sealing up the words of Revelation (22:10). Vine defines *sphragis* as 'a seal' or 'signet', Rev 7:2, 'the seal of the living God', an emblem of ownership and security, here combined with that of destination (as in Ezek 9:4), the persons to be 'sealed' being secured from destruction and marked for reward.

v3 - *"Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God."* - The seven trumpets which are sounded later (Rev 8:70) are warnings to the unsaved of mankind, not to the saints who must therefore first be sealed to mark them as being distinct from the rest of mankind. It is God's *servants* who must be sealed, the book of Revelation is written to God's servants (1:1, 22:6), Christians are referred to as servants 10 times in the book and as saints 12 times. Notice that all the plagues of Egypt which resemble the trumpets did not hurt the people of God, they were protected (Exo 9:4, 9:26, 10:23, 11:7, 12:23), the Lord made a distinction between the Egyptians and Israel, Exo 11:7. God's deliverance of his people is also shown by the experience of Noah, Lot and Esther. Before he died Jesus prayed that the disciples would be protected by the power of the Father's name (John

17:11 cf. Rev 14:1 where they are sealed in the Father's name and of the Lamb), in John 17:15 he prays that they are not taken out of the world but protected from the power of the evil one. The image of the seal comes from Ezek 9:4 in which a mark is put on the foreheads of those who grieved and lamented over all the detestable thing done in Jerusalem, they were then protected from the ensuing slaughter. The seal is of ownership because they are God's servants, but it is also the seal of protection, in the fifth trumpet the locusts were told to only harm those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads (Rev 9:4). The seal marks those who belong to God, 2 Tim 2:19, 'the Lord knows who are his'. In v2 it is called 'the seal of the living God', the seal is also the seal of the Holy Spirit, Eph 1:13, it is the seal of ownership. It was put on their foreheads i.e. their mind, it reminds us of the gold plate that was engraved as a seal with the words 'HOLY TO THE LORD' which the high priest wore on his forehead (Exo 28:36-38), this marks him out as consecrated to the Lord. Contrast this to the title written on the forehead of the harlot, 'MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH' (Rev 17:5). In Rev 14:1 the 144,000 are described as having the name of the Lamb and his Father on their foreheads, i.e. thrice sealed by God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. At baptism we are baptised into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Mat 28:19). This seal is in contrast to the mark of the beast, on the right hand or forehead, which marks those who are the beast's (13:16) and who are subject to the wrath of God (14:9-11, 16:2).

v4 - *Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel* - He heard their number, 144,000 which is clearly a symbolic number, later he sees them as a great multitude which no one could count. In the NT the church is described as the Israel of God, Gal 6:16, and as Abraham's seed in Gal 3:29, in Rom 4:16 Abraham is the father of those who believe. The number 144 also appears in Rev 21:17 which is the thickness of the walls of the New Jerusalem, which is a clear reference to the complete OT and NT church. 12,000 is found in Rev 21:16 as the length of the New Jerusalem: again this is a vision of the new Jerusalem whose gates had the names of the twelve tribes of Israel on them and whose twelve foundations had the names of the twelve apostles on them because the city is composed of both old and new testament saints. A number of dispensationalist commentators particularly from America hold that there is a separate place for Israel and the church in their theology, but this does not accord with NT theology about the church, the 144,000 are not Jewish converts in the last days but are the church. The church is the true Israel of God, God works in the world through his church, in the OT it was through the twelve tribes and in the NT through the twelve apostles. The place for Israel or rather the Jewish people in the last days is as part of the church. The number

thousand means complete so the 144,000 represent all God's people from the old and new testament. The 144,000 is not a literal number, it is the complete church not part of it. $144 = 12 * 12$, i.e. OT * NT church, $1000 = 10*10*10$ which means completeness. The symbolism ought to be evident from the breakdown of the number 144,000 into twelve tribes of *exactly* 12,000 for each tribe. Israel was the name given to Jacob after he struggled with God and with men and overcame (Gen 32:28), once again a reference to God's people as overcomers.

v4 - *144,000 from all the tribes of Israel* - What follows is clearly a census of all the tribes of Israel, however when we examine the census it has some significant differences from actual censuses taken in the OT. Each tribe has exactly 12,000 counted so the census should be regarded as symbolic. When the first census was taken of the tribes they had to pay a ransom, Exo 30:12, so those in the census were ransomed people. The 144,000 are found again in 14:1 where they have the name of the Lamb and the Father written on their foreheads. In the description of the new Jerusalem, 22:3-4, we also find God's servants with his name on their foreheads.

v5 - *From the tribe of Judah 12,000 were sealed*, - The 144,000 sealed, the first born of the twelve tribes of OT Israel is Reuben who is normally mentioned first, he is listed second to Judah, but here the first tribe in the list and therefore the first born is from the tribe of Judah, Jesus is the first born of the dead (Rev 1:5, Col 1:15) and is from the tribe of Judah (Heb 7:14, Rev 5:5). He is the firstborn of many brothers, Rom 8:29. The number of people in each tribe is 12,000, which is symbolic, this number also occurs when the New Jerusalem is measured, its length, width and height is 12,000 stadia. It had twelve gates and on each gate was written the name of one of the tribes of Israel, the city had twelve foundations on which were written the names of the twelve apostles.

v7 - *from the tribe of Levi 12,000*, - Levi is the tribe of priests, it is now include in the census, whereas they are not normally counted (Num 1:4749) 'You must not count the tribe of Levi or include them in the census of the other Israelites'. The NT saints are a royal priesthood, 1 Pet 2:9, there is no need now for a separate tribe of priests.

v8 - *from the tribe of Joseph 12,000*, - Joseph is not normally mentioned as a tribe, his sons Manasseh and Ephraim are normally mentioned as two tribes (Gen 48:5), however Ephraim went into idolatry and is not mentioned here as did Dan who is not mentioned, idolaters are excluded from the New Jerusalem (Rev 22:15). Joseph is a type of Christ, there is nothing bad mentioned about him in scripture. Both Joseph and Christ were unjustly tried, Joseph was unjustly charged with trying to rape Potiphar's

wife (Gen 39:1-20). Both were unjustly sold (Chilton) see Gen 37:28 and Mat 26:15. Both suffered; Joseph in prison and Jesus on the cross. Both were later crowned with glory and honour (Gen 41:39-45, Heb 2:9).

The census thus reveals Christ as the firstborn, it includes the priests together with Joseph as a type of Christ, all have been ransomed, but there are no idolaters in it; it is the church of the redeemed.

17. The great multitude in white robes (7:9)

Rev 7:9 After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. 10 And they cried out in a loud voice:

"Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

Rev 7.11 All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, 12 saying:

"Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honour and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"

Rev 7:13 Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes--who are they, and where did they come from?" 14 I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 Therefore,

"they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. 16 Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. 17 For the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

8:1 When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

v9 - *After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.* - First John hears their number, 144,000 (7:1), they are first described symbolically, now he looks and he sees a great multitude that no one could count. This great multitude is this same 144,000 who are also the same as the new Jerusalem, see Rev 21:1-4 and 21:12-17 in which the New Jerusalem is 12,000 stadia in length and as wide and high as it is long. The 144,000 also occur in Rev 14:1-3, where they have the name of the Lamb and of God on their foreheads as do the saints in the New Jerusalem, 22:4. The great multitude here are also found described in the New Jerusalem: they have washed their robes (22:14), they are before the throne of God and serve God (22:3), God will wipe away every tear (21:4). John also sees a great

multitude in heaven in 19:1 ff. who praise God because he has avenged on the great prostitute the blood of his servants (19:2), these are described as God's servants (19:5) and as the bride (19:7). This great number that no one could count is the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham that his offspring would be as numerous as the stars or grains of sand on the seashore (Gen 15:5, 22:17, Heb 11:12).

v9 - *from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.* - Notice the four fold description indicating that they come from the four corners of the earth, it also lends weight to the argument that they represent the complete number of the redeemed, they are not just Gentiles. These saints come from the same group that the beast has authority over (Rev 13:7) and to whom the angel has an eternal gospel for (14:6). This illustrates the universality of the gospel, we are to preach the gospel to all creatures, even to those who worship the beast. They are standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb which answers the question posed in 6:17 'who can stand on the day of their wrath', clearly only the church can stand before God. Because John sees them standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb they are in heaven (Rev 4:2, 5:13, 22:3). Compare this with the vision of 'someone like a son of man' in Daniel 7:13 in which 'all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him' Dan 7:14.

v9 - *They were wearing white robes* - The white robes are robes of righteousness, see v14, in which they are stated to have 'washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb', also see Isa 61:10. The martyrs were also given a white robe 6:11, see also Rev 3:4-5, 3:18. The armies of heaven are dressed in fine linen white and clean, 19:14. The white robes are imputed righteousness, that is the righteousness of Christ, their own good deeds are like a filthy garment, Isa 64:6, Zech 3:3.

v9 - *holding palm branches in their hands* - This reminds us of the praise given to Jesus before his death, John 12:13, the palm branches were emblems of triumph. It is also a reminder of the feast of booths celebrated at the harvest of the crops (Lev 23:39 ff.), here they celebrate the eternal harvest of the saints. Palm trees are in the city described by Ezekiel, Ezek 41:17-18.

v10 - *And they cried out in a loud voice: - "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."* - These are they that acknowledge that their salvation comes from God (Isa 25:9, Rev 12:10, 19:1) and from Jesus as the NT affirms, (Eph 2:4, 2 Thess 2:13, 1 Tim 1:15, Titus 3:4). God and the Lamb are linked together, their salvation was God's plan and implemented by the Lamb of God. They are saved from the wrath of the Lamb because they are sealed. It is interesting to consider that in

heaven we will all speak one language as in pre-Babel times. There is now no need for the confusion of languages, man is embarking on a correct activity, namely the worship of God and of the Lamb.

v11 - *All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God,* - The rest of heaven now joins in agreement and in worshipping God, who is the only one to whom worship is due cf. 4:10, 5:8, 5:14. The angels worship God and it is an angel who twice tells John not to worship at his feet but to worship God, 19:10, 22:8-9. Contrast the worship of God here with the worship of the beast and the dragon in 13:4.

v12 - *"Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honour and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"* - They all join in this sevenfold doxology as they did in 5:12.

v13 - *Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes--who are they, and where did they come from?"* - This is a rhetorical question that the elder then proceeds to answer.

v14 - *I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.* - What is the great tribulation? The word 'great' (*meGas*) is frequently used in the book of Revelation (see introduction). The NIV includes the definite article 'the' before 'great tribulation', which the KJV omits. We have already heard about 'the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth' in 3:10. The fifth seal has revealed the souls of the martyrs under the altar slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained, 6:9. Those who come out of the great tribulation are those who have washed their robes, they are the redeemed who are the Church of God. Compare with the description of the redeemed in Rev 22:14 who have washed their robes so they may have the right the tree of life and to go into the city.

The book of Revelation speaks of two tribulations, one for the church which is persecution, the other for the world featured in the seven trumpets and seven bowls and especially at the second coming. Thus we need to distinguish between tribulation for the believer and wrath on unbelievers, believers are sealed before the trumpets are sounded. The great tribulation is the time of persecution throughout this current church age but rising to a crescendo to a period of unparalleled distress just prior to

the return of Christ (Mat 24:29, Dan 12:1). It is described from the point of view of the redeemed in heaven rather than from human history; he sees their final countless number. It is the tribulation that all believers have come through (Acts 14:22), it is not just an isolated single future event in history, this should become clear from the rest of Revelation which goes on to describe more persecution that the saints will have to go through. Jesus said that in the world you will have tribulation (*thlipsis*:G2347), a word that includes pressure, suffering and persecution (John 16:33; cf. Rom 12:12; 2 Cor 1:4; 7:4; 2 Thess 1:4; Rev 1:9; 2:9, 2:10, 2:22 NTSB).

The great multitude he saw that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, is more likely to be the whole company of believers than just those who come through the final great distress. That the 144,000 consist of both OT and NT saints ought to make it clear that the tribulation occurs throughout the OT and NT eras, the New Jerusalem shows both OT and NT saints. The OT church suffered tribulation under Pharaoh in Egypt which is a model for much of the NT persecution in this book.

It is easy for the church in the west which is not under persecution to look for a future fulfilment of the great tribulation, however the reformers, the church in China and Russia will disagree, they have had and are having their tribulation now. The idea that the rapture will occur before the great tribulation is also against scripture (1 Thess 4:13-17, Mat 24:30-31) and is also demonstrated here in this verse. The book of Revelation testifies that the saints will come out of great tribulation (*thlipsis*) in this verse and the following verses:

- i. John himself was suffering tribulation (*thlipsis*:G2347), see 1:9.
- ii. Smyrna was in affliction (*thlipsis*), see :2:9 and persecution (*thlipsis*) see 2:10.
- iii. The fifth seal reveals the martyrs slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained (to the end). 6:9
- iv. When the two witnesses finish their testimony they are killed by the beast, 11:7, they are later raptured, most futurists regard the beast as the antichrist.
- v. The beast was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them, 13:7

vi. The second beast caused all who refused to worship the image of the first beast to be killed, 13:15.

vii. The woman riding the beast is drunk with the blood of the saints, 17:6.

Finally, Jesus himself testifies that the elect will come out of the great tribulation, Mat 24:20-31, Mark 13:18-27.

v14 - *they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb* - This is a glorious paradox, he has freed us from our sins by his blood (Rev 1:5), white indicates purity (1 John 1:7, Isa 1:18). Isa 61:10 refers to the garments of salvation and the robe of righteousness. It is also connected with the Israelites washing their cloths in preparation for the Lord to come down at Mt. Sinai (Exo 19:10), in this it indicates that they were to be ceremonially clean to see the Lord.

v15 - *Therefore, "they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them.* - The 'therefore' is because they are cleansed and have suffered for Christ's sake. The rewards indicated here are reiterated in 21:3 ff. 'The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him' and are further evidence that this group of saints is the whole company of believers. They are before his throne, that is in his presence and they serve God, as they had while living on the earth. Compare those who serve God day and night with the fate of those who worship the beast and his image, and the devil who accused them day and night, they will be tormented and have no rest day and night for ever and ever (Rev 14:11, 20:10). The great multitude of the saints serve him day and night in his temple, that is the inner sanctuary or the Holies of Holies, thus fulfilling Ezek 37:26, in which God will put his sanctuary among his people forever.

v16 - *Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat.*- This is a picture of heaven, as a set of negatives, they will never thirst because they will have springs of living water (v17). They will never be scorched by the sun, because there will be no sun (Rev 21:23, 22:5 cf. Isa 49:10), this is in contrast to the fourth bowl which scorched people, see Rev 16:8. It is also in contrast with those in the lake of fire. They will never hunger because of the fruit of the tree of life and Jesus said I am the bread of life.

v17 - *For the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.*" - The Lamb will be their shepherd, they shall not want (they will not thirst or go hungry) and he will lead them to springs of living water, Psa 23:1, the spring of the water of life is found in Rev 21:6, whose source is the Lamb. We have already seen the Lamb standing at the centre of the throne, Rev 5:6. God will wipe every tear from their eyes, this is repeated in 21:4, compare with its OT equivalent in Isa 25:8, contrast this with the weeping of the ungodly Mat 13:42. This does away with the curse, Gen 3:17, there will be no more curse 22:3. Compare the similarity of verses 15-17 with the description given in Rev 21:3-6, we are seeing the same event, a foretaste of heaven, thus the parallelism of the book. This section can be seen as the fulfilment of Jesus prayer before he was crucified in that he prayed that his disciples would be with him and see his glory (John 17:24).

8:1 - *When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.* - After these two pictures of the church the seventh seal is opened, followed by silence in heaven. This could be time of reflection on what has happened up until now. It could be because the first heaven and earth have passed away. The visions of the 144,000 and the great multitude form an interlude between the sixth and seventh seal. There is also an interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets which features the two witnesses, that is the witnessing church. The following verses show other biblical passages in which there is silence.

In Psa 76 the land feared and was quiet when the Lord pronounced judgement from heaven.

In Isa 18:4 before the harvest of the earth the Lord looks upon the earth from heaven in silence.

In Isa 24:8 it tells of the quietness of musical instruments and revellers after the Lord has devastated the earth.

In Isa 47:5 Babylon will go into silence.

In Isa 41:1 the islands are to be silent before the judgement of the Lord.

In Ezek 27:32 Tyre is silenced.

In Hab 2:18-20, the Lord is in his holy temple and the earth is to keep silent before him.

In Zec 1:7 the earth should be silent before the Lord because the day of the Lord is near when he will punish the wicked.

In Zec 2:13 mankind is to be still before the Lord because he has roused himself from his holy dwelling and is coming in judgement.

Scene 3: The seven trumpets and the two witnesses.

The seventh seal and the seven trumpets (8:1)

The mighty angel and the little scroll (10:1)

The two witnesses (11:1)

The seventh trumpet, the third woe (11:15)

18. The seventh seal and the seven Trumpets (8:1)

8:1 When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

2 And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.

3 Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. 4 The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel's hand. 5 Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

Rev 8:6 Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them.

18.1. Introduction:

The seven seals summarise human history from the viewpoint of heaven and the church. There is war, famine and pestilence in general and on the church in particular there is persecution, then the end will come, this probably accounts for the silence of the seventh seal. What is described is similar to the signs of the end of the age as described by Jesus in Matthew 24. The seven trumpets however follow on from the persecution of the seals and are God's warnings to unbelievers, they do not affect the eternal spiritual security of the believer which is why he is sealed first, although they may affect him physically. The seven trumpets are God's response to the prayers of his people as the first section (8:1-5) shows. A number of authors point out that in Lev 26 Israel is warned that their calamities will be multiplied seven times if they do not

heed God's voice and continue in their apostasy. Beasley-Murray points out that by tripling this with the seven seals, trumpets and bowls it builds up to the advent of Christ in an awe-inspiring climax. We should also note that Jesus voice sounded like a trumpet, 1:10.

The trumpets are modelled on the plagues on the Egyptians, the plague of blood on the Nile however is split into two, one affecting the sea and the other the drinking water (rivers and springs), and this is a good example of Farrar's 'Rebirth of Images'. Using the Exodus as our model when these disasters afflict the world it is a sign to the saints that they will soon be free of their persecutors. The effects of the trumpets are world wide because the persecution of God's people is worldwide (Beasley-Murray). God's word to Pharaoh through Moses were 'let my people go that they may worship me' Exo 8:1; Pharaoh refused and the plagues resulted. The trumpets come to the world because of their refusal to allow God's people to worship him (by persecuting them) and their refusal to worship God themselves, they prefer idolatry instead (9:20). The trumpets like the seals form a group of four, two and one. The last three trumpets which affect mankind directly are also called the three woe's, a build up in severity is clearly intended. The first four trumpets bring disaster onto the world (vegetation burned, sea, rivers and springs; i.e. man's environment) and universe (sun, moon and stars). The fifth and sixth trumpets affect mankind directly, the demonic locusts torment mankind and the two hundred million horsemen kill a third of mankind. The statement after the sixth trumpet that mankind still did not repent indicates that the purpose of these judgements is to bring mankind to repentance. Despite these disasters mankind refuses to repent and hence the witness of the church occurs in the interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpet. When they have finished their witness the seventh trumpet ushers in the end of the world and the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of Christ and there is the judgement day. The trumpets are warnings because they only affect a third of mankind. The seven bowls that occur later in Revelation are similar and complimentary to the seven trumpets except that they are final outpourings of wrath and affect all mankind who once again refuse to repent.

The main question is how to interpret the seven trumpets. To the literalist they must be some future event because they clearly have not yet occurred, Mounce considers them to be eschatological. Beasley-Murray considers the seals, trumpets and bowls to be parallel and to describe a single short period in history, namely, the time of the end which precedes the coming of Christ's kingdom. Hendriksen considers them to be the disasters and afflictions of men throughout the ages. Caird comments that John likens the disasters of his own time to the plagues of Egypt. Wilcock argues that the

trumpets are parallel to the seals, showing what happens throughout history until the Second Coming with particular reference to the suffering of the church. The trumpets cover the same time period but are warnings to the world. Lenski considers the seals to be manmade while the trumpets are miraculous. Walvoord, as well as Ladd, argues that the trumpets do not recapitulate the seven seals but that the seven trumpets are the seventh seal, and that the rest of the book is contained in the seventh seal and that the seven bowls are contained in the seventh trumpet. This looks reasonable because after the sixth seal we find the 144,000 who are sealed in readiness for the seven trumpets, then comes the vision of the great multitude and then the seventh seal after which follows the seven trumpets. However this puts everything after sixth seal which has every appearance of the Second Coming of Christ, indeed the Second Coming appears again and again throughout the book. Also the mighty angel announces that 'in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished' (10:7) and there is hardly time for the seven seals to occur within the seventh trumpet. Since the two witnesses, who occur after the sixth trumpet, prophesy throughout the church age and the church is cared for throughout the same time and the beast has authority for the same time, the trumpets must sound throughout the gospel age.

God is always calling men to repentance throughout history and natural disasters are only one of his means of doing this. God shakes the nations to awake men out of their self-sufficiency and complacency. However one would expect these disasters to become more frequent and intense as the birth pangs of Christ's coming intensify. Jesus clearly predicts a time of great distress at the end before he comes. Earlier in Mat 24:8 and Mark 13:8 he uses the term 'beginning of birth pains' when speaking about false prophets, wars, famines and earthquakes, this indicates that these will become more intense and more frequent as his coming draws nearer and nearer. While demonic oppression of men has been with us for thousands of years, at the end, a massive onslaught by the enemy, as indicated by the fifth trumpet, is to be expected as Satan realises that his time is coming to an end. As with the beast who can be seen as the antichrist but who also represents ungodly tyrannical regimes throughout the ages the seven trumpets can be seen in purely eschatological terms but they can also be seen as disasters sent by God throughout history calling men to repentance. However the sixth trumpet does look purely eschatological and it is most likely to refer to the last great battle just prior to the Second Coming. If one compares the sixth seal, sixth trumpet and sixth bowl they all refer to the last battle, the Second Coming or both. When interpreting the seven trumpets it is important to remind ourselves that John is writing in the apocalyptic style with which we are not familiar.

To those who say that it is absurd for the waters to become blood as in the second trumpet we have to answer that it has occurred once when Moses turned the Nile to blood. Chilton points out that the Sea of Galilee became like blood when the Romans killed the Jews who had taken to the water in boats in AD 70. The first four trumpets affect mans environment and could therefore refer to natural disasters, the blood being a sign indicating death. Remember that only a third of the sea turned into blood, which would seem strange if taken literally. The symbolism of these events is seen in the occurrence of the phrase 'one third' for the destruction involved in each of the first four trumpets. In the fourth trumpet the symbolism is extreme in that a third of sun, moon and stars are struck so that a third of them turned dark. If we compare the seven trumpets to the seven bowls, which also fall into groups of four, two and one and which are the complete outpouring of God's wrath, the first four bowls are complimentary to the first four trumpets. Then since the bowls are said to be signs (15:1) and therefore symbolic, then the trumpets are also symbolic but they are still symbolic of something real. The last three trumpets are called the three woes and are much worse than the first three. The fifth trumpet is likely to refer to an outbreak of demonic attacks upon mankind and could indicate a future period of unprecedented demonic attack. If one compares the fifth seal, the fifth trumpet and the fifth bowl they represent persecution of the church, tribulation for men who are not sealed and tribulation for those with the mark of the beast. The sixth trumpet seems to be a specific eschatological event in history, in which a third of men are killed, which seems to be in the future. The seventh trumpet refers to the end of the age when the kingdom of the world is handed over to Christ.

The sixth seal clearly depicts the Second Coming of Christ in wrath on the world. This is followed by the sealing of the 144,000, followed by a glimpse of a great multitude who have come out of the great tribulation which ends in a description of their blessedness in terms very similar to 21:3-7. Then the seventh seal is opened followed by silence for half an hour. A crucial question here is having opened the seven seals and therefore allowing the contents of the book to be revealed, do the contents of the book occur in time after the seventh seal is opened or does it reveal in more detail what the seven seals have already told us? I would suggest that it allows the plan of God for the world and His people to be revealed in more detail. The rest of the book shows us the enemies of the church and God's judgements upon mankind in greater detail. More specifically the seven trumpets are God's judgements upon mankind in response to the prayers of his suffering people. While the first five seals reveal mans suffering in general, the first four seals are not God's judgements upon mankind because most originate with man himself.

The first six of the seven trumpets are followed by the vision of the mighty angel and the two witnesses. That the two witnesses occur between the six and seventh trumpet is significant because the warnings of the first six trumpets need to be complimented and completed by the witness of the church before the seventh trumpet ushers in the end of the age when further repentance is impossible. The purpose of the first six trumpets is to bring men to repentance, however on their own they fail in this task. If the first four trumpets are taken as natural disasters then it is the church that must explain these, preach the gospel and urge people to repent and turn to God. Then follows the seventh trumpet in which the kingdom is handed to Christ, his wrath has come and the time for the judgement occurs. It seems that the sixth seal and the seventh trumpet both usher in the Second Coming. Therefore while the seven trumpets follow the seven seals in John's vision they do not necessarily follow in historical time. Michael Wilcock deals with this issue more fully, p85-89. The first four seals deal with mankind's history in general, the fifth seal concerns church history, the sixth seal deals with the end of mans history. The trumpets deal with the same time frame but give God's reaction to the persecution of His people that the fifth seal has revealed. Mankind's history ends with the seventh trumpet. That there is recapitulation of history in the book ought to be evident from further mentions of the second coming:

Two witnesses raptured 11:12,
 Harvest of the earth 14:14,
 Sixth bowl, 'Behold, I come like a thief!' 16:15,
 The rider on the white horse in Rev 19:11.
 Conclusion of Revelation 22:7, 22:12, 22:20.

The seven trumpets are also modelled on the fall of Jericho (Josh 6): In Josh 6:8 there are seven priests with seven trumpets encircling Jericho with the arc of the covenant following them. They marched around the city for six days and on the seventh day they marched around it seven times with the priests blowing the trumpets. They carried the arc of the covenant behind the trumpets which signifies the presence of God. At the seventh time around the priests blew long blasts on their trumpets, the people shouted and the walls fell down and everyone was slaughtered except for Rahab the harlot. The pattern is to march around the city and blow the trumpets for six days, on the seventh day march around the city six times and on the seventh time a long trumpet blast spells destruction for the city. The march seven times around the walls with trumpets blowing warns of destruction for those within the city, which on the long blast is destroyed. Compare with 11:13 when a tenth of the city collapsed and 16:19 when the cities of the nations collapsed, the seventh trumpet of Revelation ushers in the kingdom of God and the judgement (11:15). This should be compared

with the walls of the New Jerusalem, which do not collapse (21:12 ff.). Let us be thankful that we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, while created things are shaken (Heb 12:27-28). When the world hears the seven trumpets it spells impending disaster as when the wall fall down, but to the church they sound impending victory over their enemies. In case we find God's judgements harsh we must remind ourselves of Jesus words concerning those Galileans Pilate had killed or those who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them: 'But unless you repent, you too will perish' (Luke 13:1-5).

v1 - *When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.* - The silence indicates the solemnity of the moments, it could also be so that the prayers of the saints can be heard. It could connect the seventh seal with the seven trumpets but it is more likely to be a dramatic pause. The silence could also be because the Day of the Lord has come, Zep 1:7, Hab 2:20, the silence of death Psa 115:17. Once the seven seals are opened the scroll can be read and more details follow.

v2 - *And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.* - Note the phrase 'I saw', which in this case indicates the beginning of a new vision. Again the phrase 'were given' indicating that the seven trumpets come with divine approval and authority. The description of the angels who stand before God is similar to that given by the archangel Gabriel when he visited Mary: 'I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God', Luke 1:19. Archangels and trumpets are also linked to the Second Coming, 1 Thess 4:16.

v3 - *Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne.* - The censer contained fire and incense which sanctified the prayer of all (note the *all*) the saints, see Rev 5:8. This is the first reference to the golden altar, there is another reference in connection with the sixth trumpet (9:13), when a voice comes from the golden altar commanding the release of the four angels bound at the river Euphrates, it is probably the same altar under which are the martyrs, 6:9. In Exo 30:7 we find that incense was burned day and night upon the altar. The golden altar was before the throne and in Heb 9:3 we find that the earthly altar of incense was in the most holy place next to the Ark of the Covenant which we find revealed later in Rev 11:19 after the seventh trumpet is sounded. Notice the references to the golden censer and golden altar, gold reflects purity and value, thus the value of the prayers of the saints.

v4 - *The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel's hand.* - Again as in the scroll and the Lamb (Rev 5:8) in which the golden bowls full of incense are the prayers of the saints, the prayers of the saints are one of the keys to the fulfilment of God's plan, see verse 5, compare with the power of the prayers of the two witnesses in 11:6. The incense is symbolic of the prayers of the saints, Psa 141:2. The phrase 'went up before God' indicates that God heard the prayers of his saints. Compare this with God hearing the cry of the Israelites when they were in slavery in Egypt, Exo 2:23, 3:9. This is just one of the analogies with the Exodus story used in Revelation, many of the trumpets are also similar to the plagues on Egypt. The incense can represent the intercessions of Christ (Rom 8:34) or those of the Spirit (Rom 8:26-27).

v5 - *Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth* - After the prayers went up before God, the angel takes the *same* censer that contained the incense and fills it with fire from the altar and hurls it to earth. The same golden censer that contained incense together with the prayers of the saints is used to hurl fire to the earth. The seven trumpets that follow are therefore God's response to the prayers of the saints, as are also the seven golden bowls containing wrath of God (15:7). They also answer the cry of the martyrs for their blood to be avenged, see the third bowl. In the first exodus God heard the cry of his people and rescued them from their slave drivers, Exo 3:7-8, in order to do this he had to bring the plagues upon the Egyptians. This reminds us of the Lord's words in Luke 12:49, 'I have come to cast fire upon the earth'. In Ezek 10:2-7 a man is told to take burning coals from the cherubim and scatter them over the city. The fire hurled to earth finds its fulfilment in the first trumpet in which hail and fire mixed with blood was hurled to earth, 8:7, in fact fire is a feature of the first six trumpets.

First trumpet:	there came hail and fire mixed with blood,
Second trumpet	something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea.
Third trumpet	a great star, blazing like a torch,
Fourth trumpet	a third of the sun was struck,
Fifth trumpet	smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace.
Sixth trumpet	A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulphur that came out of their mouths.

v5 - *and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake.* - These are a manifestation of God's presence, for example when God descended to the top of mount Sinai (Exo 19:16) this was accompanied by thunder

and lightening, see also the throne in heaven Rev 4:5, the seventh trumpet 11:19, the seventh bowl 16:18, this is the result of the prayers of the saints. The seventh plague on the Egyptians was a storm manifesting thunder and hail, and lightning (Exo 9:23,24). The purpose of the plague was so that God's name might be proclaimed in all the earth and to persuade Pharaoh to let God's people go so that they might worship Him (Exo 9:13-18).

These manifestations of God's presence (theophany), thunder, lightening and earthquakes all come from the throne:

i. Rev 4:5 The vision of the throne in heaven.

ii. The seventh seal 8:5.

iii. After two witnesses go to heaven in a cloud 11:13.

iv. After the seventh trumpet is sounded 11:19.

v. The seventh bowl 16:18.

vi. See also Isa 29:6.

vii. The Lord's presence at Sinai Exo 20:18.

v6 - *Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them.* - In scripture trumpets are used at the following occasions:

- i. To announce the coming of God to Mt. Sinai, Exo 19:16
- ii. To announce the coronation of the king (Solomon), 1 King 1:34.
- iii. To announce the winning of a battle, 1 Sam 13:3
- iv. When the Israelites entered Jericho, Josh 6:3-9
- v. To announce the Second Coming, 1 Thess 4:16, Zep 1:14-18, Mat 24:31, 1 Cor 15:51-52.
- vi. Warning of the Second Coming, Joel 2:1
- vii. Calling the people together and having the camp move on, Num 10:2.
- viii. Dedication of the temple, 2 Chr 5:12-13.
- vi. To announce the Day of Atonement, Lev 25:9 and feast days Num 10:10
- vii. To announce the start of a battle, and feast days, Num 10:9-10.
- vii. To announce the arrival of the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem, 1 Chr 15:24.

- viii. To announce disaster because of sin, Isa 58:1, Jer 4:4-6, Jer 6:1,16-19, 51:25-29, Ezek 33:1-8, Hosea 7:16, 8:1, Amos 3:6.
- ix. The Lord's voice, Rev 1:10.

In Rev 1:10 John heard a voice like a trumpet so the seven trumpets should be understood as God's warning voice to mankind. The trumpet is sounded to call the attention of those within hearing distance. The seven trumpets should be considered as God's voice to warn the world that God is Holy and will judge man for his sin, it is a call for repentance, see Rev 9:20, in which after the sixth trumpet mankind still refused to repent of breaking the first and second tablets of the law. Seven is the completeness of their announcement. There are plenty of scriptures that show that a trumpet is used to announce a disaster that comes because of people's sin. The first six trumpets are also God's preliminary warning to mankind of the imminent arrival of Christ with the seventh trumpet. The Second Coming of Christ will be accompanied by the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, 1 Thess 4:16.

18.1.1. The seven trumpets and the ten plagues on Egypt:

The seven trumpets are in answer to the prayers of God's people seen earlier in Rev 8:3. The trumpets are warnings to mankind, the last three (woes) are worst than the first four. The first four trumpets affect the world (earth, sea, and rivers, light), the last three affect man's spiritual life (locusts, horses). They only affect a third of the land unlike the bowls later which affect all the land and unlike the seals that affect a quarter of the land. They can be likened to the plagues of Egypt. These plagues were also given in answer to the prayers of God's people and because Pharaoh would not let God's people leave and worship him, Exo 9:13. In the same way the trumpets can be viewed as warnings to those who persecute God's people to let them go and worship God (Caird), if they continue to persecute God's people then worse plagues will befall mankind, Exo 9:14. The Exodus narrative is a thread that runs throughout the book of Revelation.

The only place it did not hail was Goshen where the plague did not harm them, Exo 9:26. The trumpets do not harm God's people who are sealed, 7:2, 9:4. Similarly the Passover, in which when the destroying angel saw the blood he passed over the people of God and did not kill the firstborn.

The indictment against man after the sixth trumpet is given in Rev 9:20, because they still did not repent of worshipping demons and idols and other sins; murder, magic arts, sexual immorality and thefts. Men loved darkness rather than light, John 3:19, Rom 1:21.

The ten Plagues on Egypt:

1. Exo 7:17-18 the water of the Nile, and it will be changed into blood.
2. Exo 8:2. Plague of frogs.
3. Exo 8:16 Plague of gnats.
4. Exo 8:21 Swarm of flies.
5. Exo 9:3 Plague on livestock.
6. Exo 9:9 Festering boils on men and animals.
7. Exo 9:17-18 Plague of hail.
8. Exo 10:4-5 Plague of locusts.
9. Exo 10:21-22 Three days of darkness.
10. Exo 11:4-5 Firstborn will die.

The trumpets and the bowls are also similar and again remind us of the Egyptian plagues.

The Trumpets and Bowls Compared

	Trumpets	Bowls
First	hail fire mixed with blood hurled to earth, third of the earth, trees and green grass burned up.	Ugly and painful sores on those who had the mark of the beast and worship his image
Second	third of sea turned to blood, third of living creatures in sea died, third of ships destroyed.	Sea turned to blood, everything in the sea died

Third	Third of waters turned bitter, many people died	Rivers and springs became blood
Fourth	A third of the day and night was without light	Sun scorches people with fire
Fifth	Locusts out of the Abyss torture mankind for five months	Kingdom plunged into darkness, men gnawed their tongues in agony
Sixth	Third of mankind killed by fire, smoke and sulphur i.e. war	Three evil spirits (frogs) gather kings of the earth for battle on the great day of God Almighty.
Seventh	End of the age, time of the judgement, lightening, thunder, earthquake, hailstorm.	The end of the age, flashes of lightening, thunder, a great earthquake and plague of hail

The trumpets, seals and bowls come in groups of four first, followed by a more severe group of three. Notice below the constant repetition of a third with the trumpets, i.e. not complete destruction, because these are warnings to mankind:

First trumpet:

Rev 8:7 The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down upon the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

Second trumpet:

Rev 8:8 The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood,

Third trumpet:

Rev 8:10 The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water--

Fourth trumpet:

Rev 8:12 The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night.

18.1.2. The OT Feasts and their relevance to Revelation.

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Subject: "These are a shadow of things to come; the reality is in Christ."

"These are the LORD's appointed feasts, the sacred assemblies you are to proclaim at their appointed times." (Leviticus 23:2)

THE SPRING FEASTS:

PASSOVER AND FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD (Leviticus 23:4-8)

First month, 14th day: Passover begins at twilight
 First month, 15th day: Feast of Unleavened Bread (day 1)
 First month, 16th day: Feast of Unleavened Bread (day 2)
 First month, 17th day: Feast of Unleavened Bread (day 3)
 First month, 18th day: Feast of Unleavened Bread (day 4)
 First month, 19th day: Feast of Unleavened Bread (day 5)
 First month, 20th day: Feast of Unleavened Bread (day 6)
 First month, 21st day: Feast of Unleavened Bread (day 7)

The celebration of the Passover included the slaughter of the Passover lamb, which typified the Lamb of God, who would take away the sins of the world.

FIRSTFRUITS (Leviticus 23:9-14)

This day was like the American Thanksgiving holiday, which is coming next week: it was not observed on a particular date but always on a particular day. Just as Thanksgiving is always observed on the fourth Thursday in the month of November, the presentation of the Firstfruits was always celebrated on the first day of the week, during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

According to Leviticus 23:11, the priest is to wave the firstfruits on the day after the Sabbath. Some understand that the Sabbath mentioned there is not the Sabbath at the end of each week but the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was to be a day of sacred assembly (23:7). When we look at the Feast of Weeks, we will see that this idea is mistaken and that the Sabbath of verse 11 is, indeed, the seventh-day Sabbath.

FEAST OF WEEKS (Leviticus 23:15-22)

"From the day after the Sabbath [cf. verse 11], the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, count off seven full weeks. Count off 50 days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new grain to the LORD."

The Feast of Weeks was to be observed on the day after the seventh Sabbath--the seven full weeks (seven Sabbaths) from the presentation of the firstfruits. Thus, the Feast of Weeks was always on the first day of the week. Further, it was to be observed 50 days from the presentation of firstfruits, which indicates that the firstfruits were always presented on the same day of the week as well--the first.

THE AUTUMN FEASTS:

FEAST OF TRUMPETS (Leviticus 23:23-25)

Observed on the first day of the seventh month. The purpose of the Feast of Trumpets is not clearly stated in the Bible, but according to Jewish tradition, it was to warn the people of the impending Day of Atonement, which came nine days later.

DAY OF ATONEMENT (Leviticus 23:26-32)

Observed on the 10th day of the seventh month. This was the day when the people were to be cleansed of sin. All sin was to have been confessed and transferred into the sanctuary by this time, and the high priest ministered on the Day of Atonement to remove the sins from the sanctuary and have them born into the wilderness by the scapegoat (Leviticus 16).

FEAST OF TABERNACLES AND CLOSING ASSEMBLY (Leviticus 23:33-36)

Seventh month, 15th day: Feast of Tabernacles (Day 1)
 Seventh month, 16th day: Feast of Tabernacles (Day 2)
 Seventh month, 17th day: Feast of Tabernacles (Day 3)
 Seventh month, 18th day: Feast of Tabernacles (Day 4)
 Seventh month, 19th day: Feast of Tabernacles (Day 5)
 Seventh month, 20th day: Feast of Tabernacles (Day 6)
 Seventh month, 21st day: Feast of Tabernacles (Day 7)
 Seventh month, 22nd day: Closing Assembly (Day 8)

The Feast of Tabernacles celebrated the autumn harvest, just as the Feast of Weeks

celebrated the spring harvest.

WHAT THE FEASTS POINT TO

"Do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or by with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration, or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ" (Colossians 2:16-17).

Jesus came as the Anointed One, the Messiah, nearly 2,000 years ago; and with that are associated the festivals the Israelites observed around the spring harvest. When he was crucified, Jesus died as the Passover Lamb; and he was raised as the firstfruits on the day after the Sabbath. On the 50th day from Jesus' resurrection, the Holy Spirit came on the apostles on the Day of Pentecost, which was the Feast of Weeks. On that day, 3,000 believed the words of the apostles and received salvation (Acts 2). Jesus promised that he would come again (John 14:1-3), and Revelation has much to say about the preparation for his Second Coming. The spring festivals typified things associated with Jesus' first coming, and the autumn festivals illustrate things associated with his Second Coming.

We can find the fulfilment of each of the three autumn festivals in Revelation.

The first of the autumn festivals described in Leviticus 23 is the Feast of Trumpets. Again, though Leviticus doesn't tell us much about the purpose of this day, Jews understand it to be the warning of the approaching Day of Atonement, by which all sin must be dealt with. I believe the Feast of Trumpets is fulfilled by the seven trumpets of Revelation 8-9, 11. Study indicates that the sounding of the trumpets coincides with the messages of the three angels--Worship the Creator God, Babylon is fallen, and Do not worship Babylon.

The second of the autumn festivals is the Day of Atonement. This day was the only day on which the ministry of the high priest directly included the Ark of the Covenant. At no other time was the ark to be seen by human eyes. Revelation 11:19 is the first and--if memory serves--only time the ark is specifically mentioned; and I believe that it refers to the time by which all sin must be confessed and repented of. Notice, in the last few verses of Revelation 11, that the ark is revealed very shortly after the seventh trumpet is sounded.

The third of the autumn festivals is the Feast of Tabernacles. This was the celebration of the harvest at the end of the year, just as the Feast of Weeks was the celebration of the spring harvest. The difference is that the Feast of Tabernacles was a much bigger celebration (see Leviticus 23). Revelation 14:14-16 describes the harvest; and Revelation 7:9-15 is another reference to those who are harvested from the earth.

The purpose here has not been to go into a lot of detail but to provide an overview of the yearly festivals and to show how they point to Jesus Christ. I believe an understanding of these festivals can help us to get a perspective on his ministry and to develop a cohesive picture of Revelation.

18.2. The First Trumpet (8:7)

8:7 The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down upon the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

v7 - *The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down upon the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.* - In 7:2-3 we saw the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and sea, but they were prevented from harming the land or the sea or the trees until God's servants are sealed. Here we see the first angel sound his trumpet and hail and fire mixed with blood was hurled down upon the earth. The passage does not indicate that the angel hurled the hail and fire upon the earth, but that they had the power over these elements and were its herald. Lenski points out that a mixture of fire and hail (ice) is not natural, it is beyond nature. In verse 5 we saw that as a result of the prayers of the saints fire from the altar was hurled to the earth, here we now see the results as the first angels sounds the first trumpet in a seven fold series of warnings. A third of the earth was burned up and a third of the trees because of the fire that was hurled to earth; 'a third' indicating partial destruction. The unnatural nature of this judgement is indicated in that only a third of the earth and trees were burned but all the green grass was burned up (Lenski). The blood should be understood as indicating death although there is no indication here of human death as in the fourth trumpet, but unlike the second and third trumpets in which people died. Hailey makes the point that since man had shed the blood of the saints, as indicated by the fifth seal, then God is avenging the martyrs shed blood upon their heads (see Gen 9:6, Num 35:33, Isa

26:21, Joel 3:19, Ps 79:10). Notice the similarity with the judgement on Gog, Ezek 38:22, which involved a plague and bloodshed, torrents of rain, hailstones and burning sulphur on him and his troops. Notice that all the green grass was burned up but only a third of the earth and a third of the trees were burned up. First the land is devastated by disaster, mans environment was affected. The first four trumpets depict 'natural' disasters, but these are not natural they are acts of God, they warn man of his short life. Hail is used to indicate God's warnings and judgement, to make men hear, this is reminiscent of the seventh plague on Egypt (Exo 9:18). Compare the first trumpet with the first bowl which is poured out on the land, 16:2, but there it affects the people who worship the beast, the first trumpet only affects the land. Isa 30:30 indicates that the Lord speaks to men using fire, cloudburst, thunderstorm and hail, chapter 11 shows that God also speaks to the world through his church. One of the results of a third of the earth being burned up is famine, c.f. the third seal.

18.3. The second trumpet (8:8)

Rev 8:8 The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood, 9 a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

v8 - *The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea* - Again fire is involved in the second trumpets as it was in the first trumpet. The mountain all ablaze should remind us of mount Sinai (Exo 19:18, Heb 12:18), Mount Sinai was covered in smoke because the Lord descended on it in fire. The mountain was God's judgement on men who broke the law, John may also have had in mind the Eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79. There could also be a subtle reference to the destruction of Babylon here (Caird, Sweet), in Jer 51:63 the destruction of Babylon is likened to a stone thrown into the Euphrates and in 18:17 we find the sea captains wailing over the destruction of Babylon and their loss of trade, in Jer 51:25 Babylon is likened to a burned out mountain.

v8 - *A third of the sea turned into blood 9 a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.*- After the land then the sea is affected, the blood indicates death, only a third is affected because it is a warning, compare this with the first plague on Egypt in which the Nile changed into blood (Exo 7:17). The two witnesses also have the power to turn the waters into blood, 11:6. Compare the second trumpet with the second bowl (16:3) in which all the sea turned into blood and

every living thing in the sea died. Compare with John's use of blood in 16:6 and 17:6. The second trumpet affects both living creatures and manmade ships at sea, this depicts natural disasters at sea. There could be a link here with the distress that will come upon mankind in the last days, Luke 21:25 refers to the fact that the 'nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea'.

18.4. The third trumpet (8:10)

Rev 8:10 The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water-- 11 the name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter.

v10 - *The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water--* As with the first two trumpets fire is again involved in the great star blazing like a torch. After the land and sea the rivers are affected and the star fell from the sky. Again it is man's environment that is affected. Sweet likens the star to the king of Babylon in Isa 14:12 who has fallen from heaven. Jesus said that he saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven (Luke 10:18). With the fifth trumpet a star has fallen to earth (9:1) who is more clearly identifiable as Satan and finally in 12:8 Satan loses his place in heaven and is cast down to the earth and sea (12:12). If this interpretation is correct then Satan has come down to poison men's minds against God and thus destroy them, compare with the river of lies coming from the mouth of the dragon (12:15) and other satanic deception (13:14, 20:8,10). However this may be to over spiritualise the symbol, John may just be depicting natural disaster such as disease caused by dirty water which may cause men to repent.

v11 - *the name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter.* - In the case of the first plague, Exo 7:17, on Egypt firstly all the fish died and secondly the water became undrinkable. John has taken these two effects of the plague and divided them into the second and third trumpets (Caird). In the first plague (Exo 7:17-19) all drinking water in ponds, reservoirs and even water in wooden buckets or stone jars was affected. Wormwood is a very bitter substance (Jer 9:15, Lam 3:19) and indicates affliction and misery. John may have had in mind the water at Marah, which was bitter but which the Lord made sweet, there the Lord promised not to bring any of the diseases that he

brought onto the Egyptians provided they obey the laws of God (Exo 15:22). The bitter waters from which many people died therefore probably means diseased water, it could include floods. Compare the third trumpet with the third bowl in which the rivers and springs become blood, Rev 16:4, there is no mention of death although it is implied by the use of the term blood.

18.5. The fourth trumpet (8:12)

Rev 8:12 The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night. 13 As I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying in mid-air call out in a loud voice: "Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels!"

v12 - *The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night.* - First the earth and vegetation, then the sea, then the rivers and springs and finally the rest of the universe is affected, this is similar to the plague of darkness on the Egyptians (Exo 10:21) and the fifth bowl which is total darkness (Rev 16:10). Constant allusion to the Egyptian plagues is a way of saying that in the last days God will again bring punishment upon those hostile powers, which oppress his people. They are the prelude to that greater and final Exodus in which the church is taken out of the world and enters into the eternal presence of God (Mounce). Compare the fourth trumpet with the fourth bowl in which the sun was given power to scorch people with fire, 16:8.

- i. Darkness is also associated with the Day of the Lord when he comes again (Amos 5:18, Joel 2:2, Mark 13:24, Isa 13:10).
- ii. Darkness is also associated with the demonic (Col 1:13) and prepares us for the next two demonic plagues.
- iii. Darkness is associated with the theophany of God in judgement cf. Isa 13:10, Ezek 32:78, Joel 2:10, 3:15, Mat 24:29 and especially with the crucifixion of Christ, Mat 27:45 (Johnson).

v13 - *As I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying in mid-air call out in a loud voice: "Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels!"* - The eagle (or vulture) calls out the three Woe's to mankind because of the next three trumpets which are more intense

than the first four and affect man directly rather than through his environment. He is in mid-air to be seen by all and cries out in a loud voice to be heard by all. There is a distinction between the first four trumpets which act on the earth, sea, rivers, sun, moon and stars, i.e. the physical universe and the remaining three trumpets which affect mankind directly, hence the three Woe's. The first two woe's are clearly demonic, the locust torture mankind, the four angels kill a third of mankind, the seventh trumpet announces that the time has come for judging the dead. If the flying creature is a vulture then he is hovering over a dying beast which is a symbol of gloom (Luke 17:37). This is a warning of things to come when the birds flying in mid-air gather for the great supper of God (19:17-18, 21), but before that an angel in mid-air proclaims an eternal gospel to those who live on the earth (14:6). It should also be noted that a loud voice in 12:12 proclaims woe to the earth and sea 'because the devil has gone down to you ! He is filled with fury because he knows his time is short.' The star in 9:1 that falls to the earth seems clearly Satanic.

18.6. The fifth trumpet, the first Woe! (9:1)

9:1 The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss. 2 When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss. 3 And out of the smoke locusts came down upon the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. 4 They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. 5 They were not given power to kill them, but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes a man. 6 During those days men will seek death, but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them. Rev 9:7 The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces. 8 Their hair was like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. 9 They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle. 10 They had tails and stings like scorpions, and in their tails they had power to torment people for five months. 11 They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon. 12 The first woe is past; two other woes are yet to come.

v1 - *The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss.* - Sweet notes the hint of satanic parody: 'the key of the pit is given to the fallen one; the keys of Death and Hades are held by the risen one (1:18)'. Various interpretations are given of this star, this is similar to Rev 20:1 in which an angel from heaven has the keys to the Abyss. In this case the star had fallen from heaven to the earth, this reminds us of 12:9 in which Satan was hurled to earth with his angels, in which case the star is Satan. In Isa 14:12 the morning star is cast to the earth, this is usually seen as a reference to Satan who has fallen to the earth. Jesus saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven (Luke 10:18). He should probably be identified with the angel of the Abyss who is identified in v 11 as the destroyer, stars are sometimes a reference to angels (see Rev 1:20), the angel of the Abyss is also called Destroyer which would again fit Satan. In 12:4 the dragon swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to earth, this is likely to be a reference to the angels who followed Satan. The Abyss is also where the beast comes out of (Rev 11:7, 17:8, 18:8), it is where Satan is bound (Rev 20:3). In Luke 8:3 the evil spirits beg Jesus not to send them into the abyss, which is a place of

torment (Mat 8:29), in Romans 10:7 it seems to be the abode of the dead. The star 'was given' the key to the shaft of the Abyss which again indicates the sovereignty of God. If the fifth trumpet is interpreted as a demonic attack upon mankind then it would seem natural for the star to be their master, that is Satan.

v2 - *When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss.* - There are similarities to the sixth seal Rev 6:12 in which the sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, see Joel 2:10. Darkness can be a symbol of the demonic, in this case it certainly is, Satan's kingdom is a kingdom of darkness (Col 1:13). If the Abyss is a place of torment for demons (Mat 8:29, Luke 8:31) then if it is opened we would expect a stream of demons to come out together with smoke from the fire, here John has mixed the smoke from the furnace with the stream of demonic hordes. Compare the smoke from the Abyss with the dense smoke from the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah that looked like 'smoke from a furnace', Gen 19:28, and the presence of the Lord on Mount Sinai, Exo 19:18.

v3 - *And out of the smoke locusts came down upon the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth.* - This brings into mind Joel's vision of the locusts in Joel 1 and 2. The locusts are not ordinary locusts but are demonic powers to bring misery and darkness into the lives of men. The characteristic of locusts is that they devour everything, they destroy everything in their path, see v11, in which their king is called Abaddon which means destroyer. They also indicate a judgement of God as in the eighth plague of locusts upon Egypt (Exo 10:4), see also 2 Chr 7:13, Amos 4:9. Notice that they were *given* (indicating divine permission) power like that of a scorpion of the earth. For the use of scorpions to indicate the demonic see Luke 10:19 where Jesus gives his disciples 'authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you'.

v4 - *They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads* - They were told not to harm their normal food, they are still under the sovereignty of God. Compare this with God's command to the angels before the seven trumpets, Rev 7:3, not to 'harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God'. Compare this with the first trumpet in which the earth, trees and grass was burnt up, now the locusts are told not to harm the grass or any plant or tree. Instead of vegetation they must harm mankind v 4b. They could only harm the ungodly, they can not harm the saints, see Luke 10:19 in which the disciples are given power over snakes, scorpions and over all the power of the enemy, and *nothing will harm them*

(note that snakes and scorpions refers to the demonic). Yet again the limited power of the locusts is a sign of God's Sovereignty. They could not harm the sealed, who were sealed before the trumpets sounded, thus the church who is still on the earth is not hurt by this plague as were the Israelites (cf. Exo 8:22, 9:4, 26, 10:23 and 11:7). This seems to be a massive onslaught by demonic powers upon all mankind in the last days. Here there is no mention of one third as with the first four and indeed the sixth trumpet, it seems to be a *universal* affliction upon mankind. Perhaps it is connected to the fifth seal, which indicates the martyrs that have died. Hailey points out that the distinction made here between the sealed and those not sealed is further proof that the number one hundred and forty-four thousand represents the saints on earth at any point in time, and not a special group of saved persons in the final day.

v5 - *They were not given power to kill them, but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes a man.* - They could not kill them but only torture them for a limited time, that is limited power and duration because five months is about the locust lifetime, these trumpets are warnings to mankind and not final judgements as are the seven bowls. The effect of the locust in Joel 1:12 is to take away joy. The effect of evil spirits on mankind is to torment, Acts 5:16, and trouble people, Luke 6:18, in Luke 9:39 the demon tries to destroy the child. Luke 10:19 indicates the demonic nature of the scorpions. This reminds us of Job, Satan could do what he wanted to Job but had to spare his life; they torment but do not kill those who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. In verse 3 we saw that the locusts had been given power to sting like a scorpion, here we see the resulting agony which was like that of a scorpions sting. The scripture teaches that in the last days there will be an outbreak of demonic doctrines, deceiving spirits, counterfeit signs and wonders that deceives those who are perishing (1 Tim 4:1-3, 2 Thess 2:9-12). There is further evidence of this in Revelation in the counterfeit Christ and miracles of the beast out of the earth (13:11-15), and the three evil spirits that come out of the mouth of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet (16:13-14).

v6 - *During those days men will seek death, but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them.* - Men will seek death, men meaning mankind, because of the pain caused by the sting. The sting is not fatal, like a scorpion's sting. It is difficult to interpret this verse, it looks eschatological, and 'those days' may refer to a time right near the end. This torment of the locust sting is limited to this life only where there is at least the possibility of death, otherwise they would not wish to die. Contrast this desire to die with Paul's desire to die and be with the Lord (Phil 1:23, Morris). Their situation is like Job's who longed to die (Job 3:21).

v7 - *The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces.* - This begins a description of the locusts. The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle, see Joel 2:4, this is true in nature. Something 'like' but not crowns of gold, these are also worn by the twenty four elders (Rev 4:4) and by Jesus (Rev 14:14). Their faces resemble human faces, they had the cunning, cruelty and intelligence of men, (Mounce) this could also indicate the personal nature of the attack.

v8 - *Their hair was like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth.* - The long hair may be a symbol of vitality, like Absalom and Samson. Lions teeth emphasises their power, Joel 1:6.

v9 - *They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle.* - Breastplates of iron emphasises their impregnability. The sound of their wings heightens their terror. Chariots rushing into battle sounds like Joel's description of an army of locusts, Joel 2:5.

v10 - *They had tails and stings like scorpions, and in their tails they had power to torment people for five months.* - This enlarges on the description of scorpions in verses 3 and 5. The most likely interpretation is that this refers to demonic oppression on the minds of men. The purpose was to bring men to repentance (v 20). Once again their power is of limited duration, 5 months, it is a warning to mankind. God uses even the schemes of Satan for his own designs.

v11 - *They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon.* - Abaddon = Destroyer = Sheol or Hades, the land of death, darkness, silence. Locusts destroy every living thing in their path as does Abaddon. The angel of the Abyss from verse 1 is here identified as the Destroyer, this description best fits Satan, who is called the destroyer in John 10:10, he is king of these demonic hordes. This seems to be an unprecedented demonic attack upon mankind during the last days, possibly associated with the antichrist whose miraculous powers are demonic, Rev 16:14.

v12 - *The first woe is past; two other woes are yet to come.* - This ends the first woe and introduces the remaining two, and worse Woes. This indicates that there is a time sequence in that the sixth trumpet follows the fifth trumpet.

18.7. The sixth trumpet, the second Woe! (9:13)

Rev 9:13 The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the horns of the golden altar that is before God. 14 It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." 15 And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. 16 The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million. I heard their number. 17 The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulphur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulphur. 18 A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulphur that came out of their mouths. 19 The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury. 20 The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshipping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood--idols that cannot see or hear or walk. 21 Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.

v13 - *The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the horns of the golden altar that is before God.* - The golden altar is connected to the prayers of the saints (Rev 8:3). The sixth trumpet is in response to the prayers of the saints. For horn, see Lev 8:15, when Moses slaughtered the bull he took some of the blood with his finger and touched the horns of the altar to purify the altar.

v14 - *It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates"* - The four angels are bound so they must evil, they are released at God's command, whose purpose is to get men to repent, see verses 20-21. The four angels cover each direction of the compass, the idea being that they are released to affect the whole earth. Compare these angels with the first four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, 7:1. The Euphrates marks the boundary between Israel and her enemies (Gen 15:18, Deu 1:7, Jos 1:4), Babylon which is on the Euphrates would be to the North of Israel and it is from the North that her enemies came (Jer 25:9, Ezek 26:7, 39:2). Compare this with the sixth bowl (Rev 16:12) in which the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings of the East. Compare also with the four horsemen of the Apocalypse.

v15 - *And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind.* - The precise timing of their release indicates that they are under the divine control of God. Their purpose is to kill a third of mankind, no more no less, that is a limited number, because this is a warning to mankind. From the precise timing of their release this seems to be a specific event in history, and is therefore probably eschatological, in the light of the discussion in the next verse this event corresponds to the second coming (compare with Mat 24:36, Acts 1:7, Gen 7:11) or at least the final battle associated with it. Compare the sixth seal, sixth trumpet and sixth bowl, they all seem to refer to either the last battle or the second coming.

v16 - *The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million. I heard their number.* - The troops are mounted, meaning that they are prepared for war. Two hundred million is a large number which he could not count, but he heard their number. Compare the description here with the chariots of God in Psa 68:17, the horses like a swarm of locusts in Jer 51:27 and the horses that fly like a vulture swooping to devour of Hab 1:8. In Joel the army invades mankind on the day of the Lord (Joel 2:11-11) as this is the sixth trumpet and the seventh trumpet depicts the handing over of the world to Christ, his eternal reign and the judgement, this vision corresponds to the last great battle (see Joel 3:1-2, 9-16). The last great battle is also found in Rev 16:14, 17:14, 19:17, 20:7. Note that the sixth seal also corresponds to the Second Coming (Rev 6:12). The sixth bowl refers to the battle on the great day of God Almighty (Rev 16:14) and the Second Coming is mentioned in the next verse (16:15). This is another example of the parallelism of the book.

v17 - *The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulphur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulphur.* - Here is the only place in which John indicates that what he saw was in a vision. The breastplates had the same colours as the fire, smoke and sulphur, which came out of the horses' mouths, see v18, this indicates the unified purpose of both horse and rider. Compare the lions' heads here with the lions' teeth of the locusts, this indicates strength.

v18 - *A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulphur that came out of their mouths.* - This imagery seems to refer to war. The imagery like the locusts is similar to Joel 2:4-5, 'They have the appearance of horses; they gallop along like cavalry. With a noise like that of chariots they leap over the mountain tops, like a crackling fire consuming stubble, like a mighty army drawn up for battle.' Once

again it is a limited number that is killed, a third of mankind is killed. Fire and sulphur remind us of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:24, Luke 17:29), this was God's judgement on wickedness, a foretaste of hell (Jude 1:7 cf. Rev 14:10-11).

v19 - *The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury.* - The snakes indicate their demonic origin, Luke 10:19. The three plagues of fire, smoke and sulphur came out of their mouths, v17, 18. Their tails also inflict injury. The word for snake (*ophis*) is the same word used to describe Satan in 12:9 (see also 12:14, 15, 20:2 cf. John 3:14, 2 Cor 11:3)

v20 - *The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands they did not stop worshipping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood--idols that cannot see or hear or walk.* - Mankind is here accused of worshipping demons and in the fifth trumpet they are plagued by demons and possibly also in the sixth trumpet, the warning fits the sin. Later we find mankind worshipping the dragon and the beast (13:4) and his image (13:15) that is idolatry. The plagues are directed at unrepentant mankind, not at God's people, those who survive these plagues still did not repent. Some are killed by these plagues but to the rest they are warnings to man to repent. Consider Jesus reaction to the persecution of the Jews by Pilate or to those who died when the tower fell on those in Siloam (Luke 13:1-5) his reaction was to say to the people 'do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.' Despite the warning plagues from God, some natural some not, man refuses to worship God and give him the glory as Creator, Amos 4:10. First man is guilty of idolatry, worshipping created things not the Creator, Rom 1:23. He breaks the first tablet of the law (Ex 20:3-11, Deu 5:7, 2 King 17:35-39) rather than worship the creator (Rev 14:7). The stupidity of idolatry is emphasised by the phrase 'idols that cannot see or hear or walk' in contrast to the living creator God, Dan 5:23, Psa 115:4-5, Jer 10:5. This hammers home the point that despite these plagues mankind prefers to worship created things rather than God, the message of Revelation is that mankind is to worship God and Him alone. Consider the worship of the living creatures and the elders of the Creator God, 4:8-11; the worship of the Lamb, 5:8 ff.; all the inhabitants of the earth worship the beast, 13:8 (compare the worship of demons and idols here with the worship of the beast and his image in 13:8, 15). Consider also the message of the first angel flying in mid-air proclaiming the eternal gospel which is to fear God and give him glory and to worship him as Creator, 14:6-7; consider the dire warning to those who worship the beast and his image in 14:9-11. Twice John is rebuked because he worshipped an angel (19:10, 22:8) and is told to

worship God. In the case of the church at Pergamum and Thyatira eating food offered to idols is condemned (2:14, 20). Note that in 21:8 the place of idolaters is in the fiery lake of burning sulphur, we should therefore see the trumpets as agents of God's mercy rather than wrath, despite the fact that people do not repent. Notice the response of those at Ephesus who practised sorcery, they publicly burned their books on sorcery; it is better to burn ones books on the occult than to burn in the lake of fire. God's decree in Deu 7:5, 12:3 is to break down the altars, smash the sacred stones and burn the idols in the fire, see Josiah's response in 2 Kings 23 who did as described in Deuteronomy.

v21 - *Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts* - This is the first indictment against mankind, they did not repent, see also: Rev 11:18, Rev 14:7, Rev 14:9-11, Rev 16:5-6, Rev 16:8-11. Having rejected God as creator mankind now inevitably breaks the second tablet of the law (Deu 5:17 and Rom 1:24, 28). The punishment is indicated in Rev 21:8, their (murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practise magic arts) lot will be in the lake of burning sulphur.

The seventh trumpet does not occur until after the Two Witnesses (Rev 11:14). There is an interlude of two visions similar to the interlude between the sixth and seventh seals.

19. The Mighty Angel and the little scroll (10:1)

10:1 Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars. 2 He was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand. He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, 3 and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke. 4 And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down."

Rev 10:5 Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven. 6 And he swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, "There will be no more delay! 7 But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets."

8 Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me once more: "Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land." 9 So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, "Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey." 10 I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour. 11 Then I was told, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings."

There is now an interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets as there was between the sixth and seventh seals, this should not be considered to be chronological because the two witnesses, described after the mighty angel, preach for the whole gospel age, Rev 11:3. The seventh trumpet announces the end of history. There is now the vision of the mighty angel with the little scroll, which is followed by the two witnesses. The vision of the mighty angel with the little scroll is taken from Ezekiel chapters 1 to 3, which describes Ezekiel's, call as a prophet to Israel. He was given a little scroll to eat, which tasted as sweet as honey, which is the word of God. Caird compares the great scroll opened by the Lamb to this little scroll: the great scroll

contains the redemptive purposes of God as it was to be made effective by Christ; the little scroll contains the same purpose but to be made effective through the martyr witness of the church. However I see the little scroll to be the rest of the prophecy of Revelation that was revealed to John by the angel. The next section following this one is about the two witnesses, that is the witness of the church.

v1 - Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars. - Notice a change of the author's standpoint, he saw the mighty angel come down from heaven so John is now on the earth. This is a another mighty angel (c.f. 5:2 "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?"). His description is similar to the description of Christ: whose feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace (1:15), and whose face was like the sun shining in its brilliance (1:16), in 1:7 and 14:14 he will come again in the clouds, the angel has a rainbow above his head so he must be very close to God (4:3); in verse 3 he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion which is another allusion to Christ the Lion of Judah. Swete says that the rainbow is due to the effect of the sunshine from the angel's face. He is similar to the angel of the Lord who guided the children of Israel as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Exo 13:21, Num 12:5) he now guides John to the next part of the vision. He is similar to the one speaking to Ezekiel, Ezek 1:26, this whole passage is based on Ezek 1-3 in which Ezekiel is given a little scroll to eat at the start of his ministry. The mighty angel is similar to Christ because he is *Christ's angel* sent by Christ to give John the rest of this prophecy, see Rev 1:1 and 22:6, 'I, Jesus have sent *my* angel to give you this testimony for the churches', italics added. The likeness of the angel to Christ is because the angel comes from the presence of Christ (Mounce).

v2 - He was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand. He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, - This emphasises the angel's might in contrast to the little scroll which contained the word of God that John was to prophecy (verses 10-11). The little scroll is open in contrast to the sealed scroll of 5:1 so that anyone can read it, it is not the same scroll because it is a *little* scroll. We should note that he has his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, his authority covers both, i.e. the whole world, both the sea and land are parts of God's creation (see verse 6). This is in contrast to the dragon who was thrown down to the earth and sea (12:12) and stood by the seashore (13:1) while the two beasts came out of the sea and from the earth (13:11), the prophecy that the angel gave John concerns these three. Lenski considers the little scroll to be the gospel, which is to be proclaimed to the whole world (10:11, 11:10, 14:6). Note John also uses the sea and land to represent the

whole world when dealing with the merchants and seamen who mourn over Babylon in Ch 18.

v3 - *and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke.* - The voice of the seven thunders was probably that of Christ or God, God's voice is frequently compared to thunder, especially when God spoke to Jesus before his crucifixion (John 12:29), although the first living creature also sounded like thunder (6:1). The roar of a lion is another allusion to Christ, who is the lion of the tribe of Judah. In Rev 1:1 and 22:16 Jesus sent His angel to John, the angel comes from the presence of Jesus and hence the similarity of the angel to Jesus.

v4 - *And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down."* - He was about to write as he was commanded, 1:19, but this he was not permitted to write down. The seven thunders are sealed, we are not permitted to know all God's mysteries, there are other forces working as well as those described here (xxxx). Contrast this with the rest of the book which is an *unveiling* of God's plan for the church and her enemies, it is not sealed, 'Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near' (22:10). There are some things which man is not permitted to know (Deu 29:29, 2 Cor 12:4 cf. Dan 8:26, 12:4).

v5 - *Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven.* - To raise the right hand and swear was quite common (Dan 12:6, Gen 14:22, Deu 32:40). See comments on verse 2 for sea and land.

v6 - *And he swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, "There will be no more delay!"* - He swore by the eternal creator God (Rev 4:11, Dan 12:7) that there will be no more delay (Hab 2:3, Heb 10:37), when the seventh trumpet is about to sound, in fulfilling God's plan. In describing the creation the angel uses three couplets which are similar to the Genesis narrative in which in the first three days God made the heavens, earth, land and sea and in the next three days he fills them.

- Day 1: Created the heavens and earth, light and darkness. (Gen 1:1-5)
- Day 2: Made the sky to separate the waters above and below. (Gen 1:6-8)
- Day 3: Made land and sea, vegetation, trees. (Gen 1:9-13)
- Day 4: Sun, moon and stars. (Gen 1:14-19), heavens filled.
- Day 5: Fish and creatures in the sea, Birds. (Gen 1:20-23), sea filled.
- Day 6: Living creatures on the land, man. (Gen 1:24-31), land filled.

cf. Exo 20:11, Psa 146:6. Compare this with the first angels proclamation to 'worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water' (14:7). The first four trumpets and bowls affect the earth, sea and the heavens (8:7 ff. 16:2 ff.).

v7 - *But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.* - It is significant that the last, seventh, trumpet (Rev 11:15) coincides with the accomplishment of the mystery of God. For when the last trumpet sounds Christ will come again (Mat 24:31, 1 Cor 15:52, 1 Thess 4:16). The mystery of God is Christ (Col 2:2) this mystery is accomplished when Christ returns and establishes his kingdom and reign, see Rev 11:15-18 in which the seventh angel sounded his trumpet, this also coincides with the judgement. God tells his prophets his plans before they are enacted (Amos 3:7) God has revealed to Paul the mystery of God namely Christ. Note that because the mystery of God will be accomplished when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, it makes it unlikely that the seven bowls are the seventh trumpet.

v8 - *Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me once more: "Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land."* - The same voice as in v4, 'but I heard a voice from heaven say, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down"'. The scroll lies open it is not sealed, it is to be read. This is a similar occurrence to when the Lamb took the scroll from the hand of God. Is this the same scroll that was sealed with seven seals but is now open? Probably not because in verse 2 it is described as a *little* scroll (*biblaridion*).

v9 - *So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, "Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey."* - The little scroll is the Word of God, see Ezek 2:7, Jer 15:16 and Psa 19:9. John must prophesy some more, about many peoples, nations, languages and kings, see v11.

v10 - *I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour.* - This is taken directly from Ezekiel's experience (Ezek 3:3), he was charged to warn the wicked to turn from their sin (Ezek 3:17). It is sweet because God's word tastes sweet (Psa 19:10) but bitter because it also tells of God's judgement. Those who speak God's word will also be persecuted (Rev 11:7).

v11 - *Then I was told, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings."* - This is similar to Jeremiah's commission in which God says to Jeremiah 'I appointed you as a prophet to the nations' (Jer 1:5) and 'Now, I have put my words in your mouth. See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant' (Jer 1:9,10). Having digested God's word John must prophesy again. We have only reached the halfway stage in Revelation and there is much more to be said about the world and its inhabitants, notice the four-fold description which encompasses all of mankind, 'peoples, nations, languages and kings', compare with Rev 17:15, Dan 3:4, 7:14. The nations are a major topic of the rest of the book and references to the nations occur 17 times more before the end of the book. In 11:18 after the seventh trumpet the twenty-four elders say 'the nations were angry but God's wrath has come to them', in 12:5 and 19:15 there is a reference to Christ who will rule the nations with an iron sceptre. In 14:8, 16:19, 17:15, 18:3, 18:23 the nations are mentioned in connection with Babylon. In 20:3 and 20:8 the deception of the nations by Satan is mentioned, and in 15:4, 21:24, 21:26 and 22:2 the nations worship and glorify God. However as well as nations he must prophesy about peoples, languages and kings, kings occurs frequently throughout the rest of Revelation, there are references to the kings of the earth five times (17:2, 18, 18:3, 9, 19:19).

Lenski considers the little book to be the gospel and that John was to prophesy *before* rather than *over* many peoples and nations and tongues and kings (cf. 5:9, 7:9, 11:9). He is here representative of all the OT and NT prophets and apostles and the next section shows the gospel preached in the world by the two witnesses. It is to be preached in the whole world as indicated by the angel whose feet are planted in both the earth and sea (10:2), that is, the devil's territory as indicated by 12:12, cf. the beasts out of the sea and the earth in Ch 13.

This verse prepares us for the Two witnesses described next, they are to preach the Word of God to the world (see 11:9). This is still the interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpet, they must witness to the world in order to complete and compliment God's warnings from the first six trumpets, then the end can come when the seventh trumpet is sounded. But the end can only come when the gospel has been preached in the whole world as a testimony to *all* nations, Mat 24:14. Hence the next section concerns God's two witnesses.

20. The two witnesses (11:1)

11:1 I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there. 2 But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.

11:3 And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth." 4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. 5 If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. 6 These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.

11:7 Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. 8 Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. 9 For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. 10 The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.

11:11 But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. 12 Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on.

11:13 At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

14 The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon.

This section intervenes between the sixth warning trumpet of God and the seventh trumpet when Christ returns at which repentance is no longer possible. Just as there was an interlude between the sixth and seventh seal which featured the sealing of the 144,000 and the vision of the great multitude who both represent the church, so now we get another interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets which features the

church in its witness. The purpose is to show that as well as the disasters and pains caused by these trumpets which are designed to bring people to repentance, but failed, the witness of the church is also required in addition. God speaks to man through earthly disasters and pain but also through his church, only after the witness of the church is complete can the seventh trumpet, that is the end, come. This section, although not chronological, describes the witness of the church to the world from the ascension to the Second Coming. The church is the temple of God and is first measured i.e. protected spiritually from the power of the enemy. The witness of the church to the world is her great work as commissioned by Christ (Mat 28:18, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:45, John 10:21, Acts 1:8) and until it is finished he will not return (Mat 24:14). The two witnesses refer to the fact that Jesus sent his disciples out two by two, two witnesses are required to establish the veracity of their testimony. The church is empowered by God and filled with the spirit, she goes forth in the power of Elijah and Moses. When she has finished witnessing she is overpowered by the beast for a short time but then comes to life again and is raptured to be with the Lord. There then follows the seventh trumpet which ushers in God's kingdom.

Rev 10:11 - *Then I was told, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings."* - This verse from the previous chapter actually introduces this section. Notice the fourfold description indicating that the people come from the four corners of the earth (see 11:9).

The two witnesses represent the witnessing church rather than two individuals:

- i. The church received power to witness at Pentecost, see verse 3 'I will give power to my two witnesses and they will prophecy...' cf. Acts 1:8 and 2:18.
- ii. Two is the number to establish a witness, testimony (Deu 17:6, John 8:17, 2 Cor 13:1), for example our Lord sent his disciple out in twos, Mark 6:7.
- iii. They are described as 'the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth' 11:4. We have already seen that the church is symbolised by lampstands in 1:20. The olive trees represent the power of the Holy Spirit with which the witnesses had received (Acts 1:5, 1:8, 2:17).
- iv. They prophecy for the same period (1,260 days) as the worshippers, temple of God and holy city is trampled on by the Gentiles (42 months). These three designations are all indicative of the church.

v. The universal nature of the people who gaze on their bodies from every people, tribe, language and nation for three and a half days indicates that they are not two individuals (Rev 11:9).

vi. They rise from the dead and are raptured as is the church (11:11-12).

The two witnesses can be compared to the beast out of the earth, the false prophet.

- i. There are two witnesses and the beast has two horns
- ii. One speaks the word of God (truth) the other of the devil (lies)
- iii. Both do miracles
- iv. One is the prophetic voice of God the other is the false prophet
- v. One is empowered by God the other by the dragon.

Consider the following references to the Church and the Holy Spirit being a witness: (Acts 1:8 NIV) But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

"And WE are His witnesses to these things, and so is the HOLY SPIRIT whom God has given to those who obey Him." Acts 5:32 (Note: this was right after Pentecost, or "early rain." What about a "latter rain?")

"But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the SPIRIT of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will TESTIFY of Me. And YOU also will bear WITNESS, because you have been with me from the beginning." John 15:26,27

"YOU will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a TESTIMONY to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the SPIRIT of our Father who speaks in you." Matt 10:18-20 also Mark 13:9-11.

"And the SPIRIT and the BRIDE say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely." Rev 22:17

Finally, according to Joel, quoted by Peter in Acts 2:17, when God poured out his Spirit in the last days they would prophesy c.f. Rev 11:3, 10 the two witnesses were prophets.

(Acts 2:17-18 NIV) "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. {18} Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

Because they are prophets they have same characteristics of the OT prophets as described in 11:5-7.

v1 - *I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshippers there.* - The Old Testament background is Ezek 40:2-5, 45:3-4 and Zech 2:1-10 compare this also with the measuring of the new Jerusalem (Rev 21:15-17), in the next verse the temple is called the holy city. He is told to measure the temple and the altar, the temple of God is the church and under the altar are the souls of the martyrs, Rev 6:9. He is to count the worshippers there, this can only be the church which worships God in spirit and in truth. It is implicit that these are worshippers of God because it is God's temple that is being measured, these are in contrast to those who worship the beast and emphasises the theme of worship found in the book. Note this is another census 'count the number of worshippers', the first census in Revelation was also of the redeemed Rev 7:4. The temple probably refers to those on earth and the altar to those in heaven, he counts all the redeemed who are God's witnesses. The measuring in this case should be regarded as similar to the sealing of the 144,000 (cf. 21:15-17), that is it is preservation (measuring in scripture can be symbolic of preparation either for destruction or preservation cf. Num 35:5, Ps 60:6, Isa 65:7 Horton), but note that it does not protect them from death (see 11:7). The word for temple is Gk *naos*:G3485 also used to describe the church 1 Cor 3:16, 1 Cor 6:19, 2 Cor 6:16, Eph 2:21. John himself is told to measure the temple, only the priests were allowed to enter the holy of Holies but now all believers are allowed in, hence this is a picture of the new temple, the people of God, 1 Cor 3:16.

John is given a reed to measure the temple, Lenski considers this to be the Word or the gospel in its function of determining who is in the church and who is outside its bounds. It fixes the boundary, the line of demarcation between what is inside of and belongs to the Sanctuary of God and what is outside of it and is profane. In chapter 11 we see the church in its relationship to the world, first, as being separate, then, however, also as serving God's purposes in the world (Lenski). The inner courtyard is measured because it contains the church, just as the New Jerusalem is measured in Rev 21:15, the New Jerusalem is also the church. There were four courts in the temple, the outer court was for the Gentile, the next court was for Jewish women, then one for Jewish men then one for priests and finally the holy of Holies into which the

high priest could enter once a year. The barrier between the priests and the holy of Holies was drawn aside at the death of Christ (Mat 27:51) and now all Christians are priests and can enter the holy of Holies. Note that the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the time John wrote this.

What is the significance of the altar in: "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshippers there." We have to be a little careful with the NIV translation because the word 'count' is implied, however they are probably correct, you measure a temple and count people. As I see it the worshippers are the temple and the altar. We have already seen that the temple represents the true church but what about the altar. I think that the clues are in the fifth seal (especially 6:9): "When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained". In the OT the blood was poured under the altar of burnt offering (Lev 4:7). This indicates that their death by martyrdom is viewed as a sacrifice on the altar. The same Greek word for slain (*sphazo*) is used of both Christ (the Lamb that was slain) and these martyrs, '*sphazo*' means literally 'butchered', they follow in the footsteps of their master. 1 Cor 5:7b 'For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.' (cf. 1 Pet 2:19-25, 4:1)

Consider now the third bowl and the voice from the altar in v16:7 which I take to be the voice of the martyrs: "And I heard the altar respond: "Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgements" which is in response to the angel who said "You are just in these judgements, you who are and who were, the Holy One, because you have so judged; {6} for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve." (Rev 16:5-6).

In both these cases I take the altar to be the altar of sacrifice (rather than incense) on which the martyrs had sacrificed their lives i.e. they had been willing to die for their faith. Thus I see the altar as representing those who had died for their faith and in a sense it also representing the daily dying to self that is required of all true worshippers of Christ. If we look at Rom 12:1, worship is offering our bodies (on the altar of sacrifice) as a living sacrifice, i.e. day to day, of which martyrdom is the highest sacrifice. Thus the altar of sacrifice is closely connected to our worship. In the context of the next verse (11:2) which speaks of persecution, John is counting those who are willing to die for their faith as a result of persecution as are the Two witnesses.

v2 - *But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.* - The church, the Israel of God, has been measured to preserve it but not those 'Gentiles' outside the church,

they do not belong to God's people and are therefore not measured (cf. 21:27, 22:15). The outer court of the temple belongs to the Gentiles. In Luke 21:23 Jesus said that Jerusalem, the holy city, will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, following this there will be signs on the earth and in the heavens and then comes the return of Christ to the earth. Gentiles here mean the nations, that is the world, because they are outside the inner court, which is the Holies of Holies where God and the church dwell (Ezek 43:5-7). They trample on the holy city, meaning that they persecute the church, which is the holy city, the New Jerusalem (21:2), until Christ returns. Just as the Gentiles trample on the holy city for 42 months, the church is persecuted during the gospel age by the world. Contrast this with God trampling on the heathen in his winepress, Rev 14:20, 19:15 (the same Greek word is used, *pateo*). The heathen will experience the wrath of God in vengeance and judgement. They trample on the holy city, meaning they desecrate it (Dan 11:31) and also the saints will be persecuted by the beast for a time, time and half a time (three and a half years or 42 months), Dan 7:25, 12:7, John has in mind persecution rather than just desecration. We see later that they kill the two witnesses, when they have finished their testimony, and they leave their bodies lying in the street without burying them, which is a mark of contempt. Just as the Gentiles trample upon the church so Jesus was handed over to the Gentiles to be crucified (Mat 20:19), we should note that both the Gentiles and Jews played a part in the crucifixion of Jesus. Both the chief priests and their officials representative of the apostate church (see John 19:6 and compare to 'where also their Lord was crucified' of Rev 11:8) and Pilate representative of the Gentile world were responsible for the crucifixion. Johnson notes that the word 'Gentiles' (Gk *ethnos*) is everywhere else in Revelation translated as 'nations' in the NIV, Gentiles should best be taken then as heathen or unbelievers (see also Lenski).

It may also be noted that in the tabernacle (the forerunner of the temple, see verse 1) the lampstand was placed in the Holy Place (Heb 9:2) next to the Most Holy Place. Just as a lampstand is used as a symbol of the church (1:20 cf. 11:4) and here the figure of a holy city is used for the church, the point being that the church is holy. The word 'saints' (Gk. *hagios*) has its root in the word holy, meaning holy ones or consecrated ones.

v2 - *They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.* - This is the same time as:

- i. The two witnesses prophesy for 1,260 days, (42*30 = 1260).
- ii. Elijah prayed that it would not rain, three and a half years, see v6, he is cared for by God supernaturally.
- iii. The woman's stay in the wilderness (Rev 12:6 1,260 days and Rev 12:14 time, times and half a time).

iv. The beasts exercise of authority (Rev 13:5, 42 months).

This assumes 30 days in a month and that a time, times and half a time is three and a half years

Note: 42 months is the same time that the Gentiles trample on the holy city and the period that the beast exercises his authority. The woman's stay in the wilderness is a time, times and half a time, which is the same period mentioned by Daniel (Dan 7:25 and 12:7). The woman's stay in the wilderness 1,260 days is also the time that the two witness's prophecy. Thus chapters 11, 12 and 13 are synchronous, our interpretation of these chapters will depend on what this time period represents. We should not take this time period as a literal number because this would enable us to precisely date the day of our Lords return. A superficial reading would indicate that this represents three and a half literal years. These time periods are all the same period, what does this represent? Let us examine each occurrence of this time period in Revelation and the rest of the bible.

i. Rev 11:2 - *they will trample on the holy city for 42 months* - Jerusalem was trampled upon by the Gentiles historically from AD 70 to AD 1967 when Jerusalem was once more in the hands of the Jews. The persecution of the church started when Stephen was martyred which was a little earlier, in either interpretation of the holy city being earthly Jerusalem or the church the period of 42 months starts shortly after Pentecost. The holy city is most likely a reference to the church. There were 42 encampments of Israel in the wilderness Num 33:5 ff. which is a possible reference to the churches stay in the desert, see iii and iv below.

ii. Rev 11:3 - *And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1260 days,* - The disciples received power to witness at Pentecost. Note that at the end of their witness they are killed for three and a half days before being raptured, 11:12.

iii. In Rev 12:6 the 1,260 days of the woman's stay in the desert starts after the ascension.

iv. In Rev 12:13 the time, times and half a time of the woman's stay in the desert begins when the dragon is hurled to the earth and after the woman had given birth to the male child. The dragon lost his place in heaven when Jesus was crucified because the basis of his accusation was no longer valid, Jesus had paid the price for sin. In fact Jesus saw Satan Fall to the earth during his ministry.

v. In Rev 13:5 the beast exercises his authority for forty-two months, the beast can certainly be identified with the Roman Empire of John's day, he finds his complete fulfilment when the antichrist appears. John's primary goal is to strengthen God's people for a time of persecution, it was written to show God's people what will *soon* take place, Rev 1:1. The word *soon* covering the entire gospel age to the coming again of Christ.

From the above it is clear that the time period begins with the ascension and lasts until the second coming and therefore it cannot be equated with a three and a half year period of persecution right at the end. Although there is a short period at the end of three and half days when the beast appears to triumph over the church and its witness is silenced for three and a half days, 11:7 ff. This is more likely to equate with the second half of Daniel's week in Dan 9:27. This is the same time that Daniel allows for Antiochus Epiphanes to tyrannise Jerusalem, a period of great horror to the Jews but nevertheless a fixed period of time. The term time, times and half a time appears twice in Daniel: firstly in Dan 7:25 when another king will arise different from the others;

'He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time'

and secondly in Dan 12:6-7;

"How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?" The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand toward heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying, "It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed."

This has been related by some to the first or second half of Daniel's week of seven years, Dan 9:27, see also discussion on 11:9. We should see it as the time of the Churches witness and persecution throughout the gospel era. The use in Daniel indicates an intense period of suffering at the end times when the antichrist arises, in the two Daniel passages cited the first period of a time, times and half a time, appears short (Dan 7:25) the second period appears long (Dan 12:7). In both cases the saints appear defeated but will be delivered, Dan 7:26-7, 12:1.

We should also note that this period of three and a half years is also the same time of drought that Elijah prayed for (1 King 17:1, Jam 5:17) and the time that he was miraculously cared for by Ravens and the widow with her flour and oil which were not used up (1 Ki 17:4-16). Thus this time period indicates both persecution *and* divine care.

Our interpretation of this time period is clearly a subject of debate and of importance because the interpretation of chapter 11, 12 and 13, in which this time occurs 5 times, will depend on our interpretation of this time period. Does this period of time indicate a short period of persecution at the end times when the antichrist appears or does it signify all the persecution throughout the gospel age? Just as we look for the antichrist to come (1 John 2:18) we also know that many antichrists have come. Just as we look for the man of lawlessness to be revealed (2 Thess 2:3), we know that the secret power of lawlessness is already at work. I would therefore propose that this time period refers to the gospel age in general and the coming of the antichrist in particular. The book of Revelation should be a blessing to Christians of *all* ages and not just the last generation. Thus, for example, Nero and Domitian were types of the antichrist but were not *the* antichrist. It is generally agreed that the last days start with the ascension reaching their climax with the Second Coming. In the section here, the churches witness started at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon them and they started to prophesy, this will continue until the churches witness is silenced by the antichrist.

v3 - *And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1260 days, clothed in sackcloth.*" - The inner temple is measured and separated and as such testifies to the world (Lenski). There are two witnesses because two witnesses are required to establish the truth of testimony (Deu 17:6, John 8:17, 2 Cor 13:1). The disciples were sent out by Jesus in two's, Mark 6:7. The two witnesses prophesy during the same period as the Gentiles trample on the holy city, 1260 days = 42 months (verse 2), and the same period that the beast exercises his authority (42 months, Rev 13:5). Verse 4 alludes to Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest who represent the kingly and priestly function of the church (cf. 1:6) as well as witnessing in the power of the Holy Spirit (Zec 4 ff.). Verse 6 alludes to Elijah and Moses who represent the prophetic function of the church (Deu 18:15, 34:10), verse 10 calls them two prophets. The word *power* is not in the Greek but it is implied, it says 'I will give (*didomi*) to my two witnesses and they will prophesy...' however their power (*exousia*) is mentioned in verse 6. Sweet points out the parallel between: 'I will give to my two witnesses and they shall prophecy' and 'It was given to the nations and they shall trample on the holy city forty two months' (Sweet's literal translation).

The time period is given as 1260 days, which emphasises the day by day witness of the church (Hailey). The church is a witness to Jesus Christ, initially they were eye witnesses (Acts 2:32, 13:30, 26:15). The church will witness to the world during the gospel age until Christ comes again, v12, when the dead in Christ will meet Him in the air. They received power to witness and prophesy when the Holy Spirit came upon them at Pentecost. Jesus told them 'you will receive power when the Holy Spirit

comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth' (Acts 1:8), see also (Mark 13:9). According to Peter's speech in Acts 2:16-21 the last days prophesied by Joel started at Pentecost when the disciples began to speak in other tongues declaring the wonders of God. When the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples at Pentecost they prophesied (Acts 2:17-18).

The two witnesses are not two individuals but the witnessing church, in verse 10 they are also two prophets because the church witnesses in the power of Elijah and Moses. When they have finished their testimony they are killed (their testimony is sealed with their blood) followed after three and a half days by their resurrection and rapture. Their power is illustrated in verse 6: *These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.* On a closer examination, this power is the power of the prayers of God's people, see comments on verse 6.

We are told that they are prophets: in verse 3 'they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth'; in verse 6 we are told that they have the same power as the prophet Elijah and in verse 10 we are told that 'these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth'. Their prophecy is forth telling God's word rather than foretelling. The prophecy will be a message of repentance and hence they are clothed in sackcloth, which usually symbolises humility and mourning, Jonah 3:8, Mat 4:17, Zech 13:4, Jer 4:8, Mat 11:21. See Peters message at Pentecost (Acts 2:38) 'Repent and be baptised'. Compare with John the Baptist went before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luk 1:17), who wore clothes of camel's hair and preached 'Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near' (Mat 3:1, 4). Antipas in 2:13 was a faithful *witness* to his faith in Christ when he was martyred in the city where Satan lives. The two witnesses testify to the world and when they have finished they are killed. They belong to a group who is said to testify in Revelation and especially the martyrs. We have as examples: Jesus whose *testimony* is the book of Revelation; John who was on Patmos because of the *testimony* of Jesus (1:9); the fifth seal discloses the martyrs who had been slain because of the *testimony* they had maintained (6:9); there are those who overcome Satan by the word of their *testimony* (12:11); there are the offspring of the woman that Satan makes war against who obey God's commandments and hold to the *testimony* of Jesus (12:17); the woman is drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore *testimony* to Jesus (17:6), John's brothers are those who hold to the *testimony* of Jesus (19:10), John sees the souls of those beheaded because of their *testimony* for Jesus and because of the word of God (20:4).

v4 - *These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.* - The two olive trees, meaning a plenteous supply of oil for the lamps, i.e. the Spirit, this image comes from Zech 4:2. The two witnesses are to witness in the power of the Holy Spirit, the famous phrase 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit' comes from Zech 4:6. Notice also the seven lamps of the Holy Spirit mentioned in 4:5, these are the seven lamps on the lampstand opposite to the table with the bread on it, Exo 40:22. The image of a lampstand is in Zech 4:2 and also in Rev 1:20, where the lampstand is the church, the church is the light of the world (Mat 5:14) and the church is a light in the darkness of the world (Acts 13:47). There are two olive trees and two lampstands because two are required to establish the truth of a testimony, it does not mean that only two sevenths of the church will testify, it is part of the symbolism of the passage. God will pour out his Spirit upon the church and it will prophesy, Acts 2:16-21, this was first fulfilled at Pentecost and is being fulfilled throughout the church age and will be fulfilled again before the antichrist appears. We should also note that it is the public witness of the church, see verse 10 (because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth). They prophesy, that is, they forth tell the word of God. The two anointed ones who serve the Lord are Zerubbabel and Joshua who stand for the kingly and priestly function of the ministry (Hag 1:1, Zech 4), in Rev 1:6 the saints are referred to as a 'kingdom and priests to serve God'. Elijah and Moses later refer to the prophetic ministry (verses 5 & 6). Rev 1:6, 5:10 and 20:6 all refer to the priestly ministry of the saints while verses 3, 6, and 10 here refer to the prophetic ministry (see also 11:18, 16:16, 18:20, 18:24, 22:9). Although Chilton points out that 'stand before the Lord of the earth' refers to the priestly ministry, see Ezek 44:15, Deu 44:15.

v5 - *If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die.* - The fire refers to the word of God, Jer 5:14, 'I will make my words in your mouth a fire and these people the wood it consumes', see also Jer 23:29. See also Hosea 6:5 'I cut you in pieces with my prophets, I killed you with the words of my mouth'. Thus the two witnesses testify in the power of the Spirit with the word of God, the Spirit and the word go together because the Spirit is the Spirit of truth and the word of God is the truth (see also Eph 6:17). When the church in Acts was filled with the Spirit they spoke the word of God boldly (Acts 4:31). The beast out of the earth has a counterfeit to the fire (Rev 13:13). Nothing can harm them while they are witnessing because they have the authority of Christ (Luke 10:19). This is also a reference to the prophet Elijah (2 Kings 1:10) in which Elijah caused fire to come down from heaven and consume his enemies. Note that Jesus rebuked his disciples when they wanted to call fire down from heaven to destroy those who did not welcome him so we are not to take this literally. Luke

21:12-19 shows that the saints will be persecuted but that this will result in them being witnesses to their persecutors and that they will be given words and wisdom which they will not be able to resist or contradict. Those who try to harm them are those who reject their testimony and therefore they reject Christ and God (Luke 10:16). It is these words which will condemn their unrepentant persecutors (John 12:48), whoever rejects the Son remains under the wrath of God (John 3:36). We see at the start of the trumpet sequence that in response to the prayers of the saints' fire from the altar was hurled to the earth (8:5). Those who reject the testimony of the church will die in the lake of fire. Note: while fire comes out of the mouths of the two witnesses, water comes out of the mouth of the dragon (12:15), blasphemy out of the mouth of the beast (13:6), frogs out of the mouths of the dragon, beast and false prophet (16:13).

v6a - These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; - In 11:3 it says that these witnesses will be given power, here it is described. They have the power to prevent rain - they have the same prophetic power as Elijah, 1 King 17:1, Jam 5:16-18, who had the power to prevent rain for three and a half years. They prophesy for 1260 days (v3), i.e. 42 months (v2) the same time that the Gentiles trample on the holy city and 42 months is the same as the three and a half years that Elijah prayed that it would not rain. James comments that the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective and then gives the example of Elijah. We have already seen the power of the prayers of the saints in the prelude to the seven trumpets. This power then is the power of the prayers of the church, which we saw together with the incense ascending before God (8:4). This period represents the time from the ascension to the Second Coming, which is also the great tribulation or persecution. This is the same time that God cares for the church. During the three and a half years of drought Elijah was cared for miraculously by God the Ravens brought him food and the widows flour and oil was not used up, 1 Ki 17:4-16. Note that they have this power only during the time they are prophesying, when they have finished prophesying they are killed, v7. Compare this with the ministry of John the Baptist who went before the Lord 'in the spirit and power of Elijah' (Luke 1:17), his message was 'repent for the kingdom of heaven is near' (Mat 3:2), and was imprisoned and then beheaded (Mat 14:3 ff.).

v6b - they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want. - We see here the results of the prayers of the church manifested to the world through, for example, the seven trumpets. They have the power (*exousia*) to turn water into blood (compare with the second trumpet Rev 8:8), and to strike the earth with every kind of plague (second bowl Rev 16:3), they

have the same power as Moses, to strike the earth with every kind of plague, Ex 7:19, consider the ten plagues on Egypt that Moses was instrumental in bringing forth. In Deu 34:10 Moses is called a prophet. Their power extends over the land and sea which therefore covers the whole earth, see comments on 10:2, their witness is to the whole earth (see verses 9, 10) even to the merchants and seamen of Ch. 18. We have seen earlier that the seven trumpets are God's answer to the prayers of the saints (Rev 8:5) as are the seven bowls or plagues. How awesome are the results of the prayers of God's children, Jam 5:16-18. The Lord was working with their witness and which he confirmed by signs and wonders, Mark 16:20, Acts 14:3. When the church is acting in its official capacity its power is real, see Mat 16:18-19, 18:18-20, John 20:23 (Hendriksen) because it is acting under the authority of Christ himself, cf. Luke 10:16-19. See Mat 16:19 for the power to loose and bind.

Moses and Elijah appeared at the transfiguration, Mat 17:3, Luke 9:29. They represent the priestly and the prophetic ministries of the church. The two olive trees allude to Joshua and Zerubbabel who represent the priestly and kingly ministry of the church. We have already seen the church described by John as having been made by Jesus to be a kingdom and priests to serve God (1:6). We see here the church serving God in her delegated authority. Note: Elijah was transported into heaven at the end of his ministry, 2 Kings 2:11 cf. 11:12.

Pink points out that there were two witnesses before Pharaoh, Aaron and Moses (priest and prophet), who performed the miraculous signs. Pharaoh is one of the OT types of the antichrist. Pink gives the following as OT types of the antichrist: Cain, Lamech, Nimrod (Gen 10:8-9, 1 Chr 1:10, Micah 5:6), Kedorlaomer (Gen 14), Pharaoh, Abimalech (Gen 20:2-21:32, 26:1-26, Judg 9:1-10:1, 2 Sam 11:21, Psa 34:1), Saul, Goliath, Absalom, Herod. To these I would add Nebuchadnezzar who is used as a type in Revelation; consider that he was turned into a beast, the golden stature and the raging furnace.

v7 - Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. - Until they have finished their testimony they are inviolate, see v5. The preceding verses show that the witness of the church will be a powerful one in the last days, the gospel will be preached to all nations, tribes, peoples and languages and there will be converts (7:9). Although it may not be numerically strong, the Gospel must be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come, Mat 24:14. Here we find that when they have finished their testimony the beast will arise out of the Abyss (hell) and kill the witness of the church, their blood seals their witness. The death of the witnessing church is likely to be what was spoken to Daniel in answer to the question

"How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?": "It will be for a time, times and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed." Dan 12:7. More detail of this verse is given with the beast out of the sea (abyss) in Ch 13 who makes war on the saints and conquers them (13:7 cf. Dan 7:3, 7:21). And the beast out of the earth who caused all who refused to worship the image to be killed (13:15). Their ministry parallels that of Christ who could not be touched until his time came, and who was betrayed by Judas when Satan entered him (Luk 22:3, Jn 13:27). Jesus was killed in Jerusalem and three days later rose again and ascended into heaven - and we are witnesses of these things Acts 5:32.

This is the first mention of the beast from the abyss that is described in more detail later, Rev 13 & 17. Persecution will follow the preaching of the word, but during the preaching of it there is divine protection. See Jesus warning about persecution when he sends out the twelve in Mat 10:22 'All men will hate you because of me'. Jesus teaches us not to be surprised by persecution, this is the message of Revelation. This is the same beast as the one in Rev 17:8 who will come out of the Abyss and go to his destruction, who is also the same beast as the one that comes out of the sea in Rev 13:1 and makes war against the saints and conquers them Rev 13:7. The words 'attack' used here and 'make war' in 13:7 are the same in the original Greek. Compare also the time that the two witnesses prophecy for of 1,260 days (11:3) and the time that the beast exercises authority for forty-two months (13:5). We should not be surprised that the beast overpowers and kills the witnesses, this is one of the main warnings of the book, and the saints must be prepared and expect to die for the faith. Just as Christ died in obedience to the Father but in doing so he obtained victory over sin and death. However it also shows us the end result which is defeat of the enemy and bliss for the saints. Another view on this verse is that it represents the finish of the proclamation of the gospel on the earth and then the antichrist will arise for a short time, during which there will be no preaching and then Christ will return and vindicate his elect, Mat 24:14. It is clear from the context that this event occurs shortly before Christ comes again, however throughout church history the beast from hell has been coming and persecuting God's people. In Daniel those who will not worship a false god are either thrown into a furnace or thrown to the lions, Dan 3:1 ff., 6:1 ff. however Revelation makes clear that there is a far worse furnace for those who worship the beast (14:9 ff., 20:15, 21:8).

v8 - *Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.* - The street of the great city is in obvious contrast to the great street of the New Jerusalem along which grows the

tree of life, Rev 22:1-2, the great city is the world, see verse 9. Figuratively the great city is called Sodom (that is wickedness), Egypt (that is oppression), and Jerusalem (that is persecution). Jesus said "In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day--for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!" (Luke 13:33 NIV) Jerusalem as well as crucifying Jesus was also the city that stoned the prophets, Mat 23:37. This is a composite city depicted by Babylon the Great later in Revelation (Rev 17, 18). This is also where God's people must preach the Gospel, where there is wickedness, oppression and persecution i.e. the same world that Jesus was sent (John 17:18). Think of Russia or China. The great city is Babylon, in 16:19 we see the great city split into three parts as a result of the seventh bowl, the kings of the earth mourn her destruction in 18:10. Nineveh is also an example of a great city (Gen 10:12, Jonah 1:2). Babylon (the world system) is found drunk with the blood of the saints, 17:6, she plays a large role in persecuting the saints, as does the beast and false prophet, Rev 13. The reference to the city 'where also their Lord was crucified' is a reminder that his disciples must also take up their cross and follow him even if it leads to death. It is also indicative of false religion, cf. Gal 4:25-26, because it was the religious officials who wanted Jesus crucified (Mat 26:3-4, John 19:6, 19:15).

v9 - *For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial* - Notice the four fold description indicating that they come from the four corners of the earth, that is the people of the whole world, this confirms the universality of the great city. These are the very people they are to preach to. The three and a half day's contrasts to the 1260 days in v3, (i.e. three and a half years), it is a short time, compare this with the ten days of Rev 2:10. This can be compared to the three days Jesus spent in the tomb following his three years of ministry (Wilcock). Refusal of burial is a sign of contempt. Note that the redeemed also come from these groups of people, some of them get converted, praise God, see Rev 5:9, 7:9, 13:7, 14:6.

The three and a half days is also half a week and could have a connection with the half week of Dan 9:27 'He will confirm a covenant with many for one seven. In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him'. The weeks of Daniel (see Dan 9:24) are usually interpreted as years, thus half a week is three and a half years (cf. the 1,260 days that the two witnesses prophesy for). Thus the two witnesses prophesy for half a week of years and are dead for half a week. If we take this interpretation then the three and a half days could correspond to the forty-two months, or half week of years, when the beast exercises his authority (13:5). It could also explain why 1,260 days are mentioned in 12:6 where the woman fled into the desert to be taken care of by God

and then later when the dragon had been hurled to the earth the woman again flies to the desert to be taken care of by God for a time, times and half a time out of the serpent's reach.

First half week	Second half week
11:2 holy city trampled on by Gentiles for 42 months.	13:5 Beast exercises his authority for forty-two months.
11:3 Two witnesses prophesy for 1,260 days.	11:9 Two witnesses lie dead in the street of the great city for three and a half days.
12:6 woman taken care of by God for 1,260 days.	12:14 woman taken care of for a time, times and half a time.

The description *every people, tribe, language and nation* is also used of:

- i. Descriptions of the universal origin of the saved, 5:9, 7:9.
- ii. It is the same group to whom the angel has an eternal gospel to proclaim, 14:6.
- iii. It is the same group that the beast has authority over, 13:7.

In other words those eventually saved will come out from every people group of the earth.

v10 - *The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.* - Sending each other gifts is a parody of Purim in which the Jews celebrated relief from their enemies who tried to have all Jews killed, see Est 9:22 ff. After the children of Israel left Egypt, they were glad because the dread of Israel had fallen on them (Ps 105:38). In common with other passages there appears to be a great outbreak of persecution before the end when the witness of the church will be silenced (xxxx). Here the two witnesses are called prophets (Moses and Elijah), that is the prophetic witness of the church which tormented the inhabitants of the earth, see verses 5 and 6. This verse shows the anger of the nations, the prophets are rewarded in 11:18. It is their hour, just as the authorities had their hour when they crucified Jesus, Luke 22:53, and the world rejoiced over him (John 16:20). At this point the power of darkness seems to have triumphed just as Satan appeared to triumph when Jesus was crucified.

v11 - *But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them.* - When Christ returns the dead in Christ will rise first, 1 Thess 4:16, 1 Cor 15:51. The wicked, who are the enemies of the saints, will be filled with terror when God vindicates his elect by

raising them from the dead. The triumph of wickedness is short lived, just as Satan's triumph over Jesus at the cross was turned into defeat when God raised him from the dead and proved Satan downfall. In 13:7 we also find that the beast was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them, but in 15:2 we find those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name, their victory was in being faithful even to death, Satan has no answer to that. How often has the world rejoiced that it has destroyed the witness of the church until the Spirit of God breaths new life into the church, which rediscovers the great gospel truths, and like a Phoenix out of the ashes arises to the terror of their persecutors. 'The blood of the martyrs is the seedbed of the church' to use Tertullian's great phrase. Compare this to Ezekiel's prophecy to the valley of dry bones 'I will put breath in you, and you will come to life' (Ezek 37:6), 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.' So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet--a vast army (Ezek 37:9-10).

v12 - *Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on* - This is a clear reference to the Rapture which coincides with the second coming, 1 Thess 4:15-17, the dead in Christ will rise first, 'this is no secret rapture' (Hendriksen). The key word is cloud, clouds are nearly always associated with God's presence or the second coming, Rev 1:7, 14:14, Ezek 30:3, Dan 7:13, Joel 2:2, Zep 1:15, Mat 24:14. After the preaching of the gospel to all nations, that is the church has finished her witness (see verse 7), then the end will come, Mat 24:14. Elijah upon whom the witnesses are modelled was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind, 2 King 2:11. This section clarifies one of John's main points, even though the saints are required to be faithful to the point of death like their master (2:10, c.f. 2:13), but they will also rise again as he did. This parodies the life of Christ, they died but were not buried for three and a half days, they came to life and ascended to heaven. Notice the similarity of their ascension with the Lords (Acts 1:9). They seal their testimony by their blood and the Lord confirms their testimony by raising them from the dead.

v13 - *At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.* - Seven thousand is symbolic and is intended to indicate a complete number. In 16:19 the great city was split into three parts. The survivors were terrified when the two witnesses came to life again and because of the earthquake, they are terrified into giving glory to God. This recalls the

terror of the sixth seal, 6:12. But by then when God displays his awesome power it is too late for repentance, the time for judgement has begun.

v14 - *The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon.* - Most translators translate soon as quickly. This sentence has been placed here to show that the witness of the church lasts until the seventh trumpet, which ushers in the time of God's wrath and the judgement when repentance is no longer possible, Rev 11:18. The section about the two witnesses lies between the sixth and seventh trumpet. This verse also introduces the third Woe, that is the seventh trumpet that announces the reign of Christ and the judgement. The third woe comes quickly after the second woe. There is a play on words here, the third woe is coming soon just as Jesus is coming soon, the two coincide.

21. The seventh trumpet, the third Woe! (11:15)

Rev 11:15 The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said:

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."

11:16 And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshipped God, 17 saying:

"We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. 18 The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great-- and for destroying those who destroy the earth."

11:19 Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm.

v15 - *The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."* - This is the third and worst Woe for the world, Christ has come to judge the world, it is the end of history, the time for repentance is past and it is now time for judgement to begin. Now that the witness of the church is complete (Rev 11:7) the seventh trumpet can be sounded which ushers in the end of the age, Mat 24:31. The seventh trumpet announces the fulfilment of God's mystery as indicated by the mighty angel in 10:7, and the reign of Christ, (God's anointed one) Dan 7:14, Luke 1:33, 1 Cor 15:24. The mystery of God is Christ (Col 2:2) this mystery is accomplished when Christ returns and establishes his kingdom and reign (Dan 7:27). The dead in Christ will be raised, 'then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power', 1 Cor 15:24. The seventh trumpet is a reference to the last trumpet which announces the coming of Christ and his holy angels, and the dead in Christ will arise, Mat 24:31, 1 Cor 15:52, 1 Thess 4:16. The kingdom that once belonged to devil now belongs to God, Luke 4:5, and He will reign for ever and ever, Exo 15:18.

v16 - *And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshipped God, 17 saying "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, you have taken your great power and have begun to reign.* - God is now worshipped as the One who is and who was and not as the one who *is to come* because he has now already come and he has taken his great power and begun to reign. Notice that God is the only proper person of worship. This is the end of human history.

v18 - *The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great-- and for destroying those who destroy the earth."* - Walvoord points out that the same Greek word (Gr. verb form of *orge*) is used for angry and wrath, the wrath of men is wicked, the wrath of God is holy. 'The nations were angry' is once more a reference to that messianic psalm 2, therefore his wrath has come, Isa 34:2. This is the climactic third woe, this also hints at the battles later in Revelation (16:14, 19:19). The time has come for judging the dead, that is, the judgement, here we have a preview of the judgement of Rev 20:12. We see here a distinction between God's servants the prophets, and saints (see also Rev 16:6, 18:20, 18:24), in the NT the prophet is ministry of the church and is probably emphasised in Revelation because it is a prophetic book and John was a prophet. The time for rewarding God's servants has come; this idea of rewards is present throughout the scripture (Ps 115:13, Jer 17:10, Dan 12:13, Mat 5:12, Rev 22:12). Those who were persecuted now receive their allotted reward, Mat 5:12. In contrast to the rewards is retribution (i.e. destruction) on those who destroy the earth, the punishment fits the crime. Caird sees those who destroy the earth as a reference to the angel of the abyss whose name is Destroyer, the beast and Babylon (destroyer of the whole earth, Jer 51:25). Hailey points out that the word *destroy* means to corrupt cf. Gen 6:12 God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. The prophets and saints are described as those who reverence God's name, compare with those who cursed God's name as the result of the forth, fifth and seventh bowls, Rev 16:9, 11, 21. Also the Devil and the beast out of the sea blasphemed God, 13:1, 13:5, 17:3. It is worth noting that there is no mention here of the millennial reign which is ushered in at the Second Coming.

v19a - *Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant.* - The covenant with his people has been fulfilled. The Ark of the Covenant contain the stone tablets which were given to Moses at Sinai with the law on them, Heb 9:4. The ark was in the Holy of Holies and signified God's presence, 1 Chr 13:6, Heb 9:3-4. Some see this as introducing a new heavenly perspective for the

next section (Wilcock). In Heb 9:3 we find that the altar of incense was in the most holy place next to the ark of the covenant, in 8:5 it is this same altar that the angel took the fire from to hurl to the earth. In Josh 6:8 there are seven priests with seven trumpets encircling Jericho with the ark of the covenant following them. They marched around the city for six days and on the seventh day they marched around it seven times with the priests blowing the trumpets. As the priests blew long blasts on their trumpets the walls fell down and everyone was slaughtered except for Rahab the harlot. The march seven times around the walls with trumpets blowing warns of destruction for those within the city, which on the long blast it is destroyed. In 1 Chr 15:24 seven priests were to blow trumpets before the ark as it was brought into Jerusalem. The seven trumpets therefore announce the coming presence of God along with destruction. Ark of the covenant speaks of his presence and indicates that these judgement came from God.

v19b - *And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm.* - Hail, lightening and an earthquake are common manifestations of God's presence and of the end. See the prelude to the seven trumpets, Rev 8:5, and the seventh bowl, Rev 16:21, in which God's wrath was finished and the cities of the nations collapsed. Some of these manifestations also appeared when God gave the law at Sinai see Exo 19:16.

Scene 4: The woman, dragon and the beast.

The woman and the dragon (12:1)

War in heaven (12:7)

The dragon pursues the woman (12:13)

The beast out of the sea (13:1)

The beast out of the earth (13:11)

The lamb and the 144,000 (14:1)

The three angels (14:6)

The harvest of the earth (14:14)

22. The woman and the dragon (12:1)

12:1 A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. 2 She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth.

12:3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. 4 His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born. 5 She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron sceptre. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. 6 The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.

This is the first of a number of visions, which form an interlude between the seven trumpets and the seven bowls. They reveal more details of the struggle between good and evil in heaven and the consequent effects on God's people on earth. The devil is here revealed as the ancient enemy of God's people followed in Ch 13 by his two henchmen who do his bidding on earth, the beast out of the sea and the beast out of the earth. John sees a number of signs in heaven; the first sign is a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head, she represents the Old Testament church. She was about to give birth to a male child, the Christ. Then another sign appeared in heaven, an enormous red dragon who is the devil. He tried to kill Christ as he was born, but Jesus ascended to heaven and to God and his throne. The church was then taken care of by God during the gospel age. Eph 6:12 tells us 'that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers,

against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms', therefore it is appropriate that before our earthly enemies are introduced, namely the beast out of the sea, the beast out of the earth and the whore, that Satan should be introduced and described.

In this first section we see that God's own people bring to birth the Messiah who was promised in Gen 3:15 "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." Satan tries to prevent the birth of the Messiah who will crush his head, he fails and the Messiah ascends into heaven and Satan is evicted from heaven and cast down to earth where he makes war against the saints.

v1 - *A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head* - This sign in heaven announces a new section. This should be connected to the opening of God's temple in heaven in the previous verse, Rev 11:19. The 'woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head' is a clear reference to Joseph's dream (Gen 37:9) and therefore the woman represents the twelve tribes of Israel. Joseph's dream depicts the sun and moon and eleven stars bowing down to him, this is realised when he became the second to Pharaoh and his brothers bowed down to him (Gen 43:26-29). The woman is the elect and in particular here she is the OT elect, who gives birth to the Christ (v5) and later she is the NT elect (v17). John sees a continuum between the OT and NT elect (see 21:12-14). Wilson says 'In scripture no sharp dividing line is drawn between the true Israel and the new Israel, because the people of the promise are one people, whether they lived before or after the coming of Christ'. But here she represents the OT elect, one of the few references in Revelation to the OT elect alone. Compare the heavenly glory of this woman, who represents the elect (the Bride Eph 5:22), with the earthly glitter of the whore who represents the world, Rev 17:4. This woman stands in contrast to the whore and also to the Queen of heaven.

Johnson points out that others see a more conscious parallelism between the story and the activities of the emperor Domitian around 83 AD. After the death of his ten-year-old son, Domitian immediately proclaimed the boy a god and his mother, the mother of god. Some coins of this period show the mother Domitia as the mother of the gods standing with the sceptre and diadem of the queen of heaven. Another coin shows the mother with the child before her. In his left hand is the sceptre of world dominions, and with his right hand he is blessing the world. Still another coin shows the dead child sitting on the globe of heaven, playing with seven stars, which represent the seven planets, symbolic of his heavenly dominion over the world. On a fourth coin he

represents the imperial Zeus child, who has been exalted to be Lord of the stars and who will usher in the age of universal salvation. Such parallel imagery is hardly accidental. But whereas the coinage of Domitian glorifies the son of Domitia as the lord of heaven and saviour of the world, Rev 12 presents Jesus Christ, the Lord of heaven and earth, as the One who will rule all nations with a rod of iron (v 5). John, as it were, demythologizes the Domitian myth by presenting Christ as the true and ascended Lord of heaven, the coming Ruler and Saviour of the world. Johnson also points out that the woman's dazzling appearance like the sun relates her to the glory and brilliance of the Lord (1:16) as well as to her own light-bearing quality (1:20). With the moon under her feet signifying her permanence (Ps 72:5, 89:37, cf. Mat 16:18) and a crown of twelve stars on her head indicating her elect identity, she appears in her true heavenly and glorious character despite her seemingly fragile earthly history (v. 13-16). See also the description of the glory of the new Jerusalem 21:11 ff.

v2 - *She was pregnant and cried out as she was about to give birth* - She cried out with her birth pangs, (cf. Isa 26:17, 66:7-8, Micah 4:10) these probably represent the various attempts to kill the child, who is Christ, before she gave birth. See Gen 3:15, in which there is enmity between humankind and the Devil, and there is a promised offspring who will crush the serpent's head. In verse 4 the Dragon personally acts as the midwife to destroy the child at birth. Satan then tries to destroy the promised seed, various events are recorded in the OT in which there are attempts to destroy the line from which the Christ will be born.

Cain slays Abel, but Seth is raised, Gen 4.

Pharaoh orders the Israelite male babies to be killed, Ex 1:15.

Saul tries to kill David, 1 Sam 18:11.

When Athaliah proceeded to destroy the whole royal family, 2 Ki 11:1.

Haman tries to kill all the Jews but Esther intervenes, Esth 3:6, 7:3.

There are also various other points in the OT where the line leading to the Messiah could be broken (Hendriksen).

When God destroys the people of the earth but saves Noah.

Sarah is unable to conceive, but the miracle child Isaac is born.

The lord orders Isaac to be sacrificed but then provides a substitute

Rebekah, Isaac's wife was barren, but she conceives

Esau threatens to kill Jacob for robbing him of his birthright, but in the end does not.

The Lord wants to kill the children of Israel but Moses intervenes as an intercessor.

v3 - *Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads.* - Another 'sign' appeared in heaven, just as he saw the 'sign' of the woman, now he sees the sign of the dragon, this emphasises the symbolic nature of what he saw. This is the first appearance of the red dragon, who is the serpent from Gen 3:1. This is the introduction to one of the two external enemies of the Church, Satan and the World, the internal enemy is the flesh, but that is not what this book is about. He is red because of the blood he has shed, for he was a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). The dragon is clearly identified three times in verse 9; as that ancient serpent, called the devil, or Satan. The ten horns indicate strength and seven crowns signify his authority, the crowns are royal crowns (*diadema*) as opposed to the victory crowns that the woman wears. The royal crowns are only worn by the dragon here and by the beast in 13:1 and Christ in 19:12. His seven heads (seven meaning completeness) probably indicates his intelligence, or it could indicate his various forms, compare with the seven heads of the beast, 13:1. Compare him also with the Lamb, 5:6, who had seven horns but only one head. Note; Pharaoh was called a dragon, Ezek 29:3.

v4 - *His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth* - 'His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky', probably indicates the fallen angels, that is, the demons. When Satan was thrown out of heaven he took his demons with him, Rev 12:7, Dan 8:10.

v4 - *The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born* - This refers to king Herod who tried to kill Jesus when he was born, Mat 2:16, Herod is a type of the antichrist. This recalls a similar incident when Pharaoh tries to destroy all the male offspring (Exo 1:15-16). He is trying to prevent the birth of the one who will crush his head (Gen 3:15). They tried to kill the Christ while he was alive but could only do so when his time came, this parallels the two witnesses who are inviolate until they have finished their testimony.

v5 - *She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron sceptre.* - However the Dragon did not succeed in destroying the male child. In case we have any doubt who the child is, he is a male child, 'who will rule all the nations with an iron sceptre', which is a reference from the messianic psalm 2:9, the male child is Jesus. This messianic psalm is used also in Rev 2:27 and Rev 19:15 where Jesus is also clearly the subject. The word 'rule' actually means shepherd but in the context of 19:15 this passage means that he will strike down the nations when he

returns. Mounce gives the following explanation: 'To rule with a rod of iron means to destroy rather than to govern in a stern fashion. The shepherd not only leads his flock to pasture but defends the sheep from marauding beasts. His rod is a weapon of retaliation. The Messiah's rod is a rod of iron; that is, it is strong and unyielding in its mission of judgement.'

v5 - *And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.* - This indicates the ascension of our Lord, Mark 16:19. The throne of Jesus also appears in 3:21 and 22:3 among other places. Notice the parallelism with the two witnesses who after three and a half days go up to heaven. This verse also encapsulates the resurrection, through which Satan is defeated, see 12:8. We should note that the cross was not even mentioned, because it is the resurrection and ascension that are important, at the cross. Satan thought he had defeated the Messiah, but he made a great mistake because Jesus was snatched out of the devil's hands and he rose from the dead and ascended into heaven.

v6 - *The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.* - The corresponding verse for the NT church is in Rev 12:14, when she flies to a place in the desert where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, this period is synchronous with the 1260 days (see 11:2 for discussion of this time period). The woman, that is the church, fled to the desert, which here represents a place of safety and nourishment. Consider the flight of the Israelites from Egypt and the Pharaoh, Deu 32:10, where God nourished her for forty years on the manna (the bread of angels, Psa 78:25), the supernatural water from the rock and their clothes did not wear out, Neh 9:20-21. Consider also Elijah's flight to the desert where for three and a half years he was nourished by ravens and the widow's flour and oil, which miraculously did not run out (1 Kings 17:1-14), and by angels on another occasion (1 Kings 19:1-8). Note that when he was nourished by the Ravens and the widow it was during the drought that lasted three and a half years (Jam 5:17), hence we get 1,260 days (3.5 years * 12 months * 30 days). There is also the picture of Mary and Joseph with Jesus going to Egypt to escape from Herod. The 1260 days is the period between the ascension (see v3) and the second coming during which it is also the time of the churches' witnesses to the world (see Rev 11:3, the two witnesses who prophecy for 1260 days). It is also the time that the church is persecuted by the beast (13:5-7), but here it emphasises her (supernatural) care and providence by God, this is emphasised by the fact that God has prepared a place for her, the desert is her natural home in this life. The church does not have a permanent resting place such as a city while she is on the earth, her home is the New Jerusalem, Heb 11:13-16.

22.1. War in Heaven (12:7)

12:7 And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. 8 But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. 9 The great dragon was hurled down--that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

12:10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say:

"Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. 11 They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. 12 Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short."

This section depicts the eviction of Satan, in his role as accuser, from heaven as a result of the death and resurrection of Jesus. His basis for accusing mankind before God has gone because Christ fulfilled God's legal requirement on behalf of man. Jesus is raised far above all rule and authority, power and dominion. Having been evicted from heaven he continues his war against God and his people, and all people on the earth.

v7 - *And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back.* - Note this occurs after the ascension. Michael the archangel is mentioned in Dan 10:13, 20, 21, 12:1 where he is described as 'the great prince who protects your people' and Jude 1:9 in which he disputes with the devil about the body of Moses. There are two possible explanations for this, firstly when Satan sinned he was cast out of heaven to the earth together with his angels, Isa 14:12-15, Ezek 28:16-17. But verses 10-12 imply alternatively that after the resurrection Satan was defeated and the basis of his accusation is now void, once Jesus was ransomed for men, and cast down to earth. The basis of his accusation was that man sinned but now Jesus as a man and as mans representative lived a sinless life and paid the penalty for mans sin. Therefore Satan's legal right to be in heaven and to accuse men has gone, see also Job 1:6, Zec 3:1. After the resurrection Christ was

placed far above all power and dominion, including the devil, Rom 8:38, Eph 1:21 when God raised Christ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion. Passages such as John 12:31 imply that Satan was driven out of heaven when Christ was crucified, see also John 16:11. When the disciples reported to Jesus that even the demons submitted to them in Christ's name Jesus said "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you..." (Luke 10:17-19). In Mat 28:18 Jesus says "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples...."

v8 - *But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven.* - This implies that once the devil and his angels had a place in heaven, see Job 1:6 when he presented himself to God and Zec 3:1 when Satan accuses Joshua the high priest of sin. Not only is God stronger than Satan so is the archangel Michael, Luke 11:22. We are reminded here of the words of 1 John 4:4 'the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.' In John 12:31, just before his crucifixion, Jesus says 'now the prince of this world will be driven out' and in John 16:11 he says 'the prince of this world now stands condemned'. We see here the first part of Satan's defeat, first he is hurled out of heaven to the earth, later he loses his place on the earth and eventually will be thrown into the lake of fire (20:10).

v9 - *The great dragon was hurled down--that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.* - Here the dragon is clearly identified in case we have failed to identify him already. Satan is similarly referred to as 'the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan' in 20:2. Gen 3:1 and 3:13 are clearly indicated by the reference to the ancient Serpent who deceived Eve. Satan means accuser, see Job 1:6 ff., Zech 3:1. The devil in Greek is *Diabolos* which means slanderer, cf. the false Jews who slander the saints like their father Satan 2:9, and Satan's henchman who slanders God's name and his dwelling place and those who live there (13:6). This three-fold title or description of the dragon shows him as the deceiver, the slanderer and the accuser, after he was cast out of heaven his right to accuse men before God was gone but we see him still active in Revelation as the deceiver and slanderer through the false prophet (13:14, 19:20), the beast (13:6) and the false Jews (2:9). As long as men sinned Satan had a legal basis for being in heaven in order to accuse men of sinning before God. Following the death and resurrection of Christ, in which he as man's representative, both lived a sinless life and paid sins penalty by his death, Satan now has no legal basis for accusation since the sins of men are now forgiven, he has lost his legal case and therefore his legal right to be in heaven. Satan and his angels are

thrown out of heaven and hurled to the earth. cf. Isa 14:12 How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! Just before His death on the cross Jesus refers to this event (John 12:31-32 NIV see also John 16:11) "Now is the time for judgement on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. {32} But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." It is significant that the next verse (John 12:32) says that after the crucifixion Jesus will draw all men to himself - Satan is unable to prevent men (Jew or Gentile) coming to faith in Jesus.

v10 - *Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.* - There is now an interlude of rejoicing in heaven. The loud voice is from the saints or elders, who rejoice about Satan, the accuser of our brothers, being cast out of heaven (12:9). The classic descriptions of Satan as the accuser are given in Job (1:6 and 2:1) when Satan accuses Job for loving God only for what God gives Job, and in Zech 3:1 in which Satan accuses Joshua the high priest because of his sins. When Christ died as man's representative the price for man's sins was paid and therefore the legal basis for Satan's accusations in the law court of heaven was lost and so Satan's right to be there as man's accuser was lost so he is cast down from heaven. As Romans 8:33 says 'who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies' against this Satan has no answer. Satan is hurled out of heaven and down to the earth, and in Luke 10:18 Jesus sees Satan fall like lightning from heaven; Jesus gives his followers authority over Satan and his demons, Luke 10:19. In John 12:31 Jesus says that 'now the prince of this world will be driven out'. Once Jesus died and rose this message of the kingdom was to be preached to all people and they would come out of Satan's kingdom and be transferred to the kingdom of God (Acts 26:17-18, Col 1:13). Those who believe are free from accusation (Col 1:22), all authority was given to Christ and therefore the disciples were to proclaim the gospel to the world (Mat 28:18-20), the disciples were given power to proclaim the gospel at Pentecost (Acts 1:8). In one sense Satan lost his power over mankind when Jesus refused Satan's temptations, unlike the first Adam (Luke 4:1-13) (Mounce).

v11 - *They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.* - They overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb, they are freed of their sins by the blood of Jesus (1:5), therefore the basis of his accusation has gone because the penalty has been paid by the blood of Jesus, so when he accuses them they point him to the blood.

Hence Paul can write 'Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies' (Rom 8:33). They overcome Satan's lies in the world through the words of their testimony to Jesus. They overcome Satan because in the end they are prepared to die for their faith. When Christ died on the cross the saints were technically in Christ and therefore share in his victory, Rom 6:5-14. The results of this victory can be seen in James admonition to resist the devil and he will flee from you (James 4:7). It is seen by the spiritual warfare of Eph 6:11-18, in which the shield of faith is used to extinguish the flaming arrows of the evil one. Col 2:15 tells us that by the cross Christ has disarmed the powers and authorities and triumphed over them.

Just as Jesus overcame Satan by his death on the cross so Christ's followers must follow His example. The basis of his accusations has become null and void because they have been freed from their sins by the blood of the Lamb (Rev 1:5, 7:14, Col 1:22, Rom 8:33, 1 John 1:7). They testify that Jesus is the Christ (resulting in their salvation Rom 10:9-10) and prove the genuineness of their faith by being faithful unto death and thereby gained their life (Rev 2:10, 2:13, 6:9, 11:7, Luke 14:26, 21:16). Even death does not defeat them (Rev 6:9) because just as Jesus achieved victory over Satan through death, the saints do likewise. Once more a reference to those who are martyred which is a recurrent theme of the book. Later in 13:7 we find the beast waging war against the saints and defeating them but in 15:2 we also find those who are victorious over the beast in heaven singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb.

v12 - *Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.*" - The heavens can rejoice because Satan has been cast out, but to the earth and sea it means (yet another) woe because he will have his domain there and he is furious having lost his position in heaven. We should note that it is out of the earth and the sea that the two beasts come out, they come out of the sea and the earth because that is where Satan is now. He will try to make as much trouble for the people of the world as he can until his defeat. The trouble he causes through these two beasts is clear, especially for the church: the beast out of the sea wages war against the saints (13:7), the beast out of the earth deceives the world through miracles (13:14), he sets up an image of the first beast and kills those who refuse to worship it (13:15), he forces everyone to receive a mark without which no one can buy or sell (13:16). The devil is unceremoniously hurled to the earth together with his angels to lead the whole earth astray, verse 9. His fate was sealed at the resurrection and he was cast out of heaven and he knows it is only a short time before Christ returns to the earth to claim his rightful possession of it. His short time is the gospel

age (see v14), until the Second Coming, when he will be punished. He knows he is defeated (Mat 8:29) and that his time until he is judged and punished in the lake of fire is relatively short (Rev 20:10, 1 Cor 7:29).

22.2. The dragon pursues the Woman (12:13)

Rev 12:13 When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. 14 The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent's reach. 15 Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent. 16 But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. 17 Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring--those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. 13:1 And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea.

The woman's offspring has bruised the serpent's head (Gen 3:15 c.f. 13:3). The serpent, having pursued the woman to no effect, turns against the rest of her offspring to bruise its head (Sweet). 'Israel, the mother of the Messiah, now appears as God's Israel, the church, mother of the 'many brethren' of whom he is 'the first-born' (Rom 8:29, Gal 6:16)' (Sweet).

v13 - *When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child.* - He pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child, that is the church on earth, in order to persecute it, once more there is a reference to the exodus with Pharaoh in pursuit (Ex 14:8). Having failed to kill the Son, he tries to hurt the Son through the church, just as Saul's persecution of the church persecuted Christ, Acts 9:4, see also Mat 25:45. He cannot hurt the saints who are in heaven. *Johnson* notes that the word 'pursue' *dioko*:G1377 also means persecute. The KJV also translates *dioko* as 'persecuted'. If we see the woman as the Jews this makes historical sense. The Jews also gave birth to the Church (the rest of her offspring) which was originally composed of Jews.

v14 - *The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert* - The two wings of a great eagle is a reference to

Exodus 19:4 in which God carried the Israelites out of Egypt on eagles wings. The desert represents a place of safety, away from Pharaoh and the influence of the world. We are reminded that God's people are wanderers on the earth, we are nomads with no permanent dwelling place in this world. This verse refers to the NT church and corresponds to verse 6 that refers to the OT church. We therefore see that the woman represents both OT and NT church.

v14 - *where she would be taken care of* - The Israelites spent forty years in the wilderness and were nourished on the heavenly manna, i.e. the word of God, which had to be gathered daily otherwise it went stale, Deu 8:3. They were guided by the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, they received manna and water, their cloths did not wear out nor did their feet become swollen, Neh 9:19-21. It also speaks of the supernatural care Elijah experienced during the drought that lasted three and a half years during which he was fed by Ravens (1 Kings 17:4-7) and then supernaturally by the widow who had a jar of flour which did not get used up and a jug of oil that did not run dry until it rained (1 King 17:14). Note that the period that Elijah was looked after supernaturally was three and a half years which is also 1260 days, Jam 5:17.

v14 - *where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent's reach.* - This is the same period as that she is cared for in verse 6 (1,260 days), that is three and a half years or 42 months or 1260 days. This is also the time of Daniel's prediction of the desecration of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes (note the name Epiphanes = Epiphany or appearing) who is a type of the antichrist (2 Thess 2:4), see also Rev 11:2, and 13:5 for similar time periods. It is also the time of the persecution of God's people, Dan 7:25, 12:7. It is also the period of the churches witness to the world (Rev 11:3) and her persecution by the beast (Rev 13:5). Thus this time period indicates the time that she is supernaturally cared for by God, the time of her witness and the time of her persecution. She is out of the reach of the devil, so that is he cannot directly harm her, 'neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord', Rom 8:38-39. In 1 Pet 5:8-9 we are told to resist the devil and he will flee, he has no real power over the saints. In 1 John 5:18 we are told that Satan cannot harm God's children because Jesus keeps them safe. She is taken care of by God, see comments on verse 6.

v15 - *Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent.* - Having seen that the church is out of

his reach he tries another tactic to destroy her. What comes out of the Devil's mouth? He is the father of lies: 'when he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies', John 8:44, cf. the evil spirits that come out of the mouth of the dragon, beast and false prophet (16:13). The water is the doctrine of demons or false doctrine by which he tries to destroy the church, remember the false prophet or false christ's, Mat 7:15, 24:24, 2 Pet 2:1. If he cannot destroy the church through persecution he will try to destroy her through heresy and false doctrine, let the saints beware of Satan's devices. We also saw this in the slander of the Jews who are a synagogue of Satan in the letter to the church in Smyrna (2:9) and in Philadelphia (3:9). We see it next in the slander of the beast who slanders God's name and his dwelling place and those in heaven (13:6). We have also already seen the false teaching of the woman Jezebel, the Balaamites and the Nicolaitans (2:14-15, 20, 24). Slander from without and false teachers within (Caird) are his weapons against the church. The next section shows how he does this through the false prophet, the beast out of the earth who resembles a lamb but speaks the words of Satan. It also shows the beast out of the sea waging war against the saints by persecution. We have already seen that fire comes out of the mouth of the two witnesses (11:5), it is appropriate therefore that the dragon should fight this with water; he fights the truth of the gospel with lies.

v16 - *But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth* - A reference to the Song of Moses, sang after the Egyptians died in the sea (Exo 15:12). The sea prevented the Israelites escaping from the pursuing Egyptians until it became dry land, when they were safely over, the sea destroyed the pursuing Egyptians. Even nature is on the side of the man who is faithful to Christ. It could also be a reference to the earth swallowing up Korah and his men but it does nothing to shed light on the passage, (Num 16:30).

Another view is that at this stage the Woman is the Jewish people as distinct from the rest of her offspring who are clearly the church. The Jews were dispersed among the nations in AD 70 (Jeremiah 29:18, Lev 26:33). The earth (nations) hid the Jews well enough for there to be a remnant to return to, and re-establish, the nation of Israel. Satan enraged with Israel? Read the newspapers or watch the TV news, it won't take you too long to see that. (Jerry)

v17 - *Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring--those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. 13:1 And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea.* - Satan is powerless against the church as a whole i.e. the woman, so he makes war against her

offspring that is individuals instead. Her offspring are clearly identifies as those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus who are to be compared with those who worship the beast in 14:11-12. The woman had succeeded in bringing forth the Christ, the first born, her offspring is the NT church, which the dragon persecutes, Rom 8:29. 'The woman, like the temple, is the inward church and invulnerable; but the outward church, the rest of her offspring, is given over to the dragon's minions, like the court outside, 11:1' (Sweet). This verse introduces and prepares us for the persecution of God's people by the Devil's henchmen the beast coming out of the sea and the beast out of the earth in the next section. The dragon stands on the shore of the sea as his partner, the beast, comes out of the sea. The dragon went off to make war against the rest of her offspring, the dragon uses the beast to make war against the saints (Rev 13:7), using imprisonment and death (13:10). He also uses the more subtle approach, the beast out of the sea, which looks like a lamb but is in fact the false prophets who spreads false doctrine and performs miraculous signs. The means that Satan uses to make war against the church, persecution and the false prophet, are true to the nature of Satan who is a murderer and a liar (John 8:44). His instruments are the state (sea beast) and the world (prostitute) that both persecute the church (Rev 17:6, 18:24). In Rev 17:3 John sees a woman sitting on a scarlet beast indicating the close connection of the prostitute with the beast.

Johnson points out that the expression 'make war' (Gk *poiesai polemon*) is the identical expression used of the beast's attack on the two witnesses in 11:7 and on the saints in 13:7. There is good reason to correlate the three groups and to indicate their common identity under different figures. Notice that this section indicates that the dragon is still very active in this period in waging war against the saints and deceiving the nations v9. The beast is later shown to be the antichrist, however many antichrists have come before the final antichrist. In Ch. 13 we see the two tools of Satan, who tries to destroy the church through political power (persecution: this calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints) and false doctrine, even performing false signs and wonders to deceive the elect if that were possible. Let the saints beware.

23. The beast out of the sea (13:1)

13:1 And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. 2 The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. 3 One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was astonished and followed the beast. 4 Men worshipped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshipped the beast and asked, "Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?"

5 The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. 6 He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. 7 He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. 8 All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast--all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.

9 He who has an ear, let him hear. 10 If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed.

This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.

Earlier in Rev 12:7 we saw that the dragon was 'enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring--those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea'. Now we see how he wages war against the saints through the beast that comes out of the sea as the devil looks on. This beast was earlier revealed in Rev 11:7 as the beast out of the Abyss who makes war against the two witnesses and kills them when they have finished their testimony. He is introduced here as the Devil's henchman, he even resembles the devil with ten horns and seven heads, the devil delegates his power to the beast, his throne and authority. He is the incarnation of the Devil on earth through whom the devil makes war on the saints and overcomes them, the weapons used are imprisonment and death. All who pledge allegiance to the beast are giving their allegiance to the devil. He is the consummation of the four beasts that Daniel saw and therefore he represents an ungodly, bestial, world political empire. Later on in Revelation he rides the whore and represents an emperor, so empire and emperor are

interchangeable. He has authority for the same time that the Gentiles trample on the outer court, the same time as the two witnesses prophecy and the same time that the church is cared for in the desert. The beast exerts authority over the entire world and represents political power, the second beast represents religious and economic power. Hendriksen comments that the first beast is Satan's *hand* and the second beast is Satan's *mind*. 'The first represents the persecuting power of Satan operating in and through the nations of this world and their governments. The second symbolises the false religions and philosophies of this world'. He sums up the beast, false prophet and Babylon as the three agents of Satan's attack upon the earth namely 'antichristian persecution, antichristian religion, and antichristian seduction'.

The beast can be interpreted as the Roman Empire of John's time and subsequent ungodly empires since then culminating supremely in the empire of the antichrist. The message of this section is that the beast was given power to conquer the saints who are the only people who will not worship the beast, this calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints. In view of the fact that he kills the two witnesses at the end of their testimony, that is he silences the witness of the church (11:7) and in view of the fact that in 17:11 the 'beast who once was, and *now is not*, is an eighth king', the beast is primarily the antichrist at the end of the age. However the beast also belongs to the seven kings which indicates that he belongs to a succession of tyrannical regimes which persecute the saints. As 1 John 2:18 says 'as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, *even now many antichrists have come*. This is how we know it is the last hour.' Five of the seven kings have fallen, *one is*, the other is yet to come, but when he does come he must remain for a little while. While the man of lawlessness has not been revealed yet, the secret power of lawlessness is *already at work* in the world, 2 Thess 2:3-6.

The Christian and the State:

The main NT references to human authorities are given by Jesus in Mat 22:17-21 (cf. Mark 12:14, Luke 20:22), Paul in Rom 13:1-7, and Peter in 1 Pet 2:13-17 ff. It should be noted that Jesus reply to the question of paying taxes to Caesar is repeated in each of the synoptic gospels, Mat 22:17 etc. He propounded the principle that one should 'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's'. Jesus attitude to violence is illustrated when Peter cut the ear off a servant of the high priest and he said "Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword..." (Mat 26:52). Paul points out that the governing authorities have received their authority from God and are instituted by God; and that by rebelling against them one is rebelling against God. They are God's representatives to

punish those who do wrong, and the Christian must submit to their authority. Paul tells his readers to 'Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honour, then honour', Paul no doubt had the Roman authorities in mind. Peter also urges his readers to submit themselves, for the Lord's sake, to every authority instituted among men; whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. He also urges them to show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honour the king. He then goes on to argue that one should bear up under the pain of unjust suffering without retaliating, just as Jesus did.

Jesus, Paul and Peter are mainly talking about human institutions that maintain law and order. When Paul was treated unjustly by the Jews he appealed to Caesar for justice. These institutions are required because of man's fallen nature, without the maintenance of law and order there would be anarchy; but what of those authorities that take to themselves what belongs to God, the worship that only belongs to God. It is to this that chapter 13 of Revelation refers. Even here the bible does not argue for civil uprising under tyrannical regimes, but rather to continue to obey and fear God rather than man, even if this means death. One can see an example of this in the apostles continuing to teach against the wishes of the high priest and the Sadducees, they said 'we must obey God rather than men' (Acts 5), when one says this one must be prepared to take the consequences. One must notice that the authorities had overstepped their God given authority. If the emperor demands the worship belonging only to God then one must obey God rather than the emperor even if this means dying, the emperors authority to demand such a thing clearly does not come from God (OT examples of those who oppose such a command are: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, Dan 3). Patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints is required rather than retaliation, vengeance belongs to God. Finally, in the sermon on the mount, Jesus pronounces a blessing on those who are persecuted because of righteousness and because of Him (Mat 5:10-11); righteousness and Jesus both preclude violent behaviour against the state. Jesus states our attitude in its most radical and positive form in Mat 5:44 when he says 'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you'; Paul in Rom 12:14 states 'Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse'.

v1 - *And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea* - This a continuation of Rev 12:17 in which the dragon went off to make war against the rest of her offspring, i.e. the Church. In 12:12 woe is declared to the *earth* and *sea* because the devil has gone down to you, so it is not unnatural that here we see

the dragon standing on the seashore (the boundary between *land* and *sea*) as the first beast comes out of the *sea*, later a second beast comes out of the *earth*. What is described now is *how* the dragon makes war against her using his allies the beast out of the sea and beast out of the earth. The word used for beast (*therion*) means that it is a wild, untamed, unrestrained animal, examples are given in verse 2, i.e. a leopard, a bear and a lion. The same word for beasts is used in the fourth seal, 'They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth', 6:8. This is the same beast that the woman (harlot) rides, Rev 17:3. The beast comes out of the sea, the sea indicates peoples, multitudes, nations and languages, Rev 17:15 and Isa 17:12, i.e. the people's groups in the world; Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo Persia, Greece, Rome. God describes these empires as bestial. This is the same beast that came out of the abyss; abyss can also mean the great deep, mentioned as far back as Rev 11:7 when he kills the two witnesses. The imagery for the beast out of the sea comes from Dan 7:2 ff. Jack Deere in his book 'Surprised at the voice of God' (Kingsway 1996) comments on the dreams in Daniel: Another benefit of the symbolism in dreams is that it often reveals the perspective of God. For example, when the pagan king Nebuchadnezzar dreamed about world empires, he saw the successive empires in terms of a beautiful statue. However, when Daniel dreamed about these same empires, he saw them in terms of beasts. Nebuchadnezzar's dream represents the world's view of human empires, while Daniel's represents the divine perspective.

v1 - *He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name* - The description of the beast is similar to that of the dragon (Rev 12:3 - an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his head), the beast resembles the dragon, in the same way Christ is the image of the Father. Ten horns signifying great power, seven heads, i.e. a multiplicity meaning hard to kill, it may also stand for its various incarnations as kings or kingdoms, the crowns (*diademata*) stand for its royal authority. The ten horns are also like Daniel's fourth beast which also had ten horns which are ten kings, Dan 7:24. The ten crowns on his horns are royal crowns (*diadema*) which both the dragon (12:3) and Christ wear (19:12), these ten horns are ten kings, Rev 17:12. The number ten and seven should be taken symbolically as meaning complete. The beast is also mentioned in Rev 17:3 and explained in detail in Rev 17:7 ff. The ten horns are explained as ten kings in Rev 17:12. The seven heads are seven hills, referring to the Rome of John's time, and they are also seven kings, Rev 17:9. The beast should be contrasted with the Lamb. The beast is the incarnation of the Devil. Because he is to be contrasted with the Lamb he should be viewed as a person, but a person with a kingdom and people who do his bidding.

v1 - *and on each head a blasphemous name* - The blasphemous names on its head indicate its character, i.e. proud, arrogant, God hating, human government independent and defiant of God. It builds itself up at any cost to increase its power and wealth. Compare its blasphemous name with the name of the harlot BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH (17:5), Contrast this to the Saints who have the name of the Lamb and the Father written on their foreheads (14:1). Some of the Roman emperors demanded that they be worshipped, this is clearly blasphemy. The Roman emperors took the title *divus* or *sebastos*, which means divine. Frequently the very name God or Son of God was given to the emperors; and Nero on his coins called himself *The Saviour of the World*. For any man to call himself divine was a blasphemous insult to God. Further, the later emperors took as their title the Latin word *dominus*, or its Greek equivalent *kurios*, both of which mean lord and in the old Testament are the special title of God and in the New Testament the special title of Jesus Christ (Barclay). In Daniel the horn spoke boastfully Dan 7:8, 7:11, 7:20, 7:25. Whenever Caesar demands what belongs only to God he becomes a beast, Mat 22:21.

v2 - *The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion.* - The beast is hideous in contrast to the lamb. The beast reminds us of the first three beasts of Daniel 7. Daniel sees four beasts: lion, bear, leopard with four heads, a fourth beast with iron teeth and ten horns. These are combined into one beast in this vision. Daniel asked for the interpretation of the beasts, they are kingdoms that arise from the earth, they are political powers (Dan 7:16-18). Daniel's four beasts (in Dan 7) represent the empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome (Gleason). They parallel the statue of Dan 2 in which the gold head represents Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian empire, the silver chest and arms was to be Medo-Persia beginning with Cyrus the Great, the bronze belly and thigh was the Greco-Macedonian empire established by Alexander the Great, the fourth empire is symbolised by legs of iron which is the Roman Empire. The feet and ten toes are made up of iron and clay, the weakness of the clay indicating that it cannot be a durable world power. The rock that struck and smashed the statue is the kingdom of God which will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end but will itself endure forever, Dan 2:44 cf. the iron sceptre of Rev 2:27, 12:5, 19:15 (Gleason). Consider this remarkable description of Pharaoh king of Egypt from Ezek 32:2, 'You are like a lion among the nations; you are like a monster in the seas...'

Out of the peoples, multitudes, nations and languages came political super powers, e.g. Rome, Russia, China ruthless and arrogant. These beasts have the same

characteristics as the nations described. The leopard, swift to pounce; the bear which mauls; the lion that has strength to destroy its prey. For example Russia has been called the great bear. In Rev 17:11 the beast is described as an eighth king, so the king and his kingdom are interchangeable. If we think of great dictatorships, such as Stalin's, Mao's, Hitler's this should not surprise us. Alternatively we can think of the beast as an Empire or an emperor. John definitely sees the beast as the Roman Emperor later in Rev 17, but again both empire and emperor are interchangeable. Finally in the last generation he is the antichrist, the little horn of the fourth beast (Dan 7:8), who leads the nations of the earth against Christ and his army, 19:19, and is destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire (Dan 7:11). Dan 7:13 contains a clear reference to the Second Coming of Christ. Note that the little horn is (a type of) the antichrist the fourth beast is his kingdom. Caird points out that for his sin of idolatry Nebuchadnezzar had been turned into a beast, he was driven away from people, ate grass like cattle, his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird (Dan 4:33), he was restored as a man only when he acknowledged the sovereignty of God. In contrast to the beast is the lion of the tribe of Judah, the Lamb, the true ruler of the kings of the earth.

v2 - *The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.* - We see here that the beast is the instrument of Satan from whom he derives his power, throne and authority. The dragon gave the beast his power (*dunamis*) to exercise his authority (*exousia*) effectively. In verse 7 he exercises his power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. This power is also delegated to the beast out of the earth to perform miraculous signs to deceive the inhabitants of the earth and give breath to the image of the first beast (13:13-15). The Greek word for throne used here is the same word used for God's throne (*thronos*) and is the same word used of Satan's throne in 2:13 which the KJV translates as Satan's seat (see also the beast's throne in 16:10). In verse 4 we find that men worshipped the dragon because he had given his authority to the beast; in verse 5 we find that the beast exercises his authority for forty-two months; in verse 7 we find that he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation i.e. all the peoples of the world, that is Satan's kingdom. In verse 12 we find that the beast out of the earth exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf.

Three times in John's gospel Satan is called the prince of this world, John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11 and in Mat 4:8-9 he clearly owned the kingdoms of the world which he offered to Jesus if he bowed down to worship him. In 1 John 5:19 we are told that the whole world is under the control of the evil one; in this section we see how Satan controls the world through the beast. Daniel's third beast was given power to rule, Dan 7:6. The devil uses people and political powers to fulfil his purposes here on earth, in

the same way that God uses the church, which is his body, to fulfil His purpose here on earth, the two of them are diametrically opposed. While the beast may do the actual persecuting it is the devil that is behind it all as (2:10) makes clear, 'the devil will put some of you in prison to test you'. The beast accepts the satanic offer which Jesus refused, Mat 4:8, (Pawson). The dragon went off to make war against the saints and stood by the sea shore to watch the beast come out of the sea through whom he would make war against the saints (12:17).

v3 - *One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed* - The fatal wound that had been healed is a parody of the 'Lamb, looking as if it had been slain' see Rev 5:6. In verse 14 we find that the sword caused the wound. This wound speaks of death and resurrection, i.e. a civilisation falls and in its place another arises. It could also refer to the judgement of Satan on the cross, the fulfilment of Gen 3:15 in which 'he (*Jesus*) will crush your head', Satan was dealt a death blow at the cross, (John 12:31, 16:11, Col 2:15) the *coup de grâce* will be finally dealt when Christ comes again, see Rev 20:10. The beast has a similar appearance to Satan, compare 12:3 with 13:1. Remember that Satan had already been thrown out of heaven and hurled to the earth (12:7-9) presumably as a result of Christ's victory at the cross. There is no need to apply the healed fatal wound to the Nero *redivivus* (resurrected) myth, although this may well have applied in John's day. This myth is an example of the fatal wound that had been healed: Nero died by suicide but Domitian rose later sharing similar characteristics to Nero. Nero was so evil that many could not believe that death was the end of him. The expectation arose that he would reappear in a resurrected form (Morris). It can also refer to the rise and fall of tyrannical dictators, as one falls another one rises to take its place.

v3 - *The whole world was astonished and followed the beast.* - These who *follow* the beast (i.e. his followers) should be contrasted with the 144,000 who have the name of Lamb and his Father's name upon their foreheads and who *follow* the Lamb wherever he goes (14:1-4). The whole world refers to the unregenerate, i.e. all those who are not saints. In 17:8 we find that the cause of their astonishment when they see the beast is because he once was, now is not, and yet will come.

v4 - *Men worshipped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshipped the beast* - This political power has exceeded its legitimate authority from God in that it allows itself to be worshipped, worship that belongs only to God, and thus break the first and second commandments (Ex 20:3-5). This worship may not be explicit, it could be its refusal to allow God's people to worship God as he should be worshipped, whenever the state does this it exceeds its legitimate power,

see Rom 13:1-7. Note that John equates worship of the beast as worship of the dragon, therefore emperor worship is equated to Satan worship. This would be the case with the Roman Empire, which allowed emperor worship, especially during the reign of Nero and Domitian. Note: that in worshipping Satan men are doing what Jesus himself refused to do when tempted by the devil in the desert (Mat 4:8-10) Jesus quoted Deu 6:13 to the devil 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.' Who we worship is one of the key themes of Revelation see 4:10, 5:14, 7:11, 9:20, 14:7, 14:9, 19:10, 22:9. The men who worship the beast are all the inhabitants of the world whose names have not been written in the Lambs book of life, verse 8. Preston and Hanson quoted by Mounce note that man is made to worship some absolute power and in the last analysis will give his allegiance either to the beast (whose power is that of inflicting suffering) or to the Lamb (whose power lies in accepting suffering). In Luke 20:25 Jesus says we are to 'give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's'. It is right to pay taxes to Caesar and to honour Caesar but only God should be worshipped. The moment that Caesar demands to be worshipped he becomes a beast. Hailey notes that in rendering homage to the emperor the world was worshipping him who had given his authority to the Roman power. This worship is the counterpart to the worship of God, for in worshipping Christ to whom God gave His authority, the Christian worships God who sent the Christ and provided all blessings through Him. So in worshipping the beast they are worshipping Satan who gave his authority to the beast. The beast in accepting the worship belonging to Christ denies that Jesus is the Christ and becomes the antichrist in the sense of 'instead of' Christ (John 4:1-3). We should also see that worship involves obeying the beast, see Paul's definition of spiritual worship in Rom 12:1, in which we are to offer our bodies as living sacrifices to God, it goes on to say that we are to be renewed in our minds. In 13:16 we find that those who receive the mark of the beast receive it on their right hand (indicative of their actions) or their forehead (indicative of their mind), thus those who worship or follow the beast do so in their actions and thinking.

v4 - *"Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?"* - This is a parody of the OT verse in Psalm 35:10, 'Who is like you, O Lord?'; Psalm 71:19, 'Who, O God, is like you?' and Exo 15:11, 'who among the gods is like you, O Lord?'. The praise of the beast is a parody of the praise of God. The power of the beast is very real, 'who can make war against him'? This question is answered later in Rev 19:19-20 when the beast and the kings of the earth make war on the rider on the white horse who is the King of kings and Lord of lords, but the beast is captured and thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulphur. Mounce notes that the motivation for worship is not his moral greatness but the awesome power of his might. Compare the 'Who can make war against the beast?' with the 'who can stand?' against the wrath of the Lamb of

6:17 the answer is given in 19:19 ff. only Christ can war against the beast, not the church.

v5 - *The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months.* - The proud words and blasphemies is reminiscent of Daniel's little horn which had eyes like eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully (Dan 7:8, 20, 25 see also Rev 11:36). The phrase 'was given' and forty-two months indicates a divine limitation. The forty-two months is the period until Christ comes, see discussion on Rev 11:2. This is the same period that the Gentiles trample the holy city (Rev 11:2) and the same time that the church witnesses, 1260 days (Rev 11:3) and the same time that the woman is looked after in the desert (Rev 12:6, 14), that is, it is the gospel age which is the period of the churches witness on the earth, Acts 1:8. Thus the beast exercises his authority throughout the gospel age. Some commentators see the forty two months as a literal three and a half year period corresponding to the last half of Daniel's week, Dan 9:27.

v6 - *He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven.* - In verse 1 he had seven heads,..... and on each head a blasphemous name, we find him again in 17:3 covered in blasphemous names, He is anti God, godless and devilish. Such is the attitude of the world and is ultimately expressed by the antichrist who proclaims himself to be God, 2 Thess 2:4. He follows his master, the Devil (*diabolos*), who slanders God's people, cf. 2:9, the devil (*diabolos*) is mentioned four times in Revelation. He is similar to Daniel's king of the North, Dan 11:36, who will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods and also Daniel's little horn that spoke boastfully (Dan 7:20). This blasphemy results when rulers have absolute power and authority. Those who live in heaven can be viewed as the church who ideally lives in heaven (Phil 3:20, Eph 2:6). Herod is a type of the antichrist, Acts 12:21, as is Nebuchadnezzar who did not glorify God and turned into a beast (Dan 4:32). Compare the blasphemy here with God's servants 'those who reverence God's name', 11:18.

v7 - *He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.* - In Dan 7:21 it is the little horn of the fourth beast that wages war against the saints and defeats them. Daniel's third beast was given authority to rule (Dan 7:6). We have already had three warnings about persecution: in Rev 2:10 the church in Smyrna is warned that the devil will put some of them in prison and some might even have to die; in Rev 6:9 in the fifth seal John sees the souls of those had been slain because of the word of God and

the testimony of Jesus; in 11:7 when the two witnesses, that is the church, have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. The passage here contains an explicit warning to the Saints, that 'the beast was given power to make war against the saints *and to conquer them*', and in verse 10 this calls for 'patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints'. Notice the words 'He was given power to...' part of the message of the book is that even though the beast succeeds in killing the saints God is still on the throne and in control. The beast will *appear* to have conquered the saints, but just in the same way that the world seems to have conquered Christ on the cross, it actually gives the saints victory over the beast and his image, the victors are found singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb in 15:2-4, see also 12:11, note that the two witnesses come back to life again, 11:11. Just as the world shouted 'Crucify him' so the world will hate and persecute the saints, if they persecuted Jesus they will persecute the saints (John 15:20). Just as some of the Jews gave their allegiance to Caesar when they crucified Jesus ('We have no king but Caesar', John 19:15), the world will give their allegiance to the beast and persecute the saints. Behind the beast, of course, is the dragon who is making war against the saints, 12:17. Notice the four-fold description (tribe, people, language and nation) of those the beast has authority over indicating that they come from the four corners of the earth, the kingdom of the beast is a world-wide kingdom. The beast works closely with the whore (Rome or Babylon) who sits on the beast and who is drunk with the blood of the saints, 17:6. But the beast will make war against the Lamb and will be conquered, 17:14, 19:19-20. Here and in the preceding verses concerning his blasphemy the beast is the antichrist in the sense of 'against' Christ.

Here in 13:7 we are forewarned that the beast, i.e. ungodly tyrannical nations, will succeed in conquering the saints, putting them in prison as well as killing the saints (13:10). To be forewarned is to be forearmed. Therefore the Saints should not be surprised when their persecutors win, e.g. Russia, China etc. their attitude should be that of patient endurance. Daniel (Dan 7:21) and Revelation indicate that they win in the end. Just as man succeeded in crucifying Jesus, so man will succeed in persecuting the saints. A servant is not greater than his master, if they persecuted Jesus they will persecute the Church (John 15:20). At this point we must ask ourselves the question, why does God permit His people to suffer like this? The answer given by Caird is to allow evil to run its destructive course and burn itself out and to give mankind the greatest possible chance to repent. Martyrdom, like the cross, is the cost of divine patience (2 Pet 3:9).

v8 - *All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast--all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.* - Just as the beast has political authority over every tribe, people, language and nation, he also has religious authority, all those who do not know God will worship the beast. 'All inhabitants of the earth' is all inclusive because everyone apart from the saints, whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life, will worship the beast (see also 17:8). This persuasion is so great that everyone worships the beast, they are of course deceived. In 2 Thess 2:9-12 we find that although they are deceived by the man of lawlessness and his Satanic counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, it is also God who sends them a powerful delusion so that they believe the lie. He does this because they *refused* to love the truth and so be saved, even after his warnings of the trumpets (9:20-21). Only the names of God's people are in the Lamb's book of life, Rev 21:27. For the 'book of life' see also, Psa 69:28, Phil 4:3. The Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world because it was decided in eternity past, just as God chose those in the book of life before the creation of the earth, 1 Pet 1:20, 1 Eph 1:4. The worship of the beast out of the sea is orchestrated by the beast out of the earth, see verses 12-15, who uses signs and wonders and the threat of death to make the people of the earth worship the first beast. It should be noted that in 1 Pet 2:17 we are told to fear God and honour the king, we are not told to worship the king, that belongs only to God. Those people who know their God will not break the first and second commandment and worship the beast, Exo 20:3-6. It is commendable for a man to bear up against the pain of unjust suffering just as Christ himself did, 1 Pet 2:19-24.

v9 - *He who has an ear, let him hear.* - A solemn word to the saints to listen to the next verse, this is the only repetition of the formula used for the seven churches, see 2:7. The previous verse implies that the saints, whose names are written in the book of life, will not worship the beast, but this has consequences and we should pay careful attention to the next verse.

v10 - *If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed.* - This verse indicates the consequences associated with not worshipping the beast, namely imprisonment and death. This is taken from the Lord's words to Jerusalem, which he was about to destroy because its peoples sin, Jer 15:2-3. This stresses the inevitability of persecution. Notice that prison and death are the two forms of persecution that the church in Smyrna was warned about (2:10). It is pointless and unchristian to resist by the sword. Jesus warned in Mat 26:53 that all who draw the sword will die by the sword. This indicates the inevitability of imprisonment or death caused by the beast, it

will happen, let the saints be warned. Death by persecution is part of the saint's lot, in 12:11 the saints overcome Satan 'by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death'. Paul tells us to overcome evil with good and to submit to the governing authorities, Rom 12:21-13:1-7. As does Peter, 1 Peter 2:13 and in verse 19 he says that 'it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God'. He gives Christ as the supreme example of one who suffered unjust suffering, he committed no sin and he did not retaliate and made no threats but he entrusted himself God, 1 Pet 2:21-23.

v10 - *This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.* - This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints because they must submit without resistance to the conquering attack of the beast (Caird) just as John submitted to his exile on Patmos (1:9). One cannot remedy one wrong with another wrong, 1 Pet 3:9. Jesus did not retaliate against his accusers, 1 Pet 2:23. Remember Jesus warning about persecution in Luke 12:4, we should not fear those who can only kill the body and do no more but we should fear God who has the power over the second death. Patient endurance and faithfulness in the face of suffering is one of the themes of the book and is required of the saints, it is also found in Rev 1:9, in 14:12 it warns that patient endurance and faithfulness is called for because those who worship the beast and his image will suffer eternal torment. Patient endurance in the face of suffering is found elsewhere in scripture: 'patient in affliction' Rom 12:12; see also 2 Cor 1:6, Col 1:11, James 5:7-11. In 6:9 and 20:4 we find the souls of the martyrs who had been faithful to death, they were killed because of their *obedience* to the word of God and the testimony to Jesus which they had *maintained* until death. See also Mat 5:11-12 (blessed are you when people insult you...), Mat 5:38-39 (do not resist and evil person...), Mat 5:43-48 (Love your enemies). Jesus absorbed the wrong and injustice done against him even to the extent of allowing evil people to crucify him to death and he expects his followers to follow his example (1 Pet 2:21-23). We should not fight evil with evil but with good (Rom 12:17-21). See 'The cross of Jesus', Ch 7, Leon Morris, The Paternoster Press, 1994.

24. The beast out of the earth (13:11)

Rev 13:11 Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. 12 He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. 13 And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men. 14 Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honour of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. 15 He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. 16 He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, 17 so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.

13:18 This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666.

This is the second of the devil's henchmen, the beast from the earth is otherwise known as the false prophet and he completes this unholy trinity of Dragon, beast and false prophet. If the Devil gives to the first beast all his authority and the second beast gives glory to the first beast, then we have the counterfeit to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If the first beast represents political power this one represents religious power. Later he is called the false prophet, he looks like a lamb but speaks like the devil, he is a counterfeit Christ. The two horns stands for his witness, contrast him with the two witnesses who are the true prophets of God. He receives his authority from the political power and his function is to coerce the inhabitants of the earth to worship the first beast. He performs counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders as will the antichrist. As well as false religion it can be any false man-made philosophy that supports the state such as Nazism or communism. He also exercises economic control within the state, so that no one could buy or sell unless they had the mark of the beast on their right hand or forehead. The saints do not receive this mark and as a result they suffer for this. The beast's number is 666, 6 is mans number because man was created on the sixth day, therefore 666 is a trinity of sixes, that is, mans religion or philosophy.

We can see some of the ways in which the dragon and the beast wage war against the church through the beast out of the earth:

- i. He looks like Christ (a lamb) but speaks like a dragon i.e. he speaks lies and false doctrine, he is a false prophet.
- ii. He performs counterfeit signs and wonders, which deceive the world and could deceive even the elect.
- iii. He kills all that refuse to worship the image of the beast; this is persecution.
- iv. He forces everyone to receive a mark on his right hand or forehead without which no one can buy or sell; this is economic control.

v11 - *Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth.* - The devil had been hurled down to the earth (12:4) and in 12:12 woe is pronounced on the *earth* and sea because the devil has gone down there and is filled with fury. The first beast came out the sea, i.e. people, nations and the second beast came out of the earth. The earth is significant, it could imply a man (note, man came out of the earth, see Gen 2:7) or belonging to man. This is further implied in verse 18 the number of the beast is man's number, it is 666. Six is man's number because he was created on the sixth day. Six is one less than perfection. James 3:14-17 contrasts the wisdom of the earth which leads to envy and selfish ambition which is earthly, unspiritual and of the devil; with the wisdom that comes from heaven which is pure, peace loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Paul contrasts Adam who was of the dust of the earth with Jesus who came from heaven (1 Cor 15:47-48 cf. John 3:31).

v11 - *He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon.* - He looks harmless enough until he opens his mouth to utter Satanic lies and deceit, just as the dragon tried to destroy the church with his river of lies in 12:15. It looks like a lamb, i.e. Christ, but he comes like a wolf in sheep's clothing and inwardly is a ferocious wolf (Mat 7:15). This lamb is different to the one that was slain (Rev 5:6). He has two horns like a lamb, i.e. like Christ who had seven horns, but it had not been slain, (Christ without the cross) but speaking like a dragon. The two horns stands for his witness, compare with the two witnesses who are the true prophets of God. He is the counterfeit of Christ (Rev 5:6) but speaking the words (lies) of the dragon, i.e. Satan. This indicates false religion and false philosophy, which imitates true religion, it is a counterfeit of the real thing. Deception is how he operates, he looks like a lamb but when he speaks he speaks lies. Later the beast from the earth is called the false prophet, 16:13. His purpose is to deceive the world and the saints, if he can, into accepting the mark of the beast and worshipping his image (Rev 19:20). This completes the unholy trinity, the dragon, and the beast out of the sea and the beast out of the earth (the false prophet). Jesus warns us of false prophets and false messiah's who will appear before the end and deceive many people (Mat 24:4, 5, 11, 23, 24).

This beast seems to personify the antichrist in the sense of 'instead of' Christ, although, since John later calls him the false prophet (who points to a false Christ) he seems to be talking about two personages. Berkhof points out that Daniel refers to the political nature of the antichrist and Paul (2 Thess 2) refers to the religious nature of the antichrist, both these aspects are combined in Revelation (see section on the antichrist in the introduction).

v12 - *He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf. He made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed.* - We should note the progression of delegated authority, firstly from the dragon to the beast (13:2), then here from the first beast to the beast out of the earth. Even the dragon can only act with the permission of God as Job shows, chapter 4 shows us that God is clearly in control and will finally judge the dragon. The authority of the first beast is world-wide as shown in verse 7. The second beast is backed by the state and therefore by the devil. He has the approval of the first beast and exercises all his authority on his behalf, this is a coalition of religion and state. Johnson points out that 'on his behalf' can be better translated 'before him.' One who stands 'before' someone else is ready to do that person's bidding. The same preposition is used of the two witnesses in 11:4: 'These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.' As the antitheses of the two witnesses, the false prophets derive their authority and ministry from the first beast. Notice the two horns of this beast compared with the two witnesses. The false prophet verses the true prophet of God.

His aim is to make all the inhabitants worship the first beast v15, it is a priestly role (cf. Deu 10:8, 2 Chr 29:11, Jer 33:18, Ezek 44:15). A true prophet encourages people to worship God, but the false prophet forces the beast to be worshipped. Just as Christ received his authority from the Father so the second beast derives his authority from the first beast. His aim is to coerce, i.e. force the world to worship the first beast and break the first and second commandment (Ex 20:3-5, he does this by miraculous sign's v13, deception v14 and coercion. He represents religious power, false religion or false philosophy. Consider communism, which is the philosophy that sustains the great world powers Russia, and China, the beast would be the state. In order to explain the created order man has replaced the Creator God with the man made theory of evolution. Man has to have a belief system and if he rejects Christianity then it must be replaced by something. These are all prototypes of the final world religion that lead up to and will culminate in a religion that permits the worship of the antichrist which will be the final idolatrous act of mankind. They worshipped the first beast and they gave their allegiance to it and therefore to Satan. For the fatal wound that had been healed see v3, it was caused by a sword v14.

v13 - *And he performed great and miraculous signs* - In Deu 13:1 God's people are warned not to follow after prophets who performs signs and wonders if they entice the people to follow other gods. This does not mean that all signs and wonders are wrong, the church as the two witnesses also performs signs and wonders, 11:6. Just as the church performs authentic miracles in the course of it witness so the false prophet produces the counterfeit like the Egyptian magicians copied the first three plagues on Egypt, Exo 7:10-12, 7:22, 8:7 but they could not copy the forth plague. Notice the miraculous signs, they are demonic, they are counterfeit, he uses these to deceive the world, in both Rev 16:13 and 19:20 he is called the false prophet. He authenticates his task by deceit, just as the Lord authenticates His word by signs and wonders. The man of lawlessness will also perform counterfeit miracles, 2 Thess 2:9, a solemn commentary on this is given in 2 Thess 2:10-12 see comment in verse 8. Sorcery was common in John's day (Acts 8:9). Mat 7:22-23 clearly demonstrates that prophesying and performing many miracles is not proof that one is a Christian, for the Lord says to them, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' The false prophet is also a parody of the Holy Sprit and his gifts (1 Cor 12:7-11), thus we find a parody of the trinity: Father, Son, Holy Spirit and Dragon, Beast out of the sea, False prophet.

v13 - *even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men* - The beast is the false prophet and is the counterfeit of Elijah the true prophet who caused fire to come down from heaven twice (1 King 1:10, 2 King 18:38) and the beast out of the earth produces counterfeit miracles. It is also the counterfeit of the miracles worked by the two witnesses, Rev 11:5-6, they are depicted as having power to stop rain as did Elijah, and fire comes from their mouths. The beast is depicted here as a counterfeit of the church, whenever the church is witnessing in power then the beast will be producing the counterfeit. There are some that would argue that he represents the apostate church, historically represented by the Church of Rome. Note he is a public figure he is not hidden, as is Satan. Just as the two witnesses represent the public ministry of the church. Note: this is also the counterfeit of God's fire that comes down from heaven and devours those who rebel against God in Satan's final rebellion (20:9).

v14 - *Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth.* - In Rev 19:20 he is called false prophet and his signs and deception are also referred to. The false prophet is linked to the beast and the dragon in Rev 16:13, see also 13:12 where exercises all the authority of the first beast. He works by deception; note the warning given by Christ in Mat 24:24 that 'false Christ's and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect--if that were possible', see also Mat 24:4-5. We are warned not

to be deceived by these miracles, although the world will be deceived, we need to be on our guard. See also Paul's warning in 2 Thess 2:9 'The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing'. He is successful because he works by deception. He is clearly a type of the antichrist who displays all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders (2 Thess 2:9). He does the work of the devil by leading the whole world astray 12:9. Notice again the words 'he was given' implying God's sovereignty over all. In 2 Thess 2:11 God himself sends powerful delusions on them so that they believe the lie. Deception (*planao*) is mentioned in 2:20 when Jezebel deceives God's servants into sexual immorality; in 12:9, 20:3, 8 and 10 where the devil deceives the inhabitants of the earth and in 18:23 where it refers to the whore deceiving the nations.

v14 - *He ordered them to set up an image in honour of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived* - In 13:4 we are told that men worshipped the dragon who had give authority to the beast and they also worshipped the beast. In 13:8 we are told that all the inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast -- all who whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life. In 13:11 the beast coming out of the earth made the earth and its inhabitant's worship the first beast, then he performs great and miraculous signs to deceive the inhabitants of the earth. Now in the final stages of idolatry he orders the *inhabitants of the earth* to set up an image (*eikon*) in honour of the first beast so that the people can worship the image (verse 15) which is contrary to the first and second commandments (Ex 20:3-6). They worship the work of their own hands, see 9:20, as all idolaters do (Lenski). One of the main purposes of the book is to make it clear that only God is to be worshipped. The word image (*eikon*) is used in the NT to describe the image of the emperors head on coins (Mat 22:20), Jesus as the image of the Father (1 Cor 11:7, Col 1:15) and Paul uses it to describe icons which men made when they 'exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles' Rom 1:23. Instead of worshipping the Lamb that was slain (5:12) and who died but lives for ever more (1:18) they worship the image of the beast who was wounded and yet lived. The same idea is expressed in Nebuchadnezzar's statue made of gold and measuring sixty cubits by six cubits (Dan 3:1 KJV), notice the use of six (the NIV converts this into feet, 90*9). Notice the element of coercion and authority, he *ordered* them to set up an image of the beast. In John's time this would have been a bust or statue of the emperor. In many countries around the world it is usual to find pictures of the national leader on the wall in the workplace.

Here we find out more about the fatal wound that had been healed (Rev 13:3, 12), which was caused by a sword. The short sword (Gk. *machaira*) is not likely to be the word of God, Rev 1:16, 19:15, in which *rhomphaia* (long sword) is used. In 19:21 the long sword is used to slay the kings of the earth and their armies, here the short sword is used to wound the beast. The word for sword, *machaira*, is a common word for sword in the NT it is used for the sword Peter used to cut the ear of the slave at Jesus arrest (John 18:10) and of the sword of the spirit (Eph 6:17) and the word of God (Heb 4:12), it is used elsewhere in Revelation as the sword that killed the martyrs (6:4) and the sword used by the beast to kill the saints (13:10).

v15 - *He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.* - He was given power to give breath to the image; this is the counterfeit of creation in which God gives the breath of life and man became a living being, its speech is the counterfeit of the word of God (Hughes). Contrast this to the breath of God that brought back to life the two witnesses (11:11). Unlike Baal (1 King 18:29) this idol could speak, it is interesting that in John's description of idols in 9:20 he says that they 'cannot see or hear or walk', he does not say they cannot speak (cf. Isa 45:20, Jer 10:5, Hab 2:18).

We should again notice that the source of the voice is the dragon through the line of delegated authority from the dragon to the beast out of the sea 13:2, to the beast out of the earth (13:12) and now to the image of the beast. Just as God speaks His word, the Devil speaks lies (12:15), the beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies (13:5-6), the beast out of the earth spoke like the dragon (13:11), evil spirits come out of the mouth of the dragon, beast and false prophet (16:13-14), so also words come out of the image of the beast. The words are caused by demons cf. 16:14, they are a miraculous sign (13:13). The Lamb fights with the word of God, the sword of the spirit which proceeds out of his mouth (1:26, 2:16, 19:15, 21), so the image of the beast speaks lies and death. Like Nebuchadnezzar, he forces everyone to worship the image of the beast under pain of death. Those who refuse to worship the image are in the Lamb's book of life (13:8), by refusing to worship the image they betray their identity as worshippers of God (11:1) and are killed (Beasley-Murray) but later we see them in heaven as victorious over the beast and his image (15:2).

Consider false religion (Hinduism, Islam, etc.) or false philosophy such as communism, it is this that gives power to, and sustains the state. If we take Mao as our model of the beast then the Party is his minister of propaganda (false prophet) and his image would equate to the many pictures of Mao around China, however we should note that Mao did not have world-wide rule. It is unfashionable to say but the false religion would also apply to the Roman Catholic Church prior to the

reformation, which was also based in Rome. Consider such Papal titles as Holy Father, this is clearly blasphemous and papal infallibility, for only God is infallible. Consider such practices as indulgences, that is Simony, i.e. buying forgiveness.

v15 - *and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed* - Worship and idolatry are once again the issue here. This reminds us of the story in Daniel, of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, Dan 3:5-6, in which the order is given 'Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace' Dan 3:6. This gives a clue to the identity of the beast that in this case is Nebuchadnezzar, that is a world ruler who ruled Babylon the great city. Daniel's description of Nebuchadnezzar in Dan 4:22 says 'You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth'. Dan 3:7 indicates that 'all the peoples, nations and men of every language fell down and worshipped the image of gold', that Nebuchadnezzar made under pain of death. The saints are required to have the same bravery as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who said "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.", Dan 3:16-18. The fire of Nebuchadnezzar is temporary but God's fire is eternal, those who worship the image of the beast to avoid man's fire will end up in God's fire instead (14:9-11, 20:15, 21:8). While Christ may not save them from any furnace of this world he will save them from the lake of fire which is the second death. If a Christian refused to make an act of worship to Caesar he was liable to the death penalty. Here the beast forces the people into idolatry, only those who know their God will refuse to worship the image (Dan 11:32), we find those who had been victorious over the beast and his image in Rev 15:2. This implies that to be victorious over the beast is to be a martyr (cf. 12:11). Resisting joining in with those who worship the image involves patient endurance on the part of the saints (Rev 14:12), together with death or imprisonment. However the penalty imposed by God for worshipping the image is severe, Rev 14:9-11. The image is mentioned three times in this chapter and seven more times in Revelation (Walvoord).

v16 - *He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead* - As well as forcing people to worship the image he also forces everyone to receive a mark on the hand or forehead. This mark is on the hand or forehead and is therefore conspicuous; it is not hidden. He had great power over all classes of society, note the three couplets giving six in all: small and great, rich and poor, free and slave. Contrast this mark on the hand or

forehead with God's command to the Israelites in Deu 6:8 to 'Tie them (the commandments) as symbols on your hands (meaning strength i.e. actions) and bind them on your foreheads (i.e. mind)'. It is also a parody of God's deliverance from bondage in Egypt, only it is enslavement, (the Passover observance) see Exo 13:1-16 'And it will be like a sign on your hand and a symbol on your forehead that the LORD brought us out of Egypt with his mighty hand'. But the Christians do not receive the mark (Rev 20:4). This mark is a parody of the sealing of God's servants in Rev 7:2, who have the name of the Lamb and his Father's name written on their foreheads Rev 14:1. As the elect are sealed upon their foreheads to escape the destruction about to fall upon the earth, so the followers of the beast escape his wrath against the church by bearing his mark (Mounce). The mark affects their action (hand) and thinking (forehead), it identifies those who worship the beast.

The mark (Gr. *charagma*) must not be taken literally as in most of John's imagery. The mark received is a parody or counterfeit to the seal received by the children of God, see Rev 14:1, this seal is not a visible seal. They have the name of the Lamb and the Father written on their foreheads, if we do not take this as a literal mark then it is likely that the mark of the beast is not a literal mark. Here it is described in v17 'the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name' which is identified as 666 in verse 18. It is closely linked to those who worship the beast and his image, it marks them as his (the beast's). It is received on the forehead meaning their mind or on the hand meaning their actions i.e. anyone who follows the philosophy or who carries out the actions of the beast. The characteristics of those so marked is described in Rev 21:8, also Rev 22:15, everyone who loves (mark on the forehead) and practises falsehood (mark on the hand). From Rom 12:1 those who worship the beast are those who are conformed to the pattern of this world (worldly) and are not renewed in their mind, they do not obey the will of God. The mark can mean ownership, devotion, acceptance of the authority of the beast, just as the seal of God marks out those who are His, so the mark of the beast marks out those who are his. Not only cattle but slaves were branded as a mark of ownership. Perhaps John is also thinking of the marks of the cross that Jesus bore on his hands and the marks caused by the crown of thorns. Those who receive this mark are going to be punished along with the beast (Rev 14:9-11, 19:20). Those who worship the beast and his image and those who receive the mark of his name are the same (4:11). The saints are those who had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or hands (20:4). The saints are those who worship God (11:1), obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus (14:12).

Barclay has the following comments on the mark: The word for the mark of the beast is *charagma*, and it could come from more than one ancient custom.

- i. Sometimes domestic slaves were branded with the mark of their owner. But usually they were branded only if they had run away or had been guilty of some grave misdemeanour. Such a mark was called a stigma; we still use the word in English. If the mark is connected with this, it means that those who worship the beast are his property. Note: the word used for servants in Revelation means slaves [of Christ] so in the same way those marked by the beast are his slaves or servants.
- ii. Sometimes soldiers branded themselves with the name of their general, if they were very devoted to him. This to some extent, corresponds to the modern custom of tattooing upon one's person the name of someone specially dear. If the mark is connected to this, it means that those who worship the beast are his devoted followers.
- iii. On every contract of buying or selling there was a *charagma*, a seal, and on the seal the name of the emperor and the date. If the mark is connected with this, it means that those who worship the beast accept his authority. Note: this could also be the seal of ownership.
- iv. All coinage had the head and inscription of the emperor stamped upon it, to show that it was his property. If the mark is connected with this, it means that those who bear it are the property of the beast.
- v. When a man had burned his pinch of incense to Caesar, he was given a certificate to say he had done so. The mark of the beast may be the certificate of worship which a Christian could obtain only at the cost of denying his faith.

The only other NT use of the word *charagma* apart from Revelation is in Acts 17:29 where Paul speaks to the men of Athens "Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone--an **image** (*charagma*) made by man's design and skill." Paul is contrasting idols with the living God who made the world and everything in it see Acts 17:24 cf. Rev 14:7. We should note then the close connection between the mark and worshipping the image (13:15) which is an act of idolatry cf. 2:14, 2:20, 9:20, 21:8, 22:15, therefore receiving the mark means being marked as an idolater.

v17 - *so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.* - The second beast as well as having religious power (v15) also has economic power, no one could buy or sell unless they had the mark of the beast on their forehead or hand. It is significant that the coinage of the time had the head of the emperor on it (Mat 22:19-21) and some emperors used divine titles on the coinage as did Antiochus Epiphanes (Gleason) who is a type of the antichrist. The number of his name is most likely referring to a gematria. The penalty for worshipping the beast and his image and receiving the mark is proclaimed by the third angel in Rev 14:9-11 and is eternal torment. The first bowl is poured out on those who have the mark of the beast and who worship his image. Those who are victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name will sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb in heaven (15:2). They will reign with Christ for a thousand years (20:4).

v18 - *This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666.* - Here we are warned that wisdom will be required, as in 17:9 where wisdom is also required to interpret the seven heads of the beast. The one having a mind, let him count the number of the beast! I.e. let him use his mind. In the seven letters to the churches the one having ears is told to use them (Lenski). It is man's number meaning literally it is the number of a man, but note that in the Greek the definite article is omitted so that the NIV is correct in saying that it is *man's* number not *a mans* number (see also Hailey). Man's number is six because he was created on the sixth day, in Revelation seven stands for completeness as in the seven days of the week, God rested on the seventh day of creation (Gen 2:2).

Some interpret this as a riddle in the form of a gematria, whereby the number stands for the letters of a mans name, has not been satisfactorily solved to this day. But the simplest understanding is that if seven means complete then 6 always falls short of 7 and therefore 666 is a trinity of imperfections, it is man's religion. Certainly Nero, Domitian, Mao, Stalin and Hitler all fit the role of the beast quite nicely. Any church under persecution will readily identify who *their* beast is. To any church not under persecution it is just idle speculation, they will have to wait until the beast is revealed (2 Thess 2:3-7). Perhaps we should heed the words of the angel to Daniel (Dan 12:9), 'the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end', only then will we be able to identify the last but greatest antichrist who the Lord will slay with the breath of his mouth. However all the saints need to be able to interpret the signs of the times and an understanding of the principles involved in the book of Revelation will therefore be of value. Lenski shows that John writes the number not in words but in Greek letters: $\chi\xi\sigma$; $\chi=600$; $\xi=60$; $\sigma=6$ (chi_xi_stigma: G5516). This is the number 6, plus its multiple by 10, namely 60, again plus its multiple by $10*10$ (intensified

completeness), namely 600 -- thus 666, three times falling short of the divine 7 (cf. the measurements of Nebuchadnezzar's statue $60*6$ cubits, Dan 3:1).

v18 - 666 - There are alternative explanations, it is difficult to pin down any one person but this is probably intentional. Whenever you try to be specific you usually end up having to twist some historical fact to make it fit. The point is that John is giving principles that apply throughout the gospel age and not to one particular point in time. Remember that John is seeing human history from the point of view of heaven. As John makes clear in his epistle, *'the'* antichrist is coming, and also *many* antichrists have come. The number can be interpreted symbolically as man's number, a trinity of sixes or specifically to one man, the antichrist.

i. It tells us that it is man's number, 6 is the number of man for he was created on the sixth day, 666 is a trinity i.e. it indicates a man accepting worship due to God, this is reflected in the antichrist, see 2 Thess 2:3-4, who proclaims himself to be God. This happened in John's time with Domitian who claimed divinity. This also fits in with Mat 24:11 and 24:23-24, here Jesus warns that there will be false Christ's performing great signs and wonders to deceive even the elect.

ii. The number 666 is a trinity (Satan, beast, false prophet) it can also be considered to be man's religion, or his man made philosophy, but it falls short of true religion that is revealed from God. The evidence is more in favour of a man, a ruler or emperor, however the false prophet (a man) will give false doctrines, the resulting product will be false religion or false philosophy. Those who have the mark are therefore those who follow and believe in the false religious system or philosophical system. For example Marxism, Confucianism, Buddhism all these fall short of true divinely revealed religion. They fail to enter into God's rest. Six always falls short of perfection (seven) it misses the mark, which is the very essence of sin. Milligan points out that John would be well aware of the perverted Judaism of his day which eventually crucified his Lord, it was the religion of men (Mark 7:6-8).

iii. 666 can also be a gematria in which letters of the alphabet are also used as numbers, both in Hebrew and Greek. Various attempts have been made, most of them unsuccessful, translating the Greek Neron Kaisar into Hebrew which gives 666 makes an interesting one. The principle is that Nero would be an example of the beast out of the land others would arise after him i.e. Domitian. The name of Jesus in Greek is 888, I H Σ O Y Σ (10, 8, 200, 70, 400, 200), if John's audience knew this, as Sweet maintains, then 666 would immediately indicate that 666 was the devil's counterfeit of Jesus namely the (or an) antichrist. If Nero is the type, then modern examples

would be Hitler (consider Nazism, the philosophy that helped keep him in power), Mao (communism), Stalin (communism); the final fulfilment is the antichrist. If a=100, b = 101 c=102 etc. then HITLER = 666. The first six Roman numerals I V X L C D add up to 666. J B Smith quoted by Walvoord says 'All the numbers from 1 to 36 total 666. Beast in the evil sense occurs exactly 36 times (6*6) in Revelation'. Mounce adds that all the numbers from 1 to 8 also add up to 36 and eight is the number of the antichrist because he is an eighth king (17:11). The main problem with the use of a gematria is that many names can give the resulting 666, there is no unique name. Some texts have even been altered to give 616 that can give Nero Caesar in Latin or Gaios Kaisar (Caligula) in Greek, see Sweet. If we take the number of Jesus being 888 this fits into the 7-day pattern of creation in which the eighth day is the first day of the new order. The Jews believed that the seven days of creation corresponded to 7,000 years based on Ps 90:4 in which one day equalled a thousand years, the sixth day belongs to the antichrist and the seventh to the millennium. The fact that the antichrist is an eighth king indicates that he is the counterfeit of Christ (17:11), the penultimate claiming ultimacy (Sweet).

iv. The number sums up the character of the beast. To the Jew six falls short of the sacred number seven which is perfection, triple it and it represents a potency of evil than which there can be none greater, a direfulness of fate than which there can be none worse (Milligan).

Does Revelation indicate that there will be a world-wide religion at the time that the antichrist is revealed? Rev 13:7 indicates that the first beast will have authority over 'every tribe, people, language and nation', this fourfold description indicates over the Four Corners of the earth. And 13:8 indicates that all the inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast, except for the saints. The second beast exerts religious and economic control over the world. He performs miraculous signs that deceive the inhabitants of the earth 13:14. He coerces the inhabitants of the earth to worship the first beast and his image 13:12, 15. He forces everyone from all strata of society to accept the mark of the beast without which no one could buy or sell, 13:16-17. Therefore the answer to our question is that during the reign of the antichrist there will be world-wide worship of the beast and his image, but the saints will resist him even to the death. Since the worship of the beast is forced it is likely that any world-wide religion prior to the unveiling of the beast will be voluntary. It should be noted that with modern travel, media and communications the structure through which a world-wide kingdom of the beast could be ruled is being set-up. Every household even has its own TV set.

It is likely that very soon it will be possible for a person to have an identifying mark, even invisible, on the hand or forehead which will uniquely identify that person and it will be used for buying and selling, is this the mark of the beast? Firstly this mark did not apply to previous generations and yet there were many who did follow the beast in their generation. Goldsworthy points out that taking a literalistic interpretation of the mark being 666 tends to break down under its own weight because then every single individual will be stamped with exactly the same mark, 666, which has value only to identify the members of the group but not to distinguish one from another. Again the 144,000 referred to in chapters 7 and 14 have the mark of God on their forehead but we do not take this literally, it symbolises that we are securely sealed as the Father's own possession, the redemption which is received by faith and sealed by the Spirit of God. Similarly the mark of the beast must symbolise unbelief, rejection of Christ and his gospel (Goldsworthy). This expectation of a literal mark arises because we interpret Revelation literally rather than symbolically as it should be interpreted. We should also note that both rich and poor have the mark so that it is unlikely to be something to do with credit cards which only the rich have.

However there is a danger here, if we look for some world-wide dictator who has economic control over individuals as well as political and religious control and who therefore looks like the 'antichrist' this does not necessarily mean that the end is about to come unless that other prerequisite of the second coming is fulfilled, namely the preaching of the gospel to all nations (Mat 24:14). We must not allow speculation as to the nature of the mark of the beast to deflect the church from its primary mission, namely the preaching of the gospel. Each of the four gospels ends with the great commission (Mat 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-20, Luke 24:46-49, John 20:21-23) and Acts starts with it, Acts 1:7-8. The two witnesses continued to prophesy until the beast killed them (11:7).

The two beasts represent both the political and ecclesiastical power of the beast. The founding fathers of America separated the church and state, they recognised that an amalgam of church and state was potentially lethal for both church and state. The separation was to prevent the state interfering with the church and to prevent the church having political power with which it might coerce the people. It recognised the distinction between giving to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and giving to God what belongs to God. When Caesar starts claiming those things that belong to God he becomes a beast. In China there is an official state sponsored church, again this is dangerous because the claims of Christ on his people are above that of the state. When the emperor Constantine declared himself a Christian this removed persecution but had a disastrous effect on the church. Persecution keeps the church pure but when it

becomes the official religion the church become weak and feeble and eventually it becomes apostate. The apostate church is not just backslidden it is has so completely fallen away that it is part of the political structure of the beast. Therefore some see the apostate church as Babylon the great, Ch. 17. The apostate church had become so worldly that she is indistinguishable from the world.

Finally, how should we react to the beast out of the sea and out of the land? The beast out of the sea, who represents persecution, requires patience on the part of the saints. The beast out of the land, which represents deception, requires wisdom, to know the difference between the Lamb who was slain and the Lamb who speaks like the devil. 666 represents man's religion of works, the best that man can do, but it falls short of the perfect finished work of Christ upon the cross.

25. The lamb and the 144,000 (14:1)

14:1 Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. 2 And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. 3 And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. 4 These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb. 5 No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.

After the series of visions featuring the dragon and the two beasts there follows a series of shorter visions prior to the vision of the seven last plagues. This passage raises the question, why is it placed here? In 15:2 we see a group of saints who are clearly stated to be victorious over the beast. However the main point is to contrast those sealed with the mark of the beast with those sealed with the name of the Lamb and his Father. It also shows that the 144,000 from Rev 7:3 are preserved safe now in heaven despite many being defeated and martyred by the two beasts of the previous chapter. John repeats himself again in 15:2 by showing us those victorious over the beast, but our God is one who repeats himself so that we, his children, might get the message.

Caird points out that Revelation is an exposition of Psalm 2 and has a reference to Zion in verse 6, "I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill." He sees the 144,000 as the army of the Lord of the Lord, they follow Christ wherever he goes (v4) they are found again following Christ in 19:14, 19, and again in 17:14 in both scenes the context is that of battle. He regards their numbering in the census of (7:4) as a military role call, which also answers the question as to why they did not defile themselves with woman. The source of his symbolism is the regulations for holy war which required men to be ceremonially pure (Deu 23:10-11, cf. 2 Sam 11:11). He sees the 144,000 as martyrs and therefore as first fruits of the great ingathering of the saints. Like Jesus, the sacrificial Lamb, no lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless (1 Pet 1:19, 2:22-24).

v1 - *Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.*
 - 'Then I looked' introduces a new section it contrasts those who receive the mark of the beast in the previous section with those described here who do not receive the mark of the beast but instead have the name of the Lamb and his Father's name on their forehead. They are those who are victorious over the beast, again in 15:2 we find those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name. This scene is similar to Zech 14:4, when the Lord returns he will stand on the Mount of Olives, with him will be his followers, see also Acts 1:9-12. However later we find that John hears a sound from heaven (v2), they sing a new song before the throne (v3) and they have been redeemed from the earth (v3), so therefore Mount Zion is in heaven (see also Heb 12:22, Joel 2:32, Mic 4:7). The same 144,000 who were sealed Rev 7:3 are now in heaven, they are together with the Lamb, those who were sealed then are those who are now saved, none is lost, there were 144,000 sealed and there are 144,000 in heaven (John 6:39, 10:28-30, 17:12, 18:9). They were marked in Christ with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of their inheritance in heaven (Eph 1:13-14). This passage tells us more about the seal, they had his name (the Lambs) and his Father's name written on their foreheads (Rev 22:3). I.e. sealed by the Father and the Son, the seal of protection and ownership. This is in contrast to the followers of the beast who have name of the beast on their right hand or forehead, Rev 13:16. The saints are baptised into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Mat 28:19, Acts 2:38), the name means that not only are they owned by God as bond slaves but also that they are part of God's family, they take their name from the Father and Son as adopted sons into God's family both in heaven and on earth (Eph 1:5, 3:14-15).

The NASB better translates the start of this verse as 'And I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion'. The reference to Mount Zion is possibly another reference to Psalm 2 where Christ is installed as King on Zion, God's holy hill. Mount Zion is where God dwells, Isa 8:18, it is also where his people dwell. Joel 2:32 points out that there will be deliverance in Mount Zion in the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. Note that in Rev 22:3-4 God's servants will serve him and his name will be on their foreheads, these servants are the same as the 144,000 who are also servants (7:3-4) and who represent the whole church. In 17:14 we also find the Lamb together with his called, chosen and faithful followers.

v2 - *And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps.* - In 19:6 he heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like a peal of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns". Just as the voice of Christ sounded like thunder in 1:15; in John 12:28 people said that the voice of God sounded like thunder; in 10:3 the voice of the angel sounded like seven thunders.

The sound John heard from heaven was that of a great multitude singing, see verse 3. In Rev 15:2 those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name also, like these, held harps given them by God. If we compare this group with the 144,000 sealed from 7:1 and the great multitude of 7:9, then both the groups who play harps, the 144,000 here and those victorious over the beast, are one and the same group. They held harps given them by God, the elders also had harps which is a symbol of praise.

v3 - *And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth.* - The next three verses give a description of the redeemed, one's first impression is that they are a special group of saints, however closer inspection reveals that they have the characteristics of all the redeemed.

The redeemed sing this song before God, before the living creatures and the elders. Some would point out that the elders cannot therefore be representative of the redeemed. Only the redeemed can sing this song, a new song is mentioned much earlier and is sung by the elders, Rev 5:9, in praise of the one who purchased men for God. The redeemed also have a new name, Rev 2:17. It was a new song to the elders because the incarnation of Christ and his ascension into heaven is a new event in heaven. It is a new song to the redeemed because their salvation is complete, they are now in heaven for the first time, their redemption is accomplished. As the redeemed, only they can sing it, angels cannot be redeemed and therefore cannot sing this song,

only those born on the earth can sing this song. It is a new experience and therefore a new song (Hendriksen). Isa 25:9 gives us an idea of what this song might be like.

"Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation."

v4 - *These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb.* - Virginity here means purity, and is not to be taken literally (2 Cor 11:2), it means they were faithful to their Lord. They are the bride of Christ and therefore necessarily virgins spiritually. They were not unfaithful to their Lord. Sex within marriage is not sin. This can also be taken avoiding sex during battle (Caird). They follow the Lamb, Jesus Christ, which means that they are His disciples, John 1:43 and 10:4. In 19:14 the armies of heaven also are found *following* the Lamb into battle. In 17:14 we also find the beast waging war against the Lamb -- and with him will be his called chosen and faithful *followers*. They follow Christ wherever he goes which usually leads to the cross (John 13:36). Franzman comments that the goal and crown of the life of the church, the bride of the Lamb, is that she be forever united with Him. It is therefore natural and inevitable that until she reaches that goal and until that crown is achieved her life should be a *following* Him (cf. Jer 2:2).

v4 - *purchased from among men* - These are the redeemed of the Lord bought from every tribe and language and people and nation, cf. Rev 5:9, Psa 74:2. As with the census of the 144,000 in 7:3 ff. who were redeemed, these are also the redeemed of the Lord, see also 'redeemed' in verse 3.

v4 - *firstfruits* - Christians are a new creation. Here Christians are first fruits (James 1:18) contrast this to the gathering of the earth's grapes, which are the unbelievers who are trampled in the great winepress of God's wrath. In the OT the firstfruits of the harvest were always offered to the Lord, Deu 26:9-10, and belonged to the Lord. Note that James 1:18 does not imply that the firstfruits are martyrs, it implies that all the saints are firstfruits. The 144,000 are the firstfruits of the harvest of the earth, they belong to the Lord, the rest of the harvest does not; compare with the harvest of the earth (saints) in 14:14-16 with the harvest of grapes of 14:17-20 (men destined to wrath).

Caird says, "the idea behind the offering of firstfruits was that all living things belong to God and must not be put to secular purposes without a recognition of his rights. The dedication of the firstfruits 'redeemed' the harvest, and so released it for common

use, God's rights in the whole being guaranteed by his special possession of the part (Exo 39:22, Lev 23:15-22, Num 28:26, Deu 16:9-12). In the same way the firstborn sons of men properly belong to God; but provision was made for their redemption, because God had accepted the Levites in their place (Num 8:14-18), to be a symbol of the holiness to which the whole nation was called. In the NT Jesus is called firstfruits because his resurrection was the token and guarantee of a greater ingathering (1 Cor 15:20, 23), and the Spirit is called firstfruits because it is the pledge of the full inheritance to come (Rom 8:23, 2 Cor 1:22, 5:5, Eph 1:14). Thus when John says that the martyrs have been ransomed from all mankind to be firstfruits, he cannot conceivably mean that they 'alone from the whole world have been ransomed' (NEB). He must mean that the offering of their lives to God in sacrifice is to be the opening ceremony of a great harvest-home".

v5 - *No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.* - Compare the saints who do not lie with the liars in Rev 21:8, compare also to the Ephesian passage about the church, Eph 5:27, where the church is described as 'holy and blameless', see also Zep 3:13 in which 'the remnant of Israel will do no wrong, they will speak no lies, nor will deceit be found in their mouths'. They follow Christ in martyrdom and just as no deceit was found in his mouth (Isa 53:9), he was a lamb without blemish, so they are blameless (1 Peter 1:19). These last two verses are the only indication that they are martyrs, but since a martyr is a witness the case for this group being composed only of martyrs cannot be established with certainty. Unlike the worshippers of the beast they had not been deceived into worshipping the beast and believing the lie (2 Thess 2:11), their confession (testimony) of Jesus Christ was the supreme truth (1:9, 6:9, 11:7, 12:11, 12:17, 17:6, 19:10, 20:4) they had not denied Jesus name before men (the supreme lie) and were therefore standing before the Lamb (14:1).

26. The three angels (14:6)

Rev 14:6 Then I saw another angel flying in mid-air, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth--to every nation, tribe, language and people. 7 He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgement has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water."

14:8 A second angel followed and said, "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries."

14:9 A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, 10 he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. 11 And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name."

12 This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus.

Rev 14:13 Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labour, for their deeds will follow them."

After the vision of the two beasts he sees the 144,000 with the Lamb on mount Zion, then he sees the three angels. The three angels each proclaim judgement. The first one announces to the whole world that judgement is starting, but gives a last appeal to those on earth to worship God because he is the Creator. The second pronounces judgement on Babylon the Great who made all nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries. The third pronounces a terrible judgement of eternal torment by burning sulphur on those who worship the beast and receive his mark. Linked to this is a call for patient endurance on the part of the saints followed by a blessing on those who die in the Lord from now on. After this there is the Second Coming and the harvest of the earth. The Second Coming and the punishment of the beast, false prophet and Satan, those who worship the beast and the judgement of Babylon the Great are dealt with in more detail later.

v6 - *Then I saw another angel flying in mid-air, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth--to every nation, tribe, language and people.* - The eternal gospel is proclaimed to all mankind, see Rev 11:9, it is universally valid i.e. whosoever. Notice the four-fold description indicating that they come from the Four Corners of the earth. This is a last appeal before the judgement to come, which is the seven bowls, then it will be too late, see Mat 24:14, because the gospel will have been preached to every nation on earth. Notice that this appeal occurs between the eagle flying in mid-air crying out 'Woe! Woe! Woe!' because of the last three trumpet blasts and the birds flying in mid-air gathered for the great supper of God, it is one last appeal.

v7 - *He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgement has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water."* - The gospel at its simplest is to fear God, give him glory and worship God as creator (Acts 14:15) because the creation itself declares the Creator (Psa 19:1, Rom 1:20). However man refuses to do this preferring idolatry instead (Rev 9:20), they worship the beast instead of God (13:4). The saints however in contrast acknowledge God as Creator and therefore they worship him (Rev 11:1), they do not worship the beast (Rev 20:4). The hour of his judgement has come, that is the harvest of grapes and the winepress of God's wrath, the seven bowls and the judgement of Babylon the Great pronounced by the second angel in the next verse. It is the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water that are to be affected by God's judgement of the first four of the seven bowls and hence their mention here (cf. Exo 20:11). Bowl 1 (the land), bowl 2 (sea), bowl 3 (springs of water) and bowl 4 (the sun). Elsewhere in Revelation we find that God is acknowledged as the Creator, first by the elders, 4:11, and by the mighty angel, 10:6. However mankind has suppressed this truth about God 'and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles', Rom 1:23, men prefer to worship a beast rather than God (see 13:4). Mankind through an unproved theory of evolution prefers to be the product of chance and to be descended from animals rather than being created by the will of God (4:11) and in the image of God (Gen 1:27). 'They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator' Rom 1:25. This idolatry results in depravity and wickedness, Rom 1:24 ff., see also Rev 9:20-21.

v8 - *A second angel followed and said, "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries."* - The fall of Babylon is also proclaimed by an angel in 18:2 and described in 17:16 ff. His message interprets in part the 'hour of judgement' of which the first had given warning: 'fallen,

fallen is Babylon the Great' (Swete). This is an introduction to the fall of Babylon the Great, see Rev 17, quoted from Jer 51:7-8 and Isa 21:9. Babylon the Great is a reference to Dan 4:30 when Nebuchadnezzar congratulates himself on his achievement: 'Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?' immediately he became a beast and was driven from men. To John, Rome is a type of Babylon and the Roman emperor a type of Nebuchadnezzar who did not give glory to God. Babylon seduced the world with her adulteries, 18:3. Babylon is first mentioned in Gen 10:10. She is the prostitute who has seduced and corrupted the world's nations by the intoxicating influence of her evil (adulteries). Cities always tend to concentrate the evil within humanity. Babylon is a symbol for the spirit of godlessness, which in every age lures men away from the worship of the Creator to the worship of created things. Cities in their splendour are a monument to man; think of the tower of Babel or the skyscrapers of Manhattan.

v9 - *A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, 10 he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb.* - The first angel proclaimed the eternal gospel to those who live on the earth which was to fear God, give him glory and to worship God as Creator, in contrast to those who worship God (14:1-5) the third angel details the punishment of those who worship the beast and his image. Earlier in Rev 13:12 the beast from the earth forced the inhabitants of the earth to worship the first beast out of the sea (13:12), and to worship his image (13:15) and to receive the mark of the beast (13:16), in doing so they were worshipping Satan (13:4) who had given the beast his authority. Those who *did not* worship the image were killed or could not buy 13:15-17. The angel now pronounces the punishment on these people who *do* worship the beast and his image thereby breaking the first and second commandments (Ex 20:3-5). Those who worship the beast will join the beast, 19:20, these are also those whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life (13:8, 20:15). Their sin was to have the mark of the beast on the forehead, the place reserved for the name of God (Platt cf. 7:3). To have the mark of the beast most likely indicates that they belong to the beast in contrast to those who have the seal of God on their forehead (7:3, 14:1).

To drink the wine of God's fury is a common OT metaphor (Job 21:20, Psa 75:8, Isa 51:17, Jer 25:15). A similar figure is used in expression 'winepress of God's wrath' in 14:19, cf. Babylon who God gave the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath, 16:19. The wrath of God is poured full strength, it is not mixed with his mercy. The punishment will be in the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb, which makes it

more personal. This is the first time punishment by burning sulphur occurs, this is a reference to God's judgement on Sodom and Gomorrah, (Gen 19:24, Luke 17:29 see also 2 Pet 2:6, Jude 1:7). This is finally fulfilled in Rev 19:20, 20:10, when the beast and the dragon are consigned to the lake of burning sulphur and in 20:15, 21:8 when their followers join them. Our horror of this judgement must be understood in the light of God's *eternal* hatred of wickedness, God's character never changes.

v11 - *And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name.*" - The smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever (cf. Isa 34:10), their punishment is eternal just as Satan's is (20:10 see also Mat 25:41-46, Jude 1:7) because God lives for ever and ever (15:7) and his hatred of sin is eternal. They have no rest day or night, contrasted with the redeemed who serve God day and night (Rev 7:15) and will have no pain (Rev 21:4) and who rest from their labours v13. Those who worship the beast will join the beast (Rev 19:20, 20:15, 21:8). This contrasts with the punishment of being cast into the blazing furnace threatened by Nebuchadnezzar to those who refused to worship his image, Dan 3:15.

v12 - *This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus.* - This is the last of three calls for 'patient endurance' of the saints (1:9, 13:10) in the face of suffering (2 Cor 1:6). The saints, who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus, are here contrasted with those who worship the beast in 14:9, who do not obey God's commandments and are not faithful to Jesus (their sins are listed in 9:20-21, 16:9, 21:8, 22:15 which break most of the ten commandments). The saints must not turn their backs on the faith under persecution (12:17) or the temptation to join with those who worship the beast. If they do then they will join them in their eternal punishment. The temporal advantage gained by worshipping the beast is not worth its eternal consequences. The slight momentary gain is not worth the consequence of eternal punishment whereas the slight momentary pain leads to eternal glory (cf. 2 Cor 4:17).

v13 - *Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labour, for their deeds will follow them."* - He is told to write (1:19) which emphasises the blessing (cf. 19:9, 21:5). This is one of seven blessings in Revelation. If the verse before is a warning then this verse is an encouragement to those who must die for their faith. Those who die in the Lord will go to be with the Lord and they will rest from their labours. This phrase is added to encourage those who must die for their faith, since patient endurance includes the possibility of martyrdom. Their labour is to

remain faithful to Jesus, this is the supreme labour, see John 6:29, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent". This is in stark contrast with verse 11, in which there is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, but this book is a book of contrasts. Their 'deeds will follow them' emphasises again the eternal consequences of our temporal actions, just as worshipping the beast has eternal negative consequences. There is some uncertainty about the text, it could mean blessed are those who *die from now on*, or, blessed are those who die in the Lord for, from then on, (i.e. *after death*) they rest from their labours. When a man dies he cannot take his possessions with him, but his deed's done while alive (whether good or bad) follow him (2 Cor 5:10), see also Rev 20:12 in which the dead are judged by what they had done. For the preacher, riches in this present life verses riches in the life hereafter could be expanded upon; see also 1 Tim 6:17-19, Luke 12:32-33, Luke 12:19-21.

27. The harvest of the earth (14:14)

Rev 14:14 I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one "like a son of man" with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. 15 Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, "Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." 16 So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.

Rev 14:17 Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. 18 Still another angel, who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth's vine, because its grapes are ripe." 19 The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God's wrath. 20 They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses' bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia.

In the scriptures there are a number of references to two harvests, a grain harvest and a grape harvest for producing wine from the juice from a winepress (Num 18:27, Deu 15:14, 2 Kings 6:27). In the following passage these two harvests are referred to. The first is the harvest of the righteous the second the harvest of the wicked.

v14 - *I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one "like a son of man" with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand.* - John often hears first and later sees, thus the 'I looked' of this verse can be connected with the 'I heard' of verse 13, thus John hears about the dead who die in the Lord in verse 13 and now he sees them harvested (Chilton). The white cloud once again indicates the Second Coming. The sickle is a reference to the Second Coming and the harvest of the age (Mat 13:37, Mark 4:26, and also Joel 3:12-13). The 'one like a son of man' is Christ, 1:13, this is taken from Daniel's vision of 'one like the son of man coming with the clouds of heaven', Dan 7:13, see also Rev 1:7, Mark 12:26, Mat 24:30. In contrast to the man who had become like a beast by usurping God's authority, the day is coming when the reins of government will be forever in the hands of a man worthy of the name (Baldwin). Note: the Greek word for crown used here is

stephanos not *diadema* used in 19:12, *stephanos* is also used of the gold crown worn by the rider on the white horse in 6:2.

v15 - *Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, "Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe."* - The end of the age has arrived, Mat 13:39, the angel comes out of the temple meaning God's presence because only God can decide the time of the end of the age, Mat 24:36, Acts 1:7. The angel acts as God's messenger.

v16-17 - *So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested. {17} Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle.* - We see here that Christ has a sickle and the earth is harvested, then we see that an angel also has a sickle and gathers the earth's grapes for the winepress of God's wrath. It is likely that the harvest that Christ reaps is his own people, the wheat. These are the firstfruits of the harvest mentioned in Rev 14:4. The angels also participate in the harvest, Mat 13:41, they do the weeding out of the wicked who are left after the rapture of the elect.

v18 - *Still another angel, who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth's vine, because its grapes are ripe."* - The angels words are similar to Joel 3:13 which is clearly judgmental. The angel in charge of the fire, that is the fire of judgement, came from the altar where the incense and prayers of the saints are offered, 8:3. This same censer is filled with fire and hurled to earth, 8:5, as a prelude to the seven trumpets. The grapes are ripe meaning that the time that God judges for the Second Coming and the harvest of the age has arrived. The angel in charge of the fire then orders the angel with the sickle to gather the clusters of grapes because they are ripe, man has filled up his sins to the full (Joel 3:13).

v19 - *The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God's wrath.* - The winepress of God's wrath occurs in Isa 63:2-6, Lam 1:15, Joel 3:13, see also Rev 19:15 in which Christ is said to tread the winepress of God's wrath, that passage deals with Christ's second coming as does this passage. The winepress is an expression for God's wrath and the day of his vengeance. Hendriksen sees it as representing hell, but it is more likely the carnage resulting from the day of his vengeance when he executes judgement on the earth (Zep 1:14-18, Lam 1:15 cf. Rev 19:15, 21). In this reference to God's wrath the people are grapes which are pressed in the winepress and their blood is the grape

juice. John uses a similar figure in 14:10 in which those who worship the beast will drink the wine of God's fury, see also the reference to Babylon in which God gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath 16:19 which resulted in her being consumed by fire (18:8, 19:3).

v20 - *They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses' bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia.* - The Greek word for blood *haima* can be used figuratively of the juice of grapes. They are trampled in the winepress outside the city because that is where the wicked are, see Rev 22:15, his wrath is not against his people within the city which is the New Jerusalem. Just as the Gentiles trample upon the holy city, Rev 11:2, so Jesus tramples on the wicked outside the city, 19:15. 1,600 stadia (184 miles: about the length of Israel) is a symbolic number derived from the square of 4, the number of the earth, 7:1, multiplied by the square of 10, the number of completeness, 5:11. It thus signifies 'completeness as regards the created world, and the inability of anyone to escape God's judgement' (Wilson). See also the description of the judgement upon Pharaoh in Ezek 32:6 'I will drench the land with your flowing blood all the way to the mountains,...

Scene 5: The seven bowls.

Seven angels with seven plagues (15:1)

The seven bowls (16:1)

28. Seven angels with seven plagues (15:1)

15:1 I saw in heaven another great and marvellous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues--last, because with them God's wrath is completed. 2 And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name. They held harps given them by God 3 and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb:

"Great and marvellous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. 4 Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."

15:5 After this I looked and in heaven the temple, that is, the tabernacle of the Testimony, was opened. 6 Out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues. They were dressed in clean, shining linen and wore golden sashes around their chests. 7 Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God, who lives for ever and ever. 8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

With the seven seals there was an interlude between the sixth and seventh seal so that the church could be sealed in preparation for the seven trumpets. We have also seen that the seven trumpets, which resemble the plagues upon Egypt, were sent to warn mankind and to call mankind to repentance. We also saw that between the sixth and seventh, and final, trumpet the two witnesses, representing the church, also calling mankind to repentance. Here at the start of the seven bowls of God's wrath we see a picture of the redeemed in heaven who had been victorious over the beast, and his image and over the number of his name. They sing the song of Moses that the Israelites sang after they crossed the Red Sea, the song of Moses indicating their exodus from the world and the destruction of their enemies. This victory over the Egyptians was a foreshadowing of the victory of all God's redeemed over the beast,

his image, his number (Hendriksen). There then comes the seven bowls of God's wrath which can be likened to the Red sea that drowned the Egyptians who followed the Israelites into the Red sea (Caird). This can also be likened to the lake of blood formed from the great winepress of God's wrath of the previous chapter (Caird). There is no interval between the sixth and seventh bowl as there was between the sixth and seventh trumpet, which was included so that the church can witness to the world in a last call to repentance. There is no such interval with the bowls because the time for repentance is past, instead the scene moved inexorably from the first to the final bowl as they are poured out one by one. The trumpets warn; bowls are poured out (Hendriksen).

This section on the seven bowls could be seen as a more detailed view of the winepress of God's wrath found in Rev 14:19-20, which is clearly connected to Christ's coming and the harvest of the age. In 14:19 we find the expression 'winepress of God's wrath' and in 15:1 the seven last plagues are said to complete God's wrath. In 14:20 we find a vast lake or sea of blood for a distance of 1,600 stadia, in the second bowl we find that the sea is turned into blood like that of a dead man (Rev 16:3). If the seven bowls are a more detailed description of the winepress of God's wrath then the seven bowls occur during the time of great distress just before Christ's Second Coming, note the sudden reference to His second coming during bowl six. Notice that in Rev 19:15, which deals with the Second Coming, Christ is described as the one who treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty (19:15). One can also see in this passage a more detailed view of the wrath of God and of the Lamb first mentioned in Rev 6:16-17. Against this view is fact that the day of the Lord will bring swift destruction upon mankind, Zep 1:18, there does not seem time for the seven bowls and the Lord only appears during the sixth bowl. Unless the seven bowls are included in the time of great distress just before the end indicated by Luke 21:25-28, Mat 24:21-30, Mark 13:14-27.

Wilcock (p146) notes that again and again trouble will sweep the world (the Seals); whenever suffering is caused, God warns that it cannot be caused with impunity (the Trumpets); whenever his warnings go unheeded, he will in the end punish the wrongdoers (the bowls).

The seven bowls can be seen as God's response to the beasts of chapter 13 and the persecution of God's people. The bowls are directed at:

- (i) The people who had the mark of the beast and worshipped his image (16:2);
- (ii) Those who had shed the blood of the saints and prophets (16:6);
- (iii) The throne of the beast and his kingdom (16:10);

(iv) The air where Satan has his dwelling (16:17).

v1 - *I saw in heaven another great and marvellous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues--last, because with them God's wrath is completed.* - He sees another sign in heaven, just as he saw the woman (12:1) and the dragon (12:3), this introduces a new section. According to Wilcock the new section about the plagues rightfully starts in verse 5 with the change of scene. Just as the beast is introduced in Rev 11:7 before his main section in chapter 13 and Babylon is introduced in Rev 14:8 and 16:19 before her main section in chapter 17. This puts the first mention of the bowls directly after the winepress of God's wrath thus linking the two.

This is a sign and therefore the seven bowls should not be taken literally, but that does not mean that they do not express something that is real, behind every symbol there is something more real than the symbol, for example the Lamb or the woman of 12:1 or the dragon of 12:3. One key question is when does this happen? The sixth bowl is closely allied with the last battle between Christ's enemies and the Lord, the day of the Lord and the Second Coming. The seventh bowl describes the destruction of all the cities, but mankind is still around then. However the viewpoint is that of heaven, the events could take place over the gospel age and therefore refer to God's final judgement on individuals through 'natural' disaster, this is the idealist's view. The futurist would regard it as all happening in the future, some climactic eschatological event. Certainly the sixth and seventh bowls are future and so is probably the fourth and fifth. The seven plagues have sometimes been compared to the warning given in Lev 26:21, 24, 28: "If you remain hostile toward me and refuse to listen to me, I will multiply your afflictions seven times over, as your sins deserve" they ignored the warnings of the trumpets and so God multiplies their afflictions with the bowls. The seven plagues are God's complete outpouring of wrath, the trumpets were warnings but these plagues are not warnings, they are final judgements.

Trumpets warn; bowls are poured out, (Hendriksen). The seventh bowl (Rev 16:17) marks the completion of God's wrath. The similarity between the trumpets and bowls is another example of parallelism. Hendriksen offers the following arguments for parallelism.

- i. The close resemblance of the trumpets and the bowls.
- ii. Both visions of the trumpets and bowls end with the judgement scene (11:18, 16:17).
- iii. The vision of the bowls (15:1) has an opening almost identical with that of the vision of the woman and dragon, 12:1.
- iv. The bowls are poured out on those who have the mark of the beast, this is very general historically.

v. We have in the vision of the bowls (16:13) a description of the same forces of evil as in the vision of the dragon (12:3), the beast out of the sea (13:1) and the beast out of the earth (13:11).

v2 - *And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name. They held harps given them by God* - Wilcock argues that this section of the victorious redeemed belongs to the end of the previous section after the harvest. The plagues are merely introduced in 15:1, the section about the plagues starting in verse 5 with the phrase 'After this I looked and in heaven...' which ushers in a change of viewpoint. The song of victory of the redeemed seems to be more appropriate to the previous section, which now sees the saints in heaven after the harvest. The next scene starts with the tabernacle of the Testimony being opened.

Just as Satan stood by the sea, Rev 13:1, so God's people look on. Just as when the Israelites had passed through the Red Sea and the Egyptians were destroyed, they then sang the song of Moses, Exo 15, so God's people stand by a heavenly sea before singing the song of Moses. There could also be a link to the waters of baptism which are also linked to the Red Sea, 1 Cor 10:2. This is the same sea of glass seen in Rev 4:6 only mixed with fire because of the coming judgement, Rev 8:5 and verse 7.

It is the same Greek word translated here as 'victorious' (Gk. *nikao*) which is translated as 'overpower' in 11:7 when the beast overpowers the two witness and it is translated as 'conquer' in 13:7 when the beast makes war against the saints. Those victorious over the beast are those who did not worship the beast or his image or receive his mark, Rev 20:4, they endured patiently their persecution and remained faithful to Jesus (13:10). They are now in heaven, they are the martyrs (either through their testimony or death), they also overcame (*nikao*) the devil by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their own lives so much as to shrink from death (12:11). They held harps as did the 144,000 from 14:1-3, it is likely therefore that both groups are the same, just as the 144,000 from 7:3 are the same as the great multitude of 7:9.

v3 - *and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb*: - The song of Moses was sang after deliverance through the Red sea after they saw the great power the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, in which they were destroyed, see Ex 15. It should also be noted that these plagues are also similar to the plagues of Egypt, but the Egyptians were not finally destroyed until they entered the Red Sea. There is another song of Moses in Deu 31:30 ff., in the context here, which speaks of God's deliverance of his people it the song of Moses of Exo 15 is applicable but in the context of the seven plagues then the song of Moses of Deu 31:30 is more applicable.

Not only did they sing the song of Moses but they sang the song of the Lamb, probably meaning one song.

v3-4 - *"Great and marvellous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. 4 Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."* - Just as the Israelites praise God for his great deeds in bringing them out of Egypt so God's people in heaven praise him for his coming judgements. Because of God's holiness he is perfectly righteous in bringing about these plagues which are in response to the sin of man. It is his mercy, which has delayed these final judgements for so long and preceded them with the warning trumpets. God desires that all men come to a knowledge of the truth and to be saved, 1 Tim 2:4. Righteous acts could be translated righteous judgements, the bowls are his judicial sentences, in 16:5-7 after the third bowl the angel declares that God is just in his judgements because mankind shed the blood of the saints, the martyrs respond likewise. We are reminded here again of how awful, in God's sight, is the persecution of his saints. This verse also reminds us of a number of psalms from which it is taken, Psa 86:9-10, 98:1-2, 111:2, 145:17, see also Deu 32:4, 1 Sam 2:2, Zep 2:11. In Zec 14:16 the survivors from those nations that attack Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. Notice that all nations will come and worship before God which once again emphasises that God alone is to be worshipped, see Dan 7:14.

v5 - *After this I looked and in heaven the temple, that is, the tabernacle of the Testimony, was opened.* - This is similar to another occasion when the temple was opened exposing the ark of his covenant, Rev 11:19, this occurs after the seventh trumpet and before the vision of the woman clothed with the sun and moon. Some see this to introduce a new heavenly perspective for the next section (Wilcock, see also 4:1, 19:11). Caird sees in this another example of the Exodus typology, after crossing the Red Sea, the giving of the law amid the smoke of Sinai and the erection of the tent of testimony. The tabernacle of the testimony (Ex 38:21) contained the Ark of the Covenant (Rev 11:19) which contains the two tablets of testimony that testifies against man's sin (Exo 32:15, Deu 10:4). It can also be translated tent of witness, which is also tent of martyr. Hendriksen comments that this sanctuary is now opened, so that we may understand that the wrath, which is about to be revealed, is God's wrath.

v6 - *out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues. They were dressed in clean, shining linen and wore golden sashes around their chests.* - Notice

that the angel who gathers the grapes for the winepress of God's wrath also comes out of the temple. The seven plagues can be likened to the sevenfold affliction promised by God to those who disobey Him, Lev 26:24-25. The angels came out of the temple meaning from the presence of God and therefore with divine sanction. One of the purposes of the book is to show that earthly events are under the control of God. They were dressed in clean, shining linen (Acts 10:30) which emphasises their purity, they had a golden sash similar to the 'son of man', 1:13, see also Dan 10:5. They are distinguished from the saints who wear white linen.

v7 - *Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God, who lives for ever and ever.* - The four creatures, representing nature, now give the bowls to the angels the first four of which affect nature itself. The golden bowls in Rev 5:8 were full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints, now they are used to pour out God's wrath. Once more the wrath of God is God's answer to the prayers of the saints as with the trumpets, see Rev 8:5, the cry of the martyrs for their blood to be avenged is answered in the third bowl.

v8 - *And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.* - There are many incidents like this in scripture, in which the tent or temple is filled with a cloud of the glory of the Lord, Exo 40:34-35, 2 Chr 5:14, Isa 6:3, Isa 30:27, Ezek 10:4, this verse emphasises God's determination to complete his wrath. No one could enter the temple until the seven plagues were completed indicates God's determination to carry out these plagues to the bitter end. It is as though intimate communion with God by the saints is not possible until God has dealt with this matter (xxxx).

The seven bowls (16:1)

16:1 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go, pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath on the earth."

v1 - These are bowls of final judgement, not like the trumpets which were warnings. God first warns man through the trumpets but if these are persistently ignored then he sends his bowls of wrath, we should also remember that throughout the period of the warning trumpets the witnessing church has been at work. The seven bowls are also called the seven plagues. The wrath of God is poured out over the earth which is a fairly common idea in scripture (Psa 69:24, 79:6, Ezek 20:8 ff., Jer 10:25, Zep 3:8).

They follow the same pattern as the seven trumpets: four (affecting creation: earth, sea, water, cosmos); then two (affecting the beast); then the final one in which the cities of the nations collapsed. The first four affect the land, sea, springs of water and sun, i.e. God's creation as announced by the first of the three angels, Rev 14:7. The voice from the temple will be God's voice, Isa 66:6. The bowls are poured out on to God's creation, they affect man indirectly through his environment. There then follow two further judgements, which concern the beast, followed by the final judgement. Man is judged personally later. Mounce makes the point that 2 Thess 1:7-9 is about to be expanded in detail, that is when Christ comes again 'He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus'.

Bowl 1 is poured out on the land and it effects the people who had the mark of the beast and worshipped his image.

Bowl 2 is poured out on the sea.

Bowl 3 is poured out on the rivers

Bowl 4 is poured out on the sun

Bowl 5 is poured out over the throne of the beast.

Bowl 6 is poured out over the Euphrates

Bowl 7 is poured out into the air.

We should notice that the first four bowls affect the created order as announced by the first angel who commands those who live on the earth to 'Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water' (14:7). Because they refuse to worship Him but worship the beast, the first four bowls affect the created order: the land, the sea, the waters and the sun.

28.1. First bowl (16:2)

16:2 The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly and painful sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshipped his image.

v2 - The bowl is poured out on the land but it affects man directly. The first bowl affects all people who worship the beast and who have therefore given their allegiance to him rather than God. They refuse to worship God and therefore their hour of Judgement has come (14:7). See the similarity with the sixth plague on Egypt, Exo 9:9, in which festering boils break out on the men and animals. Those who receive the mark of the beast are marked by God (Mounce). Notice that the bowl is poured out on

the land, yet people are affected, contrary to the first trumpet which did not affect people, Rev 8:7. Just as Satan afflicted Job with boils (Job 2:7) so the followers of the beast are afflicted with painful and ugly sores. In Deu 28:35 painful boils were to be the judgement on those who disobeyed God.

28.2. Second bowl (16:3)

16:3 The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it turned into blood like that of a dead man, and every living thing in the sea died.

v3 - Blood is used to denote death, everything died in the sea compared with the trumpets in which only a third died, Rev 8:9. Note that in the Egyptian plagues it was literal blood. The two witnesses also have the power to turn the waters into blood, 11:6. See the similarity to the first plague on Egypt, Exo 7:17 ff., in which the Nile turns into blood. This also reminds us of the lake of blood from the winepress of God's wrath in Rev 14:19. Every living thing in the sea died compared with the second trumpet in which a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and third of the ships were destroyed (8:8-9).

28.3. Third bowl (16:4)

16:4 The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. 5 Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: "You are just in these judgements, you who are and who were, the Holy One, because you have so judged; 6 for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve." 16:7 And I heard the altar respond: "Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgements."

v4 - *The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood.* - Just as the second angel made the sea turn into blood so now the third angel turns the rivers and springs into blood (Psa 78:44). Blood is indicating death rather than literally, the blood is the punishment for shedding the blood of the saints and prophets v6. Compare this plague with first plague on Egypt Exo 7:17-19 in which the fish in the river die and the water becomes undrinkable even in the wooden buckets and stone jars. Compare this also with the third trumpet in which a third of

the waters became bitter and many people died, Rev 8:11. One should assume that the blood indicates that many people died.

v5 - *Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: "You are just in these judgements, you who are and who were, the Holy One, because you have so judged; -* Notice that God is described as the one who is and was, he is not described as the one who is to come because he has already come in final judgement upon the world, compare with the seventh trumpet (Rev 11:17) in which he has come. Here is the angel in charge of the waters, in 14:18 we found an angel in charge of the fire. Some might say that God was harsh in his judgements, but in relation to the sins that man had committed he is not.

v6 - *for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve* - The reason for the judgement is given here, they shed the blood of the saints, one of the most heinous crimes that man can commit, 1 Tim 1:13. The punishment fits the crime, they shed blood so they must drink blood, this is similar to the Levitical code 'life for life' Lev 24:17-18 see also Gen 9:5-6. Just as John uses the expression 'drunk with the blood of the saints' in 17:6, indicating that the harlot had murdered the saints, so here to drink blood indicates that these people died as a just punishment for murdering the saints (Psa 79, Isa 49:26). In the plague on the Egyptians all drinking water was turned into blood even in the wooden buckets and stone jars (Exo 7:19), John takes this and uses it to show that the persecutors of God's people must now drink blood because they have shed the blood of the saints. Prophets are included here because of the tradition of prophets being persecuted (Mat 5:12, 23:37, Luke 11:49). The two witnesses were prophets and were killed (11:7, 10) and in 18:24 it says that in Babylon 'was found the blood of prophets and of the saints, and of all who have been killed on the earth'. Note: 'as they deserve' is literally 'they are worthy' contrast this with the Lamb who is worthy because of his shed blood. Also 'shed the blood of your saints' literally poured out the blood, echoing the pouring out of the bowls (Sweet).

v7 - *And I heard the altar respond: "Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgements."* - Under the altar are the martyrs, whose blood has been shed, Rev 6:9. The martyrs cry for their spilt blood to be avenged is at last fulfilled as God judges the inhabitants of the earth, it is also later fulfilled by the fall of Babylon, see Rev 19:2.

28.4. Fourth bowl (16:8)

Rev 16:8 The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was given power to scorch people with fire. 9 They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him.

v8 - *The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was given power to scorch people with fire.* - Notice that the angels sphere of influence extends to the sun and not just the earth. There is no corresponding plague on Egypt, although the fourth trumpet affects the sun, the sun is darkened, Rev 8:12, this plague seems eschatological. This is the heavenly counterpart to the beast out of the earth who caused fire to come down from heaven in full view of men and deceived mankind (13:13-14). Compare with Deu 28:22; 'The LORD will strike you with wasting disease, with fever and inflammation, with scorching heat and drought, with blight and mildew, which will plague you until you perish'.

v9 - *They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him.* - They were seared by the intense heat of the sun, this is in contrast to the saints who will not be scorched by the sun, Rev 7:16, compare with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who were not scorched by the blazing furnace. Notice the explicit statement that these plagues are under the control of God. The indictment of man is that they refused to repent and glorify him. The angel had already given mankind one last chance in Rev 14:7 to repent before these plagues. Note that they cursed the name of God, they had taken on the character of the beast who is covered in blasphemous names, Rev 13:1, 13:5-6, 17:3. Despite this mankind still refuses to repent and glorify God. They did at least recognise God as the ultimate cause of these plagues but not the immediate cause in their own sin (Sweet).

28.5. Fifth Bowl (16:10)

16:10 The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness. Men gnawed their tongues in agony 11 and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done.

v10 - *The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness* - Man prefers darkness to light so this is what he gets. Man

now experiences the reality of Satan's kingdom, the absence of all good. Having rejected the goodness of God they get the evil they prefer (xxxx). Satan's kingdom is the kingdom of darkness. Compare with the ninth plague of Egypt, Exo 10:22, in which darkness covered the land for three days. Caird makes the point that darkness represents the political disintegration of the kingdom of the beast. Sweet points out that Satan's throne, which he shared with the beast (13:2), was at Pergamum (2:13), the Roman provincial capital. It suggests destruction of the central administration of the empire - something like the chaos of the civil wars of AD 68-69 (Sweet).

v10 - *Men gnawed their tongues in agony 11 and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores,* - The effect of the first plague was still in effect (xxxx). For the second time as in the fourth bowl they curse God. This is again in contrast to the saints for whom there will be no more pain, Rev 21:4. Compare this with the agony caused by the stings of the locusts in the fifth trumpet (9:5). If we compare the fifth seal, fifth trumpet and fifth bowl we find affliction: in the fifth seal affliction for the church; in the fifth trumpet the locusts torment those who *do not have* the seal of God on their foreheads and in the fifth bowl we see the agony of those people who *had* the mark of the beast and worshipped his image.

v11 - *but they refused to repent of what they had done* - The indictment of man is that despite these bowls they still refused to repent, see also the fourth bowl, verse 9. Like Pharaoh they were hardened beyond repentance. Paul's comment in Rom 9:17-18 is instructive, Pharaoh was raised so that God could display his power and that his name might be proclaimed in all the earth.

28.6. Sixth bowl (16:12)

16:12 The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East. 13 Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14 They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.

16:15 "Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed." 16 Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

v12 - *The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East.* - There is a famous incident in history in which Cyrus the Persian king captured Babylon by diverting the Euphrates river that runs through the centre of Babylon, his army then went into Babylon through the dry river bed (Barclay). There is prophecy against Babylon in Jer 50:38 'A drought on her waters! They will dry up. For it is a land of idols, idols that will go mad with terror'. Just as the Red Sea and the Jordan were dried so that the Israelites could escape Egypt (Josh 2:10) and enter the promised land, so the Euphrates river is dried up to make way for the kings of the East. Some commentators see a distinction between the kings of the East and the kings of the whole world, v14. The Euphrates marks the boundary between Israel and her enemies (Gen 15:18). Note the similarity between the sixth bowl and the sixth trumpet 9:14 in which the four angels bound at the great river Euphrates are released and their troops kill a third of mankind.

v13 - *Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet.* - This is the first mention of the false prophet who is the beast out the earth, because he is the one who performed the miraculous signs on behalf of the beast 13:13, cf. 19:20 and deceived the inhabitants of the earth 13:14, and is destroyed in 19:20. We again see here together the unholy trinity of Satan, beast and false prophet. The beast and false prophet gather the kings of the earth to make war against the rider on the white horse and his army in 19:19, they are thrown into the lake of burning sulphur in 19:20. Satan gathers the nations for battle against the camp of God's people in 20:7, he joins the beast and the false prophet in the lake of fire, 20:10. Three evil spirits come out of the mouths of these three, by coming out of the mouth it probably indicates that these are lying deceiving spirits, cf. the river of lies coming out of the mouth of the dragon (12:15) and contrasts to the sword of the Son of man (1:16, 19:15). Frogs are connected with plague, compare with second plague on Egypt (Exo 8:3). Frogs are unclean animals, Lev 11:10. The evil spirits come out of the mouth, note the word for spirit is *pneuma* in Greek which is also the word for breath. Caird points out that from the mouth of the beast came blasphemous pretensions to deity (13:6), from the mouth of the false prophet came the seductive propaganda of the imperial cult (13:12-15) and from the mouth of the dragon came the river of lies with which he tried to overwhelm the church (12:15)

v14 - *They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs,* - The miraculous signs are caused by demons, and performed by the beast out of the earth, Rev 13:13, who is

here identified with the false prophet. They are lying spirits such as those who enticed Ahab into battle, 1 Ki 22:21 ff. They perform miracles in the same way as the coming of the man of lawlessness will, 2 Thess 2:9.

v14 - *and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.* - This is the battle of Armageddon, v16, it is again referred to in Rev 17:14, 19:19 and Rev 20:8. This is one example of parallelism in Revelation. This battle precedes the Second Coming, which is referred to in v15. For other references to the last battle see also Zech 14, Joel 3, and Ezek 37, 38. This is also a reference to Psalm 2:2, 'The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One'.

v15 - *Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed.*" - This interjection is a warning to the church, that Christ is coming soon, c.f. the warning to Sardis to wake up in 3:3. We should not be surprised at this interjection because the Second Coming or the last battle occurs also in the sixth seal and the sixth trumpet. Being awake when Christ returns is a common theme in scripture, meaning being spiritually prepared for his coming, Mat 24:43, 1 Thess 5:1, 2 Pet 3:10, Rev 3:2. His Second Coming comes during this battle, hence its unexpected mention, Rev 19:19-20 see also Zech 14:4,5. This is the third of seven blessings in the book. The church in Sardis had to wake up 3:2, the martyrs were given a white robe, and there were some in Sardis who had not stained their clothes 3:4. The clothes are the garments of salvation. Those who lost their clothes could refer to back-sliders. Those who go shamefully exposed are people whose sin is seen, c.f. the naked Laodiceans who are counselled to buy white clothes to wear to cover their shameful nakedness (3:17-18).

v16 - *Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.* - This is again referred to in Rev 19:19 and Rev 20:8, another example of parallelism in the book. Armageddon or Har-Magedon, Magedon is normally connected with Megiddo, the Har meaning mountain. Megiddo is the site of many battles, but there is no mountain there. This is fairly cryptic and has baffled most commentators, the main point is that it is the site for the last great battle. Megiddo is the place where the enemies of Israel are routed led by Deborah (Judg 5:19). Armageddon is the symbol of every battle in which, when the need is greatest and believers are oppressed, the Lord suddenly reveals His power in the interest of His distressed people and defeats the enemy (Hendriksen). This last battle is referred to here and other places in Revelation (17:14, 19:19, 20:9, cf. also 11:7 ff. 13:7).

28.7. Seventh bowl (16:17)

Rev 16:17 The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, "It is done!" 18 Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. 19 The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. 20 Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. 21 From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.

The seventh bowl follows on swiftly from the sixth bowl, there is no interlude as there was between the six and seventh seal, and the sixth and seventh trumpet, in which the church can witness, the time for repentance is now past. There are similarities between the seventh trumpet (11:15) and the seventh bowl.

- i. Loud voices in heaven.
- ii. God's wrath has come.
- iii. God's temple was opened
- iv. Flashes of lightning, thunder, an earthquake, and a great hailstorm

v17 - *The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, "It is done!"* - The air is where Satan and his demons live (Eph 2:2). Just as the loud voice commands the angels to pour their bowls on the earth (16:1), so a loud voice from the temple says 'It is done', which indicates that with the seventh bowl the wrath of God is accomplished, Rev 15:1. Just as Jesus said 'It is finished' when he completed his redemptive work. What is seen here is the wrath of God on society and its structures, the punishment of the individual occurs later. Contrast the destruction here with 21:6 where 'It is done' occurs again because the redemptive plan of God is accomplished and there is a new heaven, a new earth and a new city.

v18 - *Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake.* - Compare this with the opening of God's temple in Rev 11:19, 'there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm'. Compare also with the censer hurled to earth as a prelude to the seven trumpets, Rev 8:5, 'there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an

earthquake'. The judgement of God comes from out of the temple and the throne, it is from God personally.

v18 - *No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake.* - This is the climax of God's judgement, complete destruction rather than partial as in the seals and trumpets. Compare with Dan 12:1, Ezek 38:19-20, Zec 14:4-5, Mat 24:21 and especially the similarity of this passage with the sixth seal of Rev 6:12-14.

v19a - *The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed.* - See Zech 14:4 in which the Mount of Olives is split in two when the Messiah comes. The only previous reference to the great city is the three-part description in Rev 11:8 in which the great city is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. Babylon the Great is mentioned in the next sentence (v19b), in Rev 18:10 the great city is Babylon, city of power. The language used emphasises the complete destruction of the world's cities and their trade, culture etc. (Isa 24:18-21). Everything that was made by man is destroyed, this is in contrast with the heavenly city that the saints receive which cannot be shaken, Heb 12:26. Note the three-part mourning of the kings, merchants and seamen over the destruction of Babylon in 18:9-20.

v19b - *God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath.* - Babylon the Great is here introduced and punished, the great city first appears in Rev 11:8. Just as God remembered Noah during the flood (Gen 8:1), and remembered Abraham when he destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:29) and he remembered his covenant with Abraham when the Israelites were in slavery in Egypt (Exo 2:24), so God has remembered Babylon's crimes, see 18:5. The next two chapters deal with Babylon in more detail. Just as she made the nations drink her maddening wine (see Rev 17:2, 18:3) so God makes her drink the cup of his wrath, see also (Rev 14:8, Is 51:17), if anyone worships the beast they also will drink the wine of God's wrath (Rev 14:9). It is time for Babylon to be judged, Jer 51:13, 'You who live by many waters and are rich in treasures, your end has come, the time for you to be cut off'.

v20 - *Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found.* - This emphasises the destruction caused by the earthquake, compare this with the similarity of the sixth seal of 6:14, in which 'every mountain and island was removed from its place', see also Isa 13:13, 24:19-21. There is also a similarity to the effect of the presence of God

on the great white throne in which the earth and sky which fled from his presence (20:11).

v21 - *From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.* - They curse God as they had done with the fourth and fifth plagues but this time there is no mention of repentance. This is mankind's final attitude towards God, the time for repentance is past. The plague of hail corresponds with the seventh plague on Egypt and the judgement of God (Josh 10:11, Ezek 38:22). The hail is sent from God, see Rev 11:19 in which when God's temple is opened, the ark of the covenant was seen and there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm, therefore the people curse God for sending the hail. Hail the size of golf balls is a known climatic feature in N America.

Scene 6: Babylon the whore.

The woman on the beast (17:1)

The mystery of the woman and the beast explained (17:7)

The fall of Babylon (18:1)

Mourning for Babylon (18:9).

Hallelujah (19:1)

Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb (19:9)

29. The woman on the beast (17:1).

17:1 One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters. 2 With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries."

3 Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. 4 The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. 5 This title was written on her forehead:

MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

Rev 17:6 I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus.

When I saw her, I was greatly astonished.

Chapter 16 describes the punishment of those who worship the beast, Chapters 17-18 describes the destruction of Babylon, chapter 19 describes the destruction of the beast and false prophet and chapter 20 describes the end of Satan. Cf. Heb 10:12-13 in which Christ waits for his enemies to become his footstool.

The key to reading this passage in Revelation, chapters 17-18, for the *first* time is to understand that John is referring to Rome as the woman and the emperor (or empire) as the beast. The Roman Empire extended over a great area geographically and had conquered many kingdoms, these kingdoms had to extend their loyalty to Rome. The emperor lived extravagantly as did most of Rome and huge quantities of luxurious items and slaves were imported into Rome, hence the mourning over her doom by the

merchants and shipmasters who had lost their trade. By then there was great immorality within Rome and this had spread to surrounding provinces, for example, Corinth. The letters to the Corinthians were written to correct many of the problems this involved. We find in Revelation the woman Jezebel given as an example of this within the church at Thyatira (2:20). Rome also persecuted the saints, which is mentioned in this chapter, remember that John was on Patmos for his faith. Remember also that empire and emperor can be interchangeable. So Rome and its empire are his model for these chapters. However there is a deeper meaning because John is using the general term Babylon and not specifically Rome so it does not just apply to those times but extends forward in time to cover all future ungodly empires of which the Roman is his current example, but reaching its climax with the empire of the antichrist.

The woman is the personification of that earthly city which is to be seen in contrast to the heavenly city the New Jerusalem. She is an earthly counterfeit of that heavenly city, she is covered in precious jewels, pearls and gold as is also the new Jerusalem. She is to be contrasted to the woman in chapter 12, who represents God's elect and who is clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She is the earthly copy of God's heavenly society, which is His church, she is the world that is human society organised independently and in defiance of God. We see her in Cain who murdered his brother and went out from the presence of the Lord to found a city (Gen 4:16-17). We see her in Babel in which mankind, in rebellion to God, conspired together to make a tower so that they could reach heaven (Gen 11:4), a religion of works. We see that the woman and the city is a composite city; Egypt, Sodom and earthly Jerusalem (11:8) being one example, she represents false or apostate religion as represented by earthly Jerusalem who persecuted the prophets and crucified our Lord. She also represents the world with its the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does (1 John 2:16). She represents the world's power, the world's riches, the world's trade, the world's religions and the world's commerce and culture. Her destruction occurs with the seventh bowl, 16:17, in which a tremendous earthquake causes the great cities of the nations to collapse, the great city Babylon is split into three parts. At Babel they began building a city with a tower that reached into the heavens in order to make a name for themselves but God scattered them around the world, and even today all the worlds major cities are competing to build skyscrapers taller than each other. One only has to think of Manhattan with its great skyscrapers, the twin towers of the world trade centre, which are monuments to mankind's achievements, when they are destroyed commerce will be destroyed and those who used it to become rich will mourn her passing. Hailey comments that she is the third of Satan's three methods of

destroying the church after the two beasts who represent political power and false religion or false doctrine. She represents the world of lust, all that appeals to the flesh or the mind and entices and seduces us away from God, just as she successfully enticed the kings and inhabitants of the earth away from God. This can be seen by the image of her destruction in which she is a great millstone being hurled into the sea; thus she represents the temptations of the world causing believers to be tempted into sin (Mat 18:6).

In considering the identity of the woman the following points need to be considered:

- i. She is described as the prostitute who is to be contrasted with the bride (the church).
- ii. Babylon the earthly city is to be contrasted to the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem.
- iii. The great city is described figuratively as 'Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified' (11:8).
- iv. She sits on many waters, which are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages.
- v. She is to be distinguished from the beast upon whom she sits and who destroys her.
- vi. She is the city of power, excessive luxury and great wealth.
- vii. She persecuted the saints.
- viii. She rules over the kings of the earth.
- ix. She is associated with music, trade, farming, marriage, merchants and persecution.
- x. With her the kings of the earth commit adultery and the inhabitants are intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries
- xi. In view of the emphasis of the book that only God is to be worshipped she should be viewed as the temptress who tempts men away from God.

29.1. Is Jerusalem Babylon?

Babylon is called the 'great city' (18:10) and she is also called the prostitute (17:1). The great city is introduced in 11:8 where she is figuratively called "Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified". In the latter case this can only refer to Jerusalem. Jerusalem is called Sodom in Isa 1:10, Jer 23:14. Another clear allusion to Jerusalem occurs in 18:24, "In her was found the blood of prophets and of the saints, and of all who have been killed on the earth" (cf. Mat 23:35, Luke 11:50-51). Jerusalem not only killed the prophets and Jesus but she also persecuted and killed the saints as Acts 8 records. The above can only refer to Jerusalem and not to Rome.

In each case Babylon and the New Jerusalem are introduced by one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls (17:1 and 21:9-10). It is clear from this that the author intends Babylon to contrast with the New Jerusalem the Bride. We should also note that the woman was "and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls" (17:4), which is similar to the New Jerusalem (21:18-21). Now we know that the New Jerusalem represents God's people both OT and NT (see 21:12-14). So if Babylon is to be contrasted to the church then she can either represent the world or the apostate people of God. She could be the world in general, Rome or Jerusalem.

It is likely that the beast who supports the woman is the Roman Empire, the beast is clearly a political figure (13:1-10). The seven hills of 17:8 refer to the beast and not to the woman. Rome was built on seven hills. The woman and the beast are in a close alliance as was Jerusalem with Rome. In rejecting Jesus the Jews pledged allegiance to Caesar (John 19:15). The fact that the beast then turns on the woman and "bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire" (17:16) makes sense in terms of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 66-70.

Having made a case for the woman Babylon to be Jerusalem, we need to decide whether the rest of the description of the woman also applies to Jerusalem:

1. Rev 17:2 With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries."
2. Rev 17:15 Then the angel said to me, "The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages. (cf. Rev 11:9).
3. Rev 17:18 The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth."
4. Rev 18:3 For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries."
5. Rev 18:9 "When the kings of the earth who committed adultery with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning, they will weep and mourn over her.
6. Rev 18:11 "The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes any more--
7. Rev 18:18 When they see the smoke of her burning, they will exclaim, 'Was there ever a city like this great city?'
8. Rev 18:19 They will throw dust on their heads, and with weeping and mourning cry out: "'Woe! Woe, O great city, where all who had ships on the sea became rich through her wealth! In one hour she has been brought to ruin!
9. Rev 18:21 Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said: "With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again.

10. Rev 18:23 The light of a lamp will never shine in you again. The voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again. Your merchants were the world's great men. By your magic spell all the nations were led astray.
11. Rev 19:2 for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants."

In light of the verses highlighted above the case for Jerusalem seems less convincing. Did the kings of the earth commit adultery with her? Did she rule over are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages? Did she rule over the kings of the earth? Did merchants and seamen grow rich from her excessive luxuries? Did she lead the nations astray? Was she thrown down never to be found again? For a more detailed discussion see Don K Preston.

v1 - *One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters. - This starts another new scene, the destruction of the great city has already been mentioned in the seventh bowl (16:19). This is now expanded upon in these two chapters. One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues showed John the punishment of the great prostitute, compare this with the same angel who showed John the bride, the wife of the Lamb, one is punished the other becomes the wife of the Lamb, see 21:9. The Greek word for punishment (*krima*) is elsewhere translated as *judged* (18:20 cf. 20:4). The great prostitute is clearly to be contrasted with the bride, the wife of the Lamb, the New Jerusalem and she could therefore be the apostate church although there does not seem to be much of a religious aspect to her, the apostate church would more likely be called an adulterer. There are various references to people prostituting themselves, some are about the heathen, Exo 34:15, but others concern God's people, Deu 31:16, Ezek 16:15. The root of the prostitution referred here is idolatry, that is greed, Col 3:5, she is exceedingly wealthy. A prostitute sells her body for money, Babylon sell her soul for wealth and power over the kings of the earth who are her lovers. One is reminded of the words of Jesus in Mat 16:26 'What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul'? She is called the 'great' prostitute, compare this with the expression Babylon the great. However a veiled reference to Babylon is given in Rev 11:8 where the great city is where the bodies of the two witnesses lie (the church) and the great city is described as 'figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified'. Here is a reference to earthly Jerusalem the home of the Pharisees who Jesus castigates in no uncertain terms. Babylon is also closely associated with the beast that has both political and ecclesiastical power as shown in Ch. 13. Thus the*

great prostitute is the great city, which is Babylon, it represents the world system which includes the apostate church which is so worldly it is part of the world. She sits on many waters which are later explained as 'peoples, multitudes, nations and languages' (17:15), this four-fold expression signifies that she rules the whole world.

In the bible other cities are described as prostitutes, Nineveh because of her barbarity, Nah 3:4, and Tyre for her worldliness which involved trade with all nations, Isa 23:15-17 (Caird). Jerusalem is condemned for her injustice, Isa 1:21-23, 'she who was once faithful has become a harlot'. Worshipping other gods is likened to prostitution, Exo 34:14-17, Lev 17:6-7. Idolatry is also prostitution, Lev 17:6-7, Ezek 16:17, 23:49. Most of the references in the OT to prostitution refer to the spiritual apostasy in idol worship of Israel or Jerusalem, see Ezek 16:1 ff., Lev 20:4-6, Deu 31:16, 2 Chr 21:11, Jer 2:19-21, Jer 3:1-3, Ezek 23:49, Hosea 9:1. In Num 15:38-39 the Israelites were told to obey God's commands and not prostitute themselves by going after the lusts of their own hearts and eyes.

As with the other figurative description of the great city as Egypt, Sodom and Jerusalem (16:19), Babylon is a compound city as Nineveh, Tyre and Jerusalem above indicate. The dirges of mourning over the destruction of Babylon in the next chapter are mainly taken from the doom songs over Tyre, Nineveh and Babylon in the OT. There is no conclusive evidence to suggest that Babylon is the apostate church, this idea is more likely to have come from the historicist school during reformation times that saw the Roman Catholic Church as Babylon. Although she should certainly be contrasted with the New Jerusalem (the church). Walvoord says that Ch. 17 concerns ecclesiastical Babylon and Ch. 18 political Babylon, his main argument is that she is sitting on the beast who represents political power and that she therefore must represent ecclesiastical power. That she rides the beast suggests that the beast supports her and that on the other hand she is in the dominant role at least outwardly. There have also been suggestions that Babylon is the false prophet or the second beast who is no longer required to sustain the power of the first beast. This would make sense of the plot but there is no substantial evidence to support this view. That the apostate church is part of Babylon is true however, the Egypt, Sodom, Jerusalem model indicates this as well as apostate Jerusalem being called a harlot along with Nineveh and Tyre. The church when it is apostate is indistinguishable from the world.

v1 - *"Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits on many waters.* - The angel wants to show John her punishment and destruction which is described in verse 16 and in the seventh plague 16:19 and in 18:8. We find here in

chapter 17 and 18 both a description and the punishment of one of the enemies of the church. The destruction and punishment of the rest of her enemies are dealt with later. She must not be confused with the woman of Rev 12. The woman is the city Babylon, see v18. She is insolent, proud and idolatrous, she calls herself the eternal queen (Is 47:7). See also the description of Tyre in Ezek 27, 28, Tyre is also a type of Babylon, a lament over the fall of Tyre is used as the basis for the mourning of the merchants and sea captains in Rev 18:11-19. Babylon indicates the world of industry, commerce, art, and culture, which seek to entice and seduce the believer away from God. The description of the king of Tyre in Ezek 28:12 is frequently thought to describe Satan's origin, see also Is 47:7-13 for a description of Babylon and Is 23 especially v17 where Tyre 'will return to her hire as a prostitute and will ply her trade with all the kingdoms on the face of the earth'. She is explained in Rev 17:18, as the 'great city that rules over the kings of the earth', in John's time she would be Rome that had conquered many nations. As a prostitute she seduces people away from God and makes them unfaithful, just as a prostitute seduces men from their wives, she multiplies the unfaithful among men (Prov 23:28). The waters are explained in Rev 17:15, as 'peoples, multitudes, nations and languages' notice this four-fold description, indicating that her reign extends over the Four Corners of the world. However the many waters is probably also a reference to the irrigation canals of ancient Babylon, Jer 51:13. She also sits on the beast out of the sea (many waters) who has authority over every tribe, people, language and nation, 13:7.

v2 - *With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries."* - The adultery here is her spiritual adultery, that is following after idols and the lusts of their own hearts rather than obeying the commandments of God. Greed is also referred to as idolatry (Col 3:5), as is the materialism of the modern world. The woman prostituted herself in defiance of God and the kings and nations follow her in disobeying God's commandments, in doing so they become intoxicated as with wine and do not understand their own actions. An example of the prostitute is the trade of Tyre, Isa 23:17 'She will return to her hire as a prostitute and will ply her trade with all the kingdoms on the face of the earth', whose basic sin is materialism. The kings of the earth join in with the woman in her sins and in doing so are unfaithful to their Creator. The kings join Rome in seeking wealth and power. Swete speaks of the kings of the earth as the rulers of territories, which have been absorbed into the Empire or were allied to it, and promoted its ends. The adultery of which these kings were guilty consisted in purchasing the favour of Rome by accepting her suzerainty and with it her vices and idolatries. If Rome was the temptress, the nations and their rulers had shown themselves ready to comply. Few such kings remained within the Empire; but

John is speaking of the past. He could remember e.g. the princes of the Herod family. The kings have joined her in her sins, as does the rest of the world who follow the example of the kings. Twice more in Rev 18:3 and 18:9 there are references to the kings of the earth committing adultery with her, in both there are references to her luxuries, i.e. her materialism. Jesus warns his disciples to be on their guard against all kinds of greed, and that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions (Luke 12:15).

v2 - *the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries.*" - Not only the kings but inhabitants of the earth are drunk with her wine. The inhabitants of the earth add this to their sins, they are drunk with her wine, just as they persecute the saints (6:10), gloat over their death (11:10), worship the beast (13:8) and in 17:8 they are those whose names are not in the Lambs book of life. In 14:8 we have already heard the description of Babylon as the city which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries. See Jeremiah's description of her doom in Jer 50:7 'Babylon was a gold cup in the Lord's hand; she made the whole earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; therefore they have now gone mad'. The world is seduced by her splendour and the gold cup in her hand which is filled abominable things. In Eph 5:18 we are reminded that drunkenness leads to debauchery (unrestrained sin). In Nahum 3:1-7 Nineveh is condemned because she 'enslaved nations by her prostitution and peoples by her witchcraft', she was a 'city of blood, full of lies, full of plunder, never without victims', she is described as having the 'the wanton lust of a harlot, alluring, the mistress of sorceries'. We can see from this where John gets some of his language from. Hughes comments that even a great city that was once faithful (Jerusalem) can become a harlot (Isa 1:21); hence the distinction between the old Jerusalem which has become the city of this fallen world, in bondage to earthly passions, which even stones the prophets and the new Jerusalem, the city of God, from above which is free and pure (Gal 4:25; Heb 11:10, 16, 12:22, 13:14; Rev 3:12, 21:2). The fornication or harlotry intended here is simply unfaithfulness to God, which comes to expression in the unholy pride and ambition of human self-centredness, in hatred and violence, in vice and immorality, and in every form of idolatry, which, whether it be the worship of images or of money or of worldly power, is the worship of the creature rather than the Creator (Hughes). In simple terms we can say that the world is worldly: it has given itself over to the things of this world rather than the things of God (1 John 2:15 ff., Col 3:2), the deceitfulness of wealth and the desire for other things come and distract a person from God (Mark 4:19).

v3 - *Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven*

heads and ten horns.- John was carried away in the Spirit see also 1:10, 4:2, 21:10. In the desert where there are no distractions and he is safe from her, he sees her as she really is (xxxx), he sees her sitting on a beast, the same as the beast from the sea, 13:1. In 13: the beast is described as having 'ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name'. Its scarlet colour also connects it with the woman who is dressed in scarlet. Some connect the scarlet with the red of the dragon but in fact the Greek words are different, however the seven heads and ten horns matches with the description of the dragon in 12:3. The closeness of the woman and the beast is indicating a close connection between the two. The beast is covered with blasphemous names, (cf. 13:1, 5), indicating its contempt of God and his people whom the woman persecutes, 17:6. The woman is seated on the first beast out of the sea, that is she is supported by the political power of the beast and thereby by Satan. That she is seated on the beast would indicate that she is in control of the beast but this is illusory. We need to spend time in the desert without worldly distractions to see her as she really is (xxxx). There is clearly a close relationship between the woman and the beast, because the woman sits on the beast. She is drunk with the blood of the saints, see verse 6, and the beast also makes war against the saints Rev 13:7, both persecute the church, they act together. Some see this as the alliance of church and state, the ecclesiastical woman rides the beast and is in control of the beast or the state.

v4 - *The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries* - Purple and scarlet cloth was very expensive and would only be worn by the rich (see the rich man in Lk 16:19). Her wealth was also indicated by the fact that she glittered with gold and precious stones and pearls, see also the description of Tyre in Ezek 27:22. The merchants in Rev 18:16 describe the great city as 'dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls.' It should be noted that she was 'glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls' and therefore has some similarity with the New Jerusalem who is also described as being made of pure gold, decorated with every kind of precious stone and pearls (21:18-21) she is therefore an earthly copy of the new Jerusalem the city of God, she is a counterfeit, Satan copies what God creates (xxxx). In 17:18 the woman is described as the great city that rules over the kings of the earth which is an allusion to the Rome of John's day. The Rome of the day was very wealthy and extravagant. Pearls were especially liked and to show off their wealth people would dissolve a very precious pearl in wine and then drink it (Barclay).

In verse 2 we found that 'the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of

her adulteries' now we see the gold cup in her hand from which the people drank which was 'filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries'. The woman has the allure of being attractive but her golden cup is full of filth, Jer 51:7. The gold cup looks attractive from the outside and succeeds in enticing men away from God, who thereby become filthy. John is describing the spirit of the world and 'all that glitters'. He sees her as God sees her, as she really is. The world and its allure are described by John in 1 John 2:16 'For everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world'. Some also point out that purple and scarlet is the ecclesiastical dress of the Roman Church, which on occasions also involves glittering jewel and of course the gold cup. The ecclesiastical side to the whore is also found in verse 6 where she is drunk with the blood of the saints. In her hand is a golden cup, another symbol of luxury and wealth, from which one would expect a pure and delightful drink. But instead it is 'full of abominations, even the unclean things of her fornications'(xxxx). 'These summarise the detestable things of her idol worship, her vices and corruptions which the world offers and by which it would seduce mankind. The world may serve its drink in a golden cup, but what it offers is abominable in the sight of God, and leads to degradation and death (Prov 9:13-18). It contains all that appeals to the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, pride of life, but it results in base and filthy consequences. Although Babylon offers the cup to the world, in turn she becomes a golden cup in the hand of God to madden the nations (Jer 51:7). She holds in her hand the cup of her own self-destruction as the consequences of her sins are turned back upon her (cf. v. 16)', (see Hailey). The root of her abominations is idolatry (Deu 7:25, 2 Pet 4:3). A contemporary example of the cup of the world's filth is the television which shows many things which in God's eyes are an abomination; 'what is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight' (Luke 16:15). Caird points out that the Gk word *bdelygma* (obsenity) is the same word used of 'abomination of desolation (Mk 13:14).

Jesus used the metaphor of a cup to describe the Pharisees who looked righteous from the outside (they cleaned the outside of the cup) but inside they were full of greed and self-indulgence (Mat 23:25). He also used the metaphor of a cup to describe his own suffering in which he had to drink from the cup that God gave him (Mat 26:39, John 18:11), in communion we also drink from a cup to remind ourselves of his suffering when he drank the Father's cup to the full (1 Cor 11:25) so that we might not have to drink the cup of God's wrath.

The gold cup contains those things, which seduce and entice men away from God, the cup promises pleasure, power and riches but drinking from her cup results in destruction. God's way is to drink the cup of self denial and its drink results in eternal

life. The use of a cup here filled with filth also contrasts with the cup of the wine of the fury of his (*God's*) wrath, which he gave Babylon the great (16:19). In 18:6 the angel says that God will 'Mix her a double portion from her own cup'. In 14:10 the same metaphor is used in which those who worship the beast will also drink from the cup of the wine of God's wrath. Just as she offered the world to drink from the cup of her filth and abominations so she and those who drink of her cup will drink from the cup of God's wrath. Both those who sin and those who cause sin will likewise be punished (Mat 18:7).

v5 - *This title was written on her forehead MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.* - Her name reveals her true character. This introduces the woman as Babylon, that great city. Babylon has already been mentioned by the second angel in 14:8 and in the seventh bowl in which a great earthquake split the great city (Babylon) in three parts, Babylon the great is then introduced. Babylon is also mentioned more figuratively as 'Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified' (Rev 11:8). There we find a definition of Babylon consisting of immorality, cruelty and persecution. Cities concentrate all that is worse among humanity. Babylon is identified as the great city in 18:10 and she is described as the city of power. The woman is also clearly identified by the angel as the great city in 17:18 'The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth'. In 18:17 she is described as having great wealth. She is called the mother of prostitutes, she spawns and multiplies those who are unfaithful to God (Prov 23:27). A mother produces more of her kind. A prostitute will sell her body for money, Babylon sold its soul for wealth and power, (Mat 16:26 'What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?'). The word mystery should not be part of the name. Mystery in the biblical sense means something unknown to the uninitiated but will be obvious to those who are initiated. The mystery is revealed by the angel later starting in verse 7. Other groups have names on their forehead, those who have the mark of the beast, 13:16, 14:9, the 144,000 who have their Father's name written on their forehead, 14:1, 22:4. A number of authors point out that Roman prostitutes wore on their brows labels inscribed with their names (Morris).

According to Horton the name 'Babylon' is the Greek form of the Hebrew *Babel*, which is derived from the Hebrew *balal*, 'to confuse', which produced the noun *Balbel*, which evolved so that the first *l* was assimilated into the second *b* (see Gen 11:9). The Greeks typically added endings on names, so they changed it to Babylon. Babylon was built on the site of Babel, they wanted to build a city with a tower, Gen 11:4, the tower represents man's religion of self effort. It also represents the union of politics and religion. Milligan points out that Babylon means 'the city of confusion',

see Gen 11:9. The woman should be seen as the city of the beast which is Babylon. The first city was founded by a murderer, Cain, who did not understand the principles of true religion which Abel did, Gen 4:17, Abel recognised that sacrifice was required to please God. There is also the link with the woman 'wickedness' from Zech 5:6-11 who was transported in a measuring basket to the land of Babylonia where a house would be built for her there, the implication being that Babylonia is where all wickedness dwells. In the verse being studied Babylon the Great is the mother of prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth. In 18:23 she is described as the city who by her magic spell she led all the nations astray. In 14:8 she made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries. When the languages of people of Babel were confused all their wickedness was spread around the world so that all her religions and idolatry were also spread around the world. The kingdom of the beast exercises political and religious power as shown in chapter 13, the beast from the sea (political) and the beast out of the land (religious power), the original tower of Babel was also a political and religious project. So the beast is attempting to finish this project and create a kingdom that God said should not happen. In order to do this the beast uses religion (the image of the beast) to unify the world whereas formerly the world was unified by one language.

v6 - *I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus.* - Not only does she make others drunk (14:8, 17:2) but she herself is drunk with the blood of the saints. To be drunk with blood is a figure for lust for violence. The city is figuratively described as Sodom, Egypt and Jerusalem in Rev 11:8. Jerusalem signifies the religion of the Pharisees and Sadducees who kill the prophets and stone those sent to her as well as crucifying our Lord. She persecutes the saints, typified by old Jerusalem which killed the prophets, Mat 23:37, Rev 11:8. Drunk because they do not know what they are doing, Luke 23:34. John probably has especially in mind the high priest and chief priests who crucified Jesus (Rev 11:8 cf. John 19:15), but not only Jesus was crucified but also his followers will be (Mat 23:34). Rome persecuted the saints especially during Nero and Domitian's time and later during the reformation. While it is mostly the wealth and trade of Babylon that is described here there is a religious side to her as well as she persecutes the saints. She persecutes them because they do not drink her wine and through their lives they condemn her. She sits on the beast who himself wages war against the saints (13:7) and in this respect she allies herself to him and carries out his work who is in turn carrying out the work of Satan who is making war against those who obey God's commandments (12:17).

v6 - *When I saw her, I was greatly astonished.* - John's astonishment is because he sees the woman riding the hideous beast, and he sees the allure of the world as it really is. He was in the Spirit at the time and so he saw the spiritual reality, he saw her as God sees her, may God open our spiritual eyes also.

29.2. The mystery of the woman and the beast explained (17:7).

17:7 Then the angel said to me: "Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast she rides, which has the seven heads and ten horns. 8 The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and will come up out of the Abyss and go to his destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because he once was, now is not, and yet will come.

Rev 17:9 "This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. 10 They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while. 11 The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.

17:12 "The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. 13 They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. 14 They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings--and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers."

17:15 Then the angel said to me, "The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages. 16 The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. 17 For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to give the beast their power to rule, until God's words are fulfilled. 18 The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth."

v7 - *Then the angel said to me: "Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast she rides, which has the seven heads and ten horns. - John is astonished at the woman and the beast, the angel gently rebukes John, and explains the mystery of the woman and beast. This probably raises more problems than it solves. The angel describes the beast at length first because he is more important, the woman's fall is described at length later. The beast is the one from the sea, Rev 13:1, and on which the woman sits, Rev 17:3.*

v8 - *The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and will come up out of the Abyss and go to his destruction. - The beast, which you saw - is the beast from 17:3. The description of the beast who 'once was, now is not, and will come' is in contrast to God who is, and who was, and who is to come (Rev 1:4, 1:8, 4:8). The career of the beast parodies that of the lamb for the lamb descends from heaven and returns to heaven while the beast ascends from the Abyss and then descends into it. Therefore he can be regarded as 'an', or 'the', antichrist, *anti* does not mean against but the antithesis (opposite) or instead of, he is a counterfeit. John defines him as the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ (1 John 2:22) and Paul says that: 'He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God' (2 Thess 2:4). The beast 'now is not' meaning that he is not currently on the world scene which anticipates his future appearance and is therefore a warning to the church, likewise verse 10 places them in the reign of a sixth king. The beast comes out of the Abyss and goes back to his destruction in the Abyss then hell; this emphasises the Satanic nature of the beast coming as he does from the pit of hell and receiving his authority from Satan (13:2 cf. 9:1, 9:11, 11:7, 20:3). This could be a reference to Nero who once was, now is not (he committed suicide), and will come again, a reference perhaps to renewed persecution under Domitian. It is more likely to refer to the final antichrist or the man of lawlessness who is doomed to destruction (2 Thess 2:3) of which Nero and Domitian would be types. In Rev 13:3 we find that the beast had a fatal wound which had been healed.*

v8 - *will come up out of the Abyss - See Rev 11:7 when the two witnesses have finished their testimony then the beast that comes out of the Abyss will attack and overpower them. He is the same beast that makes war against the saints and conquers them (13:7). He comes out of the Abyss, which is the abode of demons. The fact that he comes out of the Abyss links him to Satan who is the angel of the Abyss, 9:11.*

v8 - *go to his destruction - He will be thrown into the lake of fire, along with the false prophet and later Satan, see Rev 19:20.*

v8 - *The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because he once was, now is not, and yet will come. - John was astonished when he saw the woman. The world will be astonished when they see the beast, see also Rev 13:3 in which the world was astonished at the fatal wound that had been healed. This could be a reference to the Nero redivivus myth in which Domitian would be seen as Nero resurrected. There is something about the reappearance of the beast that astonishes the*

world, probably because it will be so unexpected. Just as the Second Coming of Christ will be unexpected, it will surprise the world who will mourn his coming. But the saints whose names are in the book of life will not be taken in by him, those who know their God will firmly resist him, Dan 11:32.

v9 - *"This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits.* - For the second time in the book wisdom is required, just as wisdom is required to calculate the number of the beast, Rev 13:18. The beast has seven heads which are seven hills upon which the woman sits, this identifies her with Rome in John's time but the great city is more than just Rome, but Rome was the supreme example at that time. Her excessive luxury, pride and persecution are well known as are her seven hills. Johnson points out the word here translated hills (oros:G3735) is elsewhere in Revelation translated as mountain. He also points out that the seven hills refer to the beast and not to the woman. Mountains allegorically refer to world powers in the Prophets (Isa 2:2, Jer 51:25, Dan 2:35, Zec 4:7) - see Dan 2:35 'But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth'. The expression in the next verse that they are also seven kings identifies the mountains as seven kings.

v10 - *They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a little while.* - Wisdom is once more required. The seven heads of the beast are seven hills and *also* seven kings, they are seven incarnations of the beast, and the number seven should be taken symbolically. Five have fallen and *one is* and another has *yet to come*. So one of the heads is currently a king, but note, in verse 11 that the beast *is not*. It is possible that John is projecting himself back to the reign of Vespasian. The five who have been are therefore Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero; the one who 'is' is Vespasian; the one who is to come is Titus (Barclay). There are many other permutations possible and none is satisfactory. The difficulties arise by taking seven kings to be a literal seven rather than meaning completeness, a complete series of emperors. They are living in the time of the sixth king and it is largely a time of quiet, there is only one contemporary martyr (Antipas), and part of the church is asleep. He is placing his readers at the time of the sixth for symbolic reasons: at the sixth trumpet and sixth bowl forces are gathered for the final showdown, while the seventh each depict a short but crucial moment of crisis. If they do not keep awake now, when the crisis comes they will be among the earth-dwellers captivated by the beast - the Antichrist they do not discern (Sweet). The other has not yet come, but when he comes 'He must remain for a little while' this shows God's fore knowledge and will. It is more likely that the king 'who is' is Domitian who is a type of the antichrist who is to come. The

seventh king is not the beast who is an eighth king. One should also remember that the kings have kingdoms so that the seven kings can also be interpreted as a succession of (not necessarily seven) empires. In the next verse we find that the beast is an eighth king and he belongs to the seven, therefore the seven kings should be taken to be a series of tyrannical empires who persecute the church, they are proto-beasts, remember that these seven heads are heads of the beast, the eighth king being the antichrist.

v11 - *The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.* - The beast is not the seventh king who must remain for a little while. But he belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction, his destruction is featured in 19:20 and also in 2 Thess 2:7-8. Notice the repetition from verse 8, 'The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and will come up out of the Abyss and go to his destruction'. He will reappear in the future from the pit of hell and go to his destruction. Revelation is designed to show us the final victory of good over evil. He is the supreme embodiment of the previous seven kings. Seven stands for completeness not to be taken literally, eight is one more than seven and eight is the number of Christ he is the counterfeit of Christ, see 13:18. The beast belongs to this complete series of seven kings, he once was present in the world, but he is not here now, but he will appear in the future in a new way. There is some validity in the concept that he could appear in a revived Roman empire or even papal empire. The beast is probably to be identified with the fourth beast of Daniel 7:23, 'The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it'. His destruction is shown in Dan 7:26, see also Dan 11:45.

v12 - *"The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast.* - Ten is a symbolic number and the ten kings is a complete number of kings, not necessarily ten, they reign for one hour, a short time as God sees it. The one hour is the last hour mentioned by John in his epistle (1 John 2:18). They will join with the antichrist for the last battle mentioned in verse 14, and also in Rev 16:14, 19:19, they could be the kings of the east, Rev 16:12. The ten kings can also be Daniel's ten kings who come from the kingdom of the fourth beast, Dan 7:24. They can also be the kings of the earth mentioned in 19:19. Whoever they are they are 'purely eschatological figures representing the totality of the powers of all nations on the earth which are to be made subservient to antichrist', Beckwith quoted by Mounce. The number ten is symbolic and indicates completeness. It does not point to ten specific kings nor to ten European kingdoms of a revived Roman empire (Mounce).

v13 - *They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast.* - Their one purpose is to make war against the Lamb (v14) and in order to do this they give their power and authority to the beast, who is another king. However God's purpose is different to their purpose which is that they destroy Babylon, 17:16-17.

v14 - *They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings--and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.* - The title Lord of lords and King of kings goes back to Deu 10:17 (also Psa 136:3, Dan 2:47, 1 Tim 6:15) and is repeated in Rev 19:16 which is presumably the same battle, in Rev 1:5 He is described as 'the ruler of the kings of the earth' and we find its fulfilment here. Just as the beast makes war against the saints, Rev 13:7, and conquers them now he makes war against the Lamb but loses. This is again referred to in Rev 19:19 which is the second coming, the Lamb's called, chosen and faithful followers are called his army (Rev 17:14). This is also the battle of Armageddon from the sixth bowl (16:14), this is clearly the second coming (v15). This must identify the beast as the antichrist who the Lord will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendour of his coming, 2 Thess 2:7-8. Once again there is reference to the messianic Psalm 2:1-5 here. For his called, chosen and faithful followers see the armies of heaven in 19:14, and the 144,000 of 14:4.

v15 - *Then the angel said to me, "The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages.* - Having described the beast the angel now turns his attention to the woman. The waters you saw refers back to verse 1, where he saw the great prostitute who sits on many waters, these are interpreted as the peoples of the world, those who worship the beast, and from whom the beast arises. The beast arises from the sea that is also the nations. Notice the four fold description 'peoples, multitudes, nations and languages' indicating that she rules the four corners of the earth.

v16 - *The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire.* - In their desire for power the beast and the ten kings (ten horns) will destroy the world, its trade and its glitter and so fulfil God's purpose. Nero the emperor actually set fire to Rome, which typifies what is to come, the beast will hate the prostitute.... and burn her flesh with fire. In Lev 21:9 the punishment for being a prostitute was to be burned in the fire. Her end in fire, in which the smoke from her goes up for ever and ever (19:3) also corresponds to the end of the other enemies of God, the devil, the false prophet and the beast who are thrown into the lake of burning sulphur (20:10)

and those who worship the beast and his image (14:11, 20:15). These kings eat her flesh just as the birds eat the flesh of kings and generals later in the great supper of God, Rev 19:17. The destruction of Babylon also coincides with the seventh plague, Rev 16:17. The ten kings receive authority for one hour along with the beast and fight the Lamb, Rev 17:14, see also 19:19 places the destruction of Babylon close to the second coming of Christ. If Babylon is taken to be ecclesiastical power then having got what he wants from her, in that she made the world worship the beast, he now destroys her.

Milligan, who sees the woman as false religion, gives an example that John would be familiar with in which the false church and the beast persecute the true church, but later the beast destroys the false church. When they crucified Jesus Pilate said to the Jews "Shall I crucify your king?" and the chief priests answered "We have no king but Caesar," (John 19:15). We have an example of the woman riding or controlling the beast, and yet in AD 70 the Roman armies succeeded in completely destroying Jerusalem and all in her.

v17 - *For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to give the beast their power to rule, until God's words are fulfilled.* - They, the beast and ten horns, are willing helpers. Their purpose is to make war against Christ and his army, see v14, but God uses them to fulfil his purposes in order to destroy the prostitute.

v18 - *The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.* - In the OT the two cities listed as 'great city' are Nineveh and Jerusalem, and there is also the 'great Babylon'. The interpretation of the woman as the great city, means Babylon, see Rev 18:2,10, 21 i.e., Babylon the great. In John's day it was Rome, a type of Babylon. Rome represents all that is of the world. Babylon rules over the kings of the earth as did Rome and all other capital cities of the world's empires. She is probably put last in order to introduce the next section on her destruction. We should see the great city, that is the world, as the counterfeit to the New Jerusalem which is of course the Church. The great city is a composite city we first saw her in 11:8 where the bodies of the two witnesses lie, the city is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. We also know that she is drunk with the blood of the saints, 17:6. The earthly city rules the world the heavenly Jerusalem is ruled by Christ (xxxx).

30. The fall of Babylon (18:1).

18:1 After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendour. 2 With a mighty voice he shouted:

"Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit, a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird. 3 For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries."

Rev 18:4 Then I heard another voice from heaven say:

"Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; 5 for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes. 6 Give back to her as she has given; pay her back double for what she has done. Mix her a double portion from her own cup. 7 Give her as much torture and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself. In her heart she boasts, 'I sit as queen; I am not a widow, and I will never mourn.' 8 Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her: death, mourning and famine. She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her."

For background see the following passages:

- i. The Fall of Lucifer is described in Isa 14:12.
- ii. A dirge against the king of Tyre, Ezek 27:1-11.
- iii. Doom song of Babylon, Isa 13:19-22.
- iv. Doom song of Edom, Isa 34:11-15.
- v. Doom songs of Babylon, Jer 50:39, see also Jer 51 which contains many of the thoughts in Rev 18.
- vi. Doom song of Nineveh, Zep 2:13-15.

v1 - After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendour. 2 With a mighty voice he shouted: - The angel has great authority delegated to him by God, just as Satan gave beast great authority. The angel is going to announce the fall of the great city which is the city of the beast. The earth was illuminated by his splendour which comes from the glory of God when the angel was in God's presence in heaven. Just as Moses face shone with the glory of God after he had been in God's presence. The angel is similar in description to that in Ezek 43:1-2 in which the land was radiant with God's glory. The

glory of the angel is appropriate to the greatness of his announcement and his authority to proclaim the word of God concerning the demise of Babylon.

v2 - Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great - The angel announces the fall of Babylon the Great, this is a repetition of the angel's announcement in 14:8, see also Isa 21:9: 'Babylon has fallen, has fallen! All her idols lie shattered on the ground'. This also reminds us of the fall of the ancient Babylonian king, Belshazzar, in Dan 5:26, 'God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end'. The repetition of Fallen indicates the certainty of judgement.

v2 - She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit, a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird. - After her destruction she will be deserted, this is enlarged upon by the angel in 18:21-24. She is already inhabited by unclean spirits who provoke men into unclean acts (xxxx). After man is no longer there the demons move around seeking rest (Luke 11:24). The description in this verse is a classical biblical description of a desolate city, Jer 9:11, 50:39, 51:37, Isa 13:19-22, 34:8-15.

v3 - For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries. - The angel gives the reasons for her destruction, she seduced the nations, kings and merchants to be unfaithful to God, see also 17:2. See Jer 51:7, 'Babylon was a gold cup in the Lord's hand; she made the whole earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; therefore they have now gone mad' and Isa 51:17-23. The kings join in with her in her sins against God, they also share in her power and luxury, see verse 9. The merchants also get rich from her desire for greater and greater luxury, we see this now in the world the rich get richer while the poor get poorer, what is condemned here is excessive luxury. The merchants will lament the loss of their profitable trade, Rev 18:11, 15, 23.

v4 - Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; - This is clearly a warning to the saints. There are two meanings here, first to come out meaning to be separate from her in her sins and secondly to flee from her in order to avoid her judgement (see 1 Cor 11:32, Jer 51:6, 45). Just as Lot fled Sodom before its destruction (Gen 19:12 ff.); the Israelites fled Egypt; God's people fled Babylon (Jer 51:45); and the early church fled Jerusalem to avoid persecution before her destruction; so God's people are told to leave Babylon before her destruction comes upon her. This is a personal command of God. This has an echo throughout scripture starting with Abraham who was told to leave his own country (Gen 12:1). He was looking forward to a better country, a heavenly one, and

God has prepared a city for him (Heb 11:8-16). This finds its fulfilment with the heavenly Jerusalem later in Revelation. It finds an echo in 2 Cor 6:16 in which God's people are called out, that is they are to be a holy people separate from the world and its sin. Note that the word church in the NT is *ekklesia* meaning an Assembly of God's called out ones. This should be read with the warnings to the churches at Pergamum (Balaam, idolatry, immorality) and Thyatira (Jezebel, idolatry, immorality) in mind. The saints do not belong to the world, but have been chosen out of the world (John 15:19 cf. James 4:4 and 1 John 2:15-17).

v5 - *for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes.* - Just as man tried to make a tower at Babel that reached to heaven (Gen 11:4), so now her sins have piled up to heaven instead and God has remembered her crimes, He has not forgotten (cf. Jer 51:9). In the seventh bowl God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of his wrath, 16:19. Note that this is in contrast with the saints whose sins He will remember no more (Heb 8:12, 10:17, Jer 31:33)

v6 - *Give back to her as she has given; pay her back double for what she has done. Mix her a double portion from her own cup.* - In Exo 22:4 a thief must payback double the property that was stolen v4, v7, v9. Babylon must be repaid for her deeds, her punishment is according to her deeds, Jer 50:29, Psa 137:8. In Jer 16:18 they are paid back double for the sin of idolatry (cf. Isa 40:2). Just as she used the gold cup to tempt the world away from God so it will be used to judge her (cf. Rev 17:2, 4, 18:3, Jer 25:15, 51:7) and she will drink from the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath (16:19) which involves the destruction of the cities of the earth by an earthquake.

v7 - *Give her as much torture and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself. In her heart she boasts, 'I sit as queen; I am not a widow, and I will never mourn.'* - We see here that her punishment is just, she gets as much torture and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself. 'In her heart she boasts "I sit as queen; I am not a widow, and I will never mourn" ' Isa 47:5-12, she is arrogant, but God sees all and judges her accordingly, the fall of Babylon described in Isa 47. This is also a denouncement of the Queen of Heaven, Jer 7:18, 44:17. This is also a warning to the church at Laodicea who had the same attitude, which said 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing' (3:17). John is using the harlot to show the church, especially the comfortable Laodiceans, the true nature of the harlot. The Christian is not to love the world or anything in it, the world and its desires pass away but the man who does the will of God lives forever (1 John 2:15-17).

v8 - *Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her: death, mourning and famine. She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her.* - The 'therefore' relates to v 4-7. The one-day indicates the suddenness of her judgement. The plagues are probably the seven bowls, especially the seventh but also the fifth. God judges her according to her words, 'I sit as queen; I am not a widow, and I will never mourn.' 'I sit as a queen and death comes to her; I am not a widow and mourning comes to her; she lived in luxury and famine comes to her. She gets the double portion from her own cup v6. God uses the beast and ten kings to judge her, they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire, 17:16 (Zec 9:4, Isa 47:9). In Lev 21:9 the punishment for a priest's daughter being a prostitute was to be burned in the fire. Finally note that however powerful Babylon is the Lord God who judges her (as shown by the angel with great authority in verse 1) is mightier than her.

30.1. Mourning for Babylon (18:9).

This has much in common with the lament for Tyre in Ezek 26 and 27. Babylon is described as a city of power and of great wealth, in one hour she loses both of these. See also Isa 23:1-18 for a lament over Tyre. Notice the triple emphasis given by the kings, merchants and seamen of the one hour of her doom and ruination, verses 10, 17, 19, this is another example of the use of three in describing the structure of the city, cf. 11:8, 16:19 (Milligan). Because these people have based their life and their hope on the woman who represents the wealth and pleasures of this life, when she is destroyed their hope has gone and therefore they mourn her passing. These people were in love with the world and the things of this world (see 18:12 ff.) and therefore mourn its passing (1 John 2:15-17), this is in contrast to the saints who rejoice over her destruction because the world persecuted her (18:20, 19:2).

The kings mourn their loss of power and luxury; the merchants and seamen mourn their loss of wealth through trading in the things of the world. Notice the merchants carry out their trade over the land while the seamen carry out their trade by the sea, thus covering the whole world. Jesus warns us that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions (Luke 12:15 ff.).

30.1.1. The kings of the earth mourn (18:9).

Rev 18:9 "When the kings of the earth who committed adultery with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning, they will weep and mourn over her. 10 Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry:

"Woe! Woe, O great city, O Babylon, city of power! In one hour your doom has come!"

v9 - "When the kings of the earth who committed adultery with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning, they will weep and mourn over her. - The kings shared her luxury which is now destroyed therefore they weep and mourn over her (cf. Ezek 26:16, 27:35). The smoke of her burning arises because she is destroyed by fire, see previous verse and 17:16. John uses a similar expression to 'smoke of her burning' to describe the torment of those who worship the beast, 14:11. In 19:3 the saints, apostles and prophets who had been persecuted by her shout 'Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever'. Note that the beast, false prophet and the dragon are cast into the lake of fire, 20:10.

v10 - *Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry: "Woe! Woe, O great city, O Babylon, city of power! In one hour your doom has come!"* - The kings mourn for their loss of power. Without her their power has gone. They are terrified because their security is gone, they know they are next because they committed adultery with her. They had committed adultery with her and were thus united to her in her fate (xxxx), cf. those who committed adultery with Jezebel who share her fate unless they repent of her ways (2:20-23). The kings of the earth are dispatched later (19:19-21). Babylon has lost her power in one hour, which is the same time that the ten kings receive authority as kings along with the beast (17:12). Their sorrow is worldly sorrow not godly sorrow which leads to repentance (2 Cor 7:10), their sorrow is totally self centred. Caird comments that the one hour of persecution (17:12) is balance by the one hour of retribution, this assumes that the ten kings are the same as the kings of the earth, it should also be born in mind that the ten kings help destroy the whore so they are unlikely to be the same group. Consider the lament over the destruction of Egypt (Ezek 32:10) 'I will cause many peoples to be appalled at you, and their kings will shudder with horror because of you when I brandish my sword before them. On the day of your downfall each of them will tremble every moment for his life'.

30.1.2. The merchants mourn (18:11).

11 "The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes any more-- 12 cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth; every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble; 13 cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep; horses and carriages; and bodies and souls of men. 14 "They will say, 'The fruit you longed for is gone from you. All your riches and splendour have vanished, never to be recovered.' 15 The merchants who sold these things and gained their wealth from her will stand far off, terrified at her torment. They will weep and mourn 16 and cry out:

"Woe! Woe, O great city, dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls! 17 In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin!"

v11-13 there are seven categories of goods, most of which are luxuries:

treasures:	gold, silver, precious stones and pearls
fine fabrics:	fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth
fancy building materials:	every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble
spices etc.:	cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and frankincense
Foods:	of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat;
Livestock:	cattle and sheep; horses and carriages;
Slaves:	and bodies and souls of men

v11 - *"The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes any more--* The merchants mourn not over Babylon but because they have lost their trade. There follows a seven-fold list of goods, which the merchants traded in.

v12 - *cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth; every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble;* - The woman was decorated with many of these things, she was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls, 17:4, compare with her description given by the merchants in Rev 18:16 'Woe! Woe, O great city, dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls!' They traded in pearls but missed the

pearl of great price that would have gained them entry to the New Jerusalem (Mat 13:45, Rev 21:21).

v13 - *cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep; horses and carriages; and bodies and souls of men.* - Wine and oil were not damaged by the third seal (6:6) wheat was scarce, Barley is not traded by the merchants because it is poor mans food, it is not a luxury.

v14 - *"They will say, 'The fruit you longed for is gone from you. All your riches and splendour have vanished, never to be recovered.'* - The fruit you longed for is likely to be those things listed in the previous verses. They note the finality of her destruction.

v15 - *The merchants who sold these things and gained their wealth from her will stand far off, terrified at her torment. They will weep and mourn* - They mourn because they have lost their source of wealth, 18:3. Her torment is to be burned by fire, 17:16, 18:8, 9. They stand far off from her at a safe distance from her burning as did the kings. They could be next and join in her punishment since they too grew rich from her luxury.

v16 - *and cry out: "Woe! Woe, O great city, dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls!* - In 17:4 we find that the woman was also dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. These items were also part of their cargoes.

v17 - *In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin!* - Her wealth described in the previous verse has been ruined in a short time, one hour. cf. 18:10 the kings mourn, 18:19 the seamen mourn, the one hour corresponds to the period of the authority of the ten kings along with the beast (17:12) who bring her to ruin (17:16).

30.1.3. The sea captains mourn (18:17).

"Every sea captain, and all who travel by ship, the sailors, and all who earn their living from the sea, will stand far off. 18 When they see the smoke of her burning, they will exclaim, 'Was there ever a city like this great city?' 19 They will throw dust on their heads, and with weeping and mourning cry out: "Woe! Woe, O great city, where all who had ships on the sea became rich through her wealth! In one hour she has been brought to ruin! 20 Rejoice over her, O heaven! Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you."

v17 - *Every sea captain, and all who travel by ship, and all who earn their living from the sea, will stand far off.* - The seamen are mentioned here because they compliment those who trade over land, the merchants, thus together they trade by land and sea over the whole world, which is the devil's kingdom (But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! 12:12). They mourn as do the merchants because they have lost their source of wealth, see Ezek 27:25. They also like the kings and merchants stand afar off terrified by her torment.

v18 - *When they see the smoke of her burning, they will exclaim, 'Was there ever a city like this great city?'* - The kings of the earth also saw the smoke of her burning (18:9). See also the lament over Tyre in Ezek 27:32.

v19 - *They will throw dust on their heads, and with weeping and mourning cry out: "Woe! Woe, O great city, where all who had ships on the sea became rich through her wealth! In one hour she has been brought to ruin!* - Taken from the lament over Tyre in Ezek 27:30. They weep and mourn their loss of wealth rather than over their sins.

v20 - *Rejoice over her, O heaven! Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you."* - Compare with Jer 51:48 'Then heaven and earth and all that is in them will shout for joy over Babylon, for out of the north destroyers will attack her,' declares the LORD'. In contrast to the mourning of the kings, merchants and sea captains those in heaven and God's people in heaven are called to rejoice over her because God has judged her for the way she treated the saints while they were on earth. In the NIV the quotation marks seem to be misplaced here but the speaker is most likely to still be the voice from heaven in verse 4. This is just an initial command for those in heaven to rejoice over her destruction, there follows a description of her destruction and after this in, 19:1, heaven erupts with a great roar of a great multitude in heaven *shouting* praise to God that he has

condemned the great prostitute and avenged the blood of his servants. There is similar rejoicing in heaven when Satan is expelled 12:12. It is those in heaven who have been persecuted by the great city, their blood has been avenged, and so they are to rejoice. She had killed the saints, Rev 17:6 and prophets 18:24, God has at last vindicated His servants the martyrs when they cried out for justice and their blood to be avenged, Rev 6:9, 19:2. This is the only time that God's apostles are mentioned in the book, they are included because they have been persecuted as well as the saints and prophets (Luke 11:49, Rev 18:24). Prophets are mentioned more often than apostles because there is a stronger tradition of prophets being persecuted (Mat 5:12). Both apostle and prophet is a church ministry (1 Cor 12:28). God has treated her the same way she treated His people, this principle is also seen in 18:6, 'Give back to her as she has given', it is the principle of sowing and reaping (Gal 6:7).

30.2. Final destruction (18:21).

Rev 18:21 Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said: "With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again. 22 The music of harpists and musicians, flute players and trumpeters, will never be heard in you again. No workman of any trade will ever be found in you again. The sound of a millstone will never be heard in you again. 23 The light of a lamp will never shine in you again. The voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again. Your merchants were the world's great men. By your magic spell all the nations were led astray. 24 In her was found the blood of prophets and of the saints, and of all who have been killed on the earth."

Note the six fold repetition of *never* indicating the complete destruction of Babylon (Hendriksen):

Babylon *never* to be *found* again.

The music of... *never* to be *heard* in you again

no workman... will *ever* be *found* in you again.

The sound of the millstone will *never* be *heard* in you again

The light of a lamp will *never* *shine* in you again.

The voice of bridegroom and bride will *never* be *heard* in you again

v21 - *Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said: "With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again.* - This is based on the scroll upon which Jeremiah had written all the disasters that would come upon Babylon, the staff officer Seraiah was to read it and tie it to a stone and throw it into the Euphrates, and say 'So Babylon will sink to rise no more because of the disaster I will bring upon her. And her people will fall' Jer 51:60-64. This is followed by a six fold statement of what will *not* be found in her again (Ezek 26:21). This should also remind us that Jesus said: 'But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea' Mat 18:6. The true crime of the harlot is that she tempts God's people to sin.

v22 - *The music of harpists and musicians, flute players and trumpeters, will never be heard in you again. No workman of any trade will ever be found in you again. The sound of a millstone will never be heard in you again.* - Compare this with the words

of the Lord to Tyre in Ezek 26:13 and to the inhabitants of the earth in Isa 24:8. Contrast the lack of music with the redeemed, Rev 14:2, who play their harps.

v23-24 - *The light of a lamp will never shine in you again. The voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again. Your merchants were the world's great men. By your magic spell all the nations were led astray. 24 In her was found the blood of prophets and of the saints, and of all who have been killed on the earth.*" - 'The light of a lamp will never shine in you again' in contrast to the New Jerusalem in which the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp (21:23). In the New Jerusalem where the Lamb is the bridegroom and the church is the bride and voices will be very much in evidence, see 19:6. Her merchants were the world's great men (Isa 23:8) who mourned for her in 18:11-17. Compare this to Jeremiah's words to the people of Judah as they were about to go into captivity because they did not obey the Lord or listen to his prophets, Jer 25:10 'I will banish from them the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, the sound of millstones and the light of the lamp'. Contrast this to the blessedness of the wedding supper of the Lamb, 19:9. This also reminds us of two other earlier judgements: in the days of Noah people were eating, drinking, marrying and the flood destroyed them all; in the days of Lot people were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building (notice that marriage was not mentioned) but then they were destroyed by fire and sulphur from heaven; then Jesus reminds us that it will be just like this when he comes again (Luke 17:26-30); a contemporary example was Pompeii in AD 79 (Sweet). The reasons for judgement are given as:

- i. By your magic spell all the nations were led astray (cf. Nahum 3:4).
- ii. In her was found the blood of prophets and of the saints, and of all who have been killed on the earth c.f. the souls under the altar (6:9) and 19:2 where he has avenged on her the blood of his servants (Jer 51:49).

Nineveh was known for its bloodshed, sorcery and witchcraft (Nahum 3:4) 'all because of the wanton lust of a harlot, alluring, the mistress of sorceries, who enslaved nations by her prostitution and peoples by her witchcraft'. Verse 24 is similar in thought to Jer 51:49 'Babylon must fall because of Israel's slain, just as the slain in all the earth have fallen because of Babylon'. Nineveh and Jerusalem (Mat 23:37) are types of Babylon depicted here by John. In her was found the blood of the prophets and of the saints, in 17:6 we saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, she persecuted the saints and got her just retribution. She is not just a persecutor but is responsible for the blood of all those killed on the earth. So she is

much more than just the apostate church, she represent that lust for power and wealth that causes nations to go to war for. She reigns over the kings of the earth and she is therefore, in her greed, responsible for all wars.

Chilton points out that this verse can only refer to Jerusalem.

(Mat 23:30-39) And you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' {31} So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. {32} Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers! {33} "You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? {34} Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. {35} And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. {36} I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation. {37} "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. {38} Look, your house is left to you desolate. {39} For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

Babylon is clearly to be contrasted with the New Jerusalem, that is the church, both are introduced by one of the seven angels who held the bowls, both are decked in gold and fine jewels. She persecutes the church see 17:6 cf. Acts 8:1, 13:50. But few see apostate Judaism as Babylon. And yet this is far more applicable to the young church than the Roman church some centuries later. Chilton links the destruction of Babylon with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70.

30.3. Hallelujah (19:1).

19:1 After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting:

"Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, 2 for true and just are his judgements. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants."

3 And again they shouted:

"Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever."

4 The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried:

"Amen, Hallelujah!"

5 Then a voice came from the throne, saying:

"Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!"

6 Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting:

"Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. 7 Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. 8 Fine linen, bright and clean, has given her to wear."

(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

The prostitute has been destroyed and in contrast to the mourning of the earthlings those in heaven rejoice. In response to the exhortation in 18:20 the saints in heaven rejoice because:

i. God has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth and avenged on her the blood of the saints (v2).

ii. God Almighty reigns and the wedding of the Lamb has come (v7).

In contrast to the prostitute the bride is introduced.

v1 - *After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, - In contrast to the mourning of the world over the destruction of Babylon we now have rejoicing over her destruction by those in heaven. This burst of praise is in response to the invitation for the saints, apostles and prophets in heaven to rejoice because God has judged the great city for the way she has treated them, 18:20. There is a description of her destruction given by the angel and then comes this burst of praise that continues through to verse 7 as all of heaven join in, in a glorious cacophony of praise. In Jer 51:48 there is joy in heaven and earth over the destruction of the actual*

city Babylon. The great multitude shown here are in heaven, and are probably the martyrs, see next verse, they could be the same group as in verse 6 which is all the saints. A great multitude that no one could count standing in front of the throne and in front of the Lamb are also seen in 7:9, they also ascribe salvation to God and to the Lamb (7:10). This is the only place in the NT where Hallelujah (Praise the Lord) occurs (see v 3, 4, 6) it is a popular expression in the Psalms (Note: the uses of 'Praise the Lord' in the psalms).

v2 - *for true and just are his judgements. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants.*" - His judgements of the great prostitute are quite fair because she corrupted the world and shed the blood of God's servants. God has answered the cry of the martyrs to God in Rev 6:10 to avenge their blood (cf. Deu 32:43, 2 King 9:7 and Ps 79:10). The woman was found drunk with the blood of the saints, Rev 17:6.

v3 - *And again they shouted: "Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever."* - Note that they shout Hallelujah. She shares the same fate as those who worship the beast (Rev 14:11), the devil, the beast and the false prophet (Rev 20:10) the smoke of their torment goes up for ever and ever. She meets the same fate as those two cities Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:28) and Edom (Isa 34:10).

v4 - *The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried: "Amen, Hallelujah!"* - The twenty-four elders, as representative of the church, cry Amen (so be it). In 7:11-12 the elders and four living creatures also fell down in worship. This is the last time we hear the living creatures and elders.

v5 - *Then a voice came from the throne, saying: "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!" 6 Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.* - There is a glorious sound as a great multitude of all God's people join in praise, shouting (note, they were not singing), 'Hallelujah! For the Lord God Almighty reigns'. John describes their sound as the roar of rushing waters and like peals of thunder, their numbers are so many. In chapter 4 we found God reigning over the universe but to the saints on earth it seems that the political powers reign instead, but now God has demonstrated his reign by destroying the great harlot; the destruction of the beast, false prophet and dragon occur later.

v7 - *Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.* - The wedding supper of the Lamb is alluded to in the last supper (Mat 26:26-29), when we eat this bread and drink this cup we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes when we shall drink it anew in his Father's kingdom (1 Cor 11:23-26). They give God the glory, the new Jerusalem comes down from heaven it was God's idea and God who brought his plan of salvation to fruition through the Lamb and the Spirit. The idea of the bride and bridegroom is alluded to in Isa 62:5, in Mat 9:15 Jesus calls himself the bridegroom, it is used in the parable of the ten virgins in Mat 25:1, and John the Baptist refers to himself as a friend of the bridegroom (John 3:29), the bride is the disciples. When Jesus comes again it will be to collect his bride to be with him forever (1 Thess 4:16-17). The wedding of the Lamb is in contrast to the destruction of the whore in which the voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in her again (18:23). The bride, that is the church, has made herself ready for the wedding, for the wedding supper of the Lamb, see 19:9. The bride was previously described in 14:4-5 as pure virgins and blameless, see also Eph 5:25-26. The bride is described later in Rev 21:2 and 21:9 ff.

Hendriksen reviews the marriage customs of the Hebrews. 'First comes the betrothal. This is considered more binding than our 'engagement'. The terms of the marriage are accepted in the presence of witnesses and God's blessing pronounced upon the union. From this day groom and bride are legally husband and wife (2 Cor 11:2). Next comes the interval between betrothal and the wedding-feast. During this interval the groom pays the dowry to the father of the bride if this has not yet been done (Gen 34:12). Sometimes the dowry is in the form of service rendered (Gen 29:20). Then comes the procession at the close of the interval. The bride prepares and adorns herself. The groom, arrayed in his best attire and accompanied by his friends, who sing and bear torches, proceeds to the home of the betrothed. He receives the bride and conveys her, with a returning procession, to his own home or to the home of his parents (Mat 9:15; cf. also Mat 25:1 ff.). When the groom had to come from afar, the feast was at times spread at the home of the bride. Finally there is the wedding-feast, which includes the marriage supper. The usual festivities last seven, or even more, days.'

The bride is the church and Christ the bridegroom. The church is betrothed to Christ and Christ has paid the dowry for her with his own blood. The interval of separation is the current dispensation during which the bride makes herself ready. At the end of this dispensation the Bridegroom accompanied by his angels comes to receive his bride and the wedding feast begins. It does not last a few weeks but throughout eternity. In Christ the bride was *chosen* from eternity. Throughout the OT dispensation the wedding was *announced*. When Christ assumed our flesh and blood; the *betrothal*

took place. The price, the *dowry* was paid on Calvary and now after an *interval*, the Bridegroom *returns* and the wedding supper of the Lamb begins (abridged from Hendriksen). Even now Jesus is preparing a place for his bride who he will come back for and who will be with him forever (John 14:2-3, 1 Thess 4:17).

v8 (KJV) - *And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.* - The King James Version is the best rendition, 'sentence of justification' is nearer the true meaning than 'righteous acts of', Isa 61:10. It is also more in line with other references in Rev 3:4 (Sardis - dressed in white); 3:18 (Laodicea - I counsel you to buy white cloths to wear); 6:11 (those out of the great tribulation wearing white robes); 7:9 (the great multitude wearing white robes); 7:14 (they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb). It was granted her or it was given her, meaning that it is not her own righteousness, it comes from the Lord.

31. Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb! (19:9)

Rev 19:9 Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'" And he added, "These are the true words of God."

10 At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

v9 - *"Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'" And he added, "These are the true words of God."* - John is told to write, so the blessing that follows is important (cf. 14:13, 21:5), it is one of seven blessings in Revelation. God has decreed that His Son should have a wedding and that the wedding hall should be full of invited guests (Mat 22:9-10, Lk 14:23). Those who are invited are the church now ('effectually called' - Hendriksen). The image of the wedding supper is found in two of Jesus parables, the king who gave a marriage feast for his son and the ten virgins (Mat 22:2, 25:10, Luke 14:16), the church as the bride of Christ is found earlier, see v7. Jesus refers to drinking the fruit of the vine when he drinks it anew with his disciples in his Father's kingdom (Mat 26:29, Mark 14:25, Luke 22:18, see also Isa 25:6-9, Luke 13:29). This is really the introduction to the next section, the Great Supper of God. The bliss of the wedding supper of the Lamb should be contrasted with the Great Supper of God (v17).

v10 - *At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."* - John falls down to worship the angel when the angel says in the previous verse "These are the true words of God" and after he had seen the great multitude of the saints in heaven joined by the host of heaven shouting praise to God. There are places in OT where men pay homage to angels but the Col 2:18 passage disapproves of worshipping angels. John is emphatically told by the angel to worship God, the angel is a servant of God also. John tries to worship an angel again in 22:8 and he is again told to worship God. A little earlier the angel told John 'these words are trustworthy and true...!' John falls down at the feet of the angel when he had heard and seen all these things, the vision he had been seeing was that of the New Jerusalem and the river of life. The reason in both cases for his worship of the angel who had been showing him these things is firstly the grandeur of his visions but secondly their truth, if his visions were only grand he would not have attempted to worship the angel but it is their truth that so overcame him so that he worshipped the angel for showing them to him. The angel is a fellow servant with John and his brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. That is the testimony of Jesus given by his life, teaching, death and resurrection. This passage emphasises that only God is to be worshipped, which is part of the message of the book, cf. 14:7, 9. The lesson is doubly taught that only God is to be worshipped, the message to John's hearers is that if angels are not to be worshipped then man is certainly not to be worshipped which is one of the chief sins of the Roman Emperors and what John is guarding against. Chilton points out that there is another truth taught here which emphasises that angels and men are of equal status and that John is not to demean himself by prostrating himself to an angel of equal status.

The testimony of Jesus is mentioned three times earlier in the book. In 1:2 the vision John saw is the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, (the revelation was given by God and testified to by Christ, Mounce) in verse 1:1 the book is the revelation (unveiling) of Jesus Christ which God gave him. In 1:9 John was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. In 12:17 the dragon 'went off to make war against the rest of the woman's offspring-- those who obey God's commands and hold to the testimony of Jesus'. In the latter two cases and in the current verse the testimony of Jesus refers his testimony about himself rather than our testimony about him. His testimony is summarised by 1 Tim 2:5-6 "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, {6} who gave himself as a ransom for all men--the testimony given in its proper time."

Then after rebuking John the angel says Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. Hughes notes that the conjunction 'for' connects what has just been said with the previous statement. Prophecy here is the declaration of the message entrusted by God to his servant. It is a function of servant hood as the angel just said. The ministry of the servant is to bear witness to Jesus not to oneself and so worship of the angel is entirely incongruous with the ministry of prophecy. The ministry of the OT prophets also bears witness to Jesus as he told his disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:25-27 see also John 5:39). Note: the angels worship the Lamb in 5:11. Jack Deere comments 'Prophecy is meant to testify to the awesomeness of Jesus, not to the prophetic ministry. The greatest prophets want people to behold the glory of Jesus. They care little about how they are viewed. John the Baptist was one of the greatest of all prophets because he said, and *meant*, "He must become greater; I must become less" (John 3:30). People who feel like John the Baptist can be entrusted with great revelations.'

Scene 7: Victory for the Lamb.

The rider on the white horse (19:11)

The end of the beast and the false prophet (19:20)

The thousand years (20:1)

The dead are judged - the great white throne (20:11)

32. The rider on the white horse (19:11)

Rev 19:11 I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. 12 His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. 13 He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. 14 The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. 15 Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations.

"He will rule them with an iron sceptre."

He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. 16 On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written:

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Rev 19:17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in mid-air, "Come, gather together for the great supper of God, 18 so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty men, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, small and great."

In 4:1 there was a door opened in heaven and John was invited up to heaven; in 11:19 God's temple in heaven was opened; in 15:5 the tabernacle was opened and out came the seven angels with seven bowls; here heaven itself is opened and Jesus is revealed coming in wrath upon the earth. We see here a fuller account of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ together with his army of saints in wrath against the world. The passage shows the heavens opened and Christ revealed as King of kings and Lord of lords. The world led by the antichrist (the beast), the false prophet and the kings of the earth with their armies fight against Him and his army, but he slays them with the word of his mouth. The beast and the false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire. Then Satan is bound for a thousand years, and there is the millennial reign of Christ. At the end of the thousand years Satan is let loose again and there is a final battle, in which Satan is defeated and cast into the lake of fire. This is followed by the general

resurrection and the Judgement day and anyone whose name is not in the book of life is also cast into the lake of fire.

v11 - *I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True.* - 'I saw heaven standing open', this introduces a new section (cf. Ezek 1:1, Rev 4:1). At the second coming of Christ to the earth, heaven and the earth are joined together for a brief period of time as Christ reveals himself to an unbelieving mankind in all his great glory and majesty (xxxx). In 4:1 John saw a door in heaven through which only he entered but now the whole of heaven is open so that all may see Christ. The rider is clearly Christ, he is clearly identified in verse 13; his name is the Word of God and again in verse 16 where he is called King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The rider whose name is Faithful and True is a reference to Christ since He designates himself as 'the faithful and true witness' in the letter to the church in Laodicea, see Rev 3:14. This title contrasts Him with those who deceive mankind (v20), the beast and the false prophet. He is *the* faithful witness (1:5), here he vindicates his followers by destroying His and the churches' enemies. This event is commonly taken to be the Second Coming for another interpretation see Sweet & Hailey.

v11 - *With justice he judges and makes war.* - God is just in everything he does: Isa 11:4, 'but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked'. Psa 96:13 'they will sing before the LORD, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his truth'. His description in (1:14) shows him with white hair indicating wisdom. In 16:7 there is the response from the altar 'true and just are your judgements'.

v12 - *His eyes are like blazing fire and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself.* - Eyes like blazing fire fits the description of Jesus in Rev 1:14, cf. 2 Thess 1:7, with them he sees the wickedness of the wicked, which he hates. He has many crowns (Gr. *diadema*) to indicate his royal authority, he is King of Kings (v16), the dragon wore seven royal crowns (12:3) while the beast wore ten royal crowns both of whom he now goes on to defeat (19:20, 20:10). He has a name written on him that only he knows, for 'only the Son of God can understand the mystery of his own being' (quoted by Wilson). There is more to Christ than we can know and only he can understand (xxxx).

v13 - *He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God.* - His robe is dipped in blood because he is coming in wrath against the people world (Isa 13:9, 63:1-6). He has trod the winepress of God's wrath, see v15 (Isa 63:1, Rev 14:19) compare with Jacob's blessing over Judah 'he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes', Gen 49:11. His name is the Word of God, that is Jesus (John 1:1) cf. v15 and v21, He is God's last word to the world.

v14 - *The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.* - The army of heaven refers to the saints, a parallel passage calls them his 'called, chosen and faithful followers' (17:14). They are dressed in *fine linen, white and clean* (cf. 3:5, 6:11, 17:14, especially 19:8), the bride of the Lamb, this does not refer to angels because they wore shining linen (15:6), there is no reference to angels in white (although the same Greek word *lampros* meaning bright is used of angels raiment in 15:6 and the saints in 19:8, in general white is used for the saints throughout Rev). See the army of the Lord in Joel 2:11, 'mighty are those who obey his command'. In 14:4 the 144,000 also *follow* the Lamb wherever he goes, the saints are followers of Jesus. These are in contrast to those in 13:3 who followed after the beast. Note that the army also rides white horses as does their leader. The armies of heaven are mentioned here because they, that is the church, share in our Lord's victory. They are referred to again in 19:19 when the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gather to make war against the rider on the horse and *his army*.

v15 - *Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations.* - The sharp sword is the word of God (Heb 4:12), he is called the Word of God (v13), it is His word which condemns people at the last day (John 12:48). It says in Isa 11:4 that 'with the breath of his mouth he will slay the wicked' (cf. Hos 6:5; Isa 60:12). See also v21 in which the kings of the earth and their armies are 'killed by the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse'. In the same way he overthrows the antichrist with the breath of his mouth, and destroys him by the splendour of his coming (2 Thess 2:8). In 2:16 he will fight against those at Pergamum who hold to the teaching of Balaam and the Nicolations with the sword of his mouth. We should not be surprised at Christ using the word of God to fight against his enemies since the universe was made at God's command (Heb 11:3).

v15 - *"He will rule them with an iron sceptre."* - This is another reference to the Messianic psalm 2:9, 'You will rule them with an iron sceptre ; you will dash them to pieces like pottery'. This could be a reference to the millennial reign of Christ and his saints who will also rule with him as a reward given to those who overcome in the letter to the church at Thyatira (2:26). However Mounce maintains that to rule with an

iron sceptre means to destroy rather than govern in a stern fashion, this makes sense in the light of the many scriptures on the day of God's wrath which indicate destruction, see especially Isa 11:4 and Psa 2:9b and also see Isa 13:9, Zep 1:15-18, 3:8.

v15 - *He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.* - Winepress is a common metaphor for God's wrath (Isa 63:1-6, Joel 3:13), he squeezes until there is no blood left, there is so much blood that it forms a lake, see 14:19 for the great winepress of God's wrath. In verse 13 his robe is dipped in blood. In the sixth seal it is called the great day of their wrath (5:17).

v16 - *On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.* This contrasts to the title of the harlot, who is BABYLON THE GREAT MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH, Rev 17:5. Compare with the same description of the Lamb in (17:14) and 'I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill' in the Messianic psalm, Psa 2:5. The kings of the earth gather against the Lord, but he over powers them because he is the King of Kings. He has the same title 'Lord of lords and King of kings' in the description of the battle against the ten kings and the beast in 17:14, he also has with him his called, chosen and faithful followers. In 1:5 he is described as the ruler of the kings of the earth, in this passage he openly demonstrates this in a final victory at his Second Coming. His title is on his robe so that it is visible to all. It is also a divine title used of God in 1 Tim 6:15 'the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords'.

v17, 18 - *And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in mid-air, "Come, gather together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty men, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, small and great."* - This is from Ezekiel's prophecy about Gog, Ezek 39:4, 17 see also David and Goliath, 1 Sam 17:46, 'Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel', see also the description of the judgement upon Pharaoh, Ezek 32:3-10. The great supper of God should be contrasted with the wedding supper of the Lamb (19:9). For birds flying in mid-air see 8:13, 14:6. Also contrast the gathering of the kings of the earth (19:19) with the birds gathering together to eat the flesh of kings (v17, 18). Notice that it deals with all classes of people from kings to slaves, small and great, see also 6:15, in which there is the similar description of those classes of people who hide from the wrath of the Lamb in the sixth seal. This same battle is also described in Rev 17:14 when the beast and ten kings wage war against the Lamb, he has the same title King

of kings and Lord of Lords, and in 20:8 when Satan and the nations of the earth (Gog and Magog) surround the camp of God's people. Chilton points out that to be devoured by bird is a basic aspect of the covenant curse Dt 28:26, 49.

(Deu 28:26 NIV) Your carcasses will be food for all the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and there will be no one to frighten them away.

33. The end of the beast and the false prophet (19:19)

19:19 Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. 20 But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshipped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulphur. 21 The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.

v19 - *then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army* - Here we see the conflict of two armies, one is an earthly one the other a heavenly one. This is a last attack on the people of God, see Ezek 38, 39 especially 38:15-16. Jesus is ruler over the kings of the earth (Rev 1:5) this is fulfilled in v21. This is the battle of Armageddon mentioned in the sixth bowl (16:14) this clearly takes place at the Second Coming (16:15). The beast and the kings of the earth are mentioned in (17:12), as 'ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast'. His army are the saints and not angels, see v14, they are dressed in 'fine linen, white and clean' which refers to the saints. Compare this scene with 12:17 when the dragon makes war on the saints and 13:7 when the beast makes war on the saints and overcomes them.

v20 - *But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshipped his image.* - There is no mention of a fight, just the capture of the beast and false prophet. The false prophet first appears in the sixth bowl (16:13) and is clearly identical with the beast out of the earth in Rev 13:11 who made the earth and its inhabitants worship the beast. He works by delusion and deceived the world by his miraculous signs (13:14), the miraculous signs are demonic (16:14). Signs and miracles do not always come from God, we should

beware of signs and wonders we should be discerning to see if they come from false prophets, Mat 24:24. We should note that the beast and false prophet are captured together because they act together as in Rev 13 where the beast out of the earth supports the beast out of the sea (Milligan).

v20 - *The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulphur* - The beast at last goes to his destruction, 17:8, 11. This is the end of the antichrist and the false prophet, the devil joins them later followed by those who worship the beast or receive his mark (14:9, 20:15). The second of His enemies are destroyed before he hands the kingdom to his Father (1 Cor 15:23-26), the first enemy was Babylon (17:16 ff.) who was also destroyed by fire. They will be tormented day and night for ever (20:10) in the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Mat 25:41 see also Isa 30:33).

v21 - *The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse,* - The rest of them should be contrasted with the rest of the woman's offspring, namely the church of 12:17, these are the kings, generals, all people, i.e. the unsaved world, v18, who join with the beast and false prophet to fight against Christ and his followers. The sword is the word of God (see v13, 14) which pronounces judgement (John 12:48). His word destroyed them, (2 Thess 2:8, Isa 11:4). This is also referred to in 17:12-14 in which the ten kings and the beast will make war against the Lamb but He will overcome them.

v21 - *and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.* - The invitation given by the angel in v17, 18 to the birds flying in mid-air is now realised. This is imagery for final disaster, and is taken from Ezek 39:17-20, see also 32:4. This is the final indignity for men, they were not buried but the birds ate their flesh, just as the dogs ate Jezebel's flesh and there was nothing to be found of her when it came time to bury her, 2 King 9:33-37, this should be compared to the two witnesses who were also refused burial. Their punishment is not described here but later, 20:15. Compare the end here of the kings and their armies with the end of the prostitute whose flesh was also eaten (17:16) by the beast and ten kings.

34. The thousand years (20:1)

20:1 And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. 2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. 3 He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

20:4 I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5 (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

Rev 20:7 When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth--Gog and Magog--to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. 9 They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. 10 And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

This has become, unfortunately, one of the more disputed passages in scripture. It is the only place in Revelation where the thousand years appears. There are three interpretations:

a. Premillennialism: Christ's return in power and glory will deprive Satan of all his power, raise the Christian dead, and set up the kingdom of the saints on earth. After a thousand years, Satan will re-emerge from his imprisonment, attempt once more to destroy the saints, fail, and be destroyed himself. Then will come the resurrection of the rest of the dead, the judgement of the great white throne, the final destruction of the wicked, and the making of a new heaven and earth. The appearing of the Antichrist, the tribulation, the rapture is usually held to have taken place before

Christ's coming in victory, and that comes before (pre-) the millennium: hence the name of this interpretation. This doctrine is sometimes called chiliasm which is derived from the Greek *chillios*, a thousand.

b. Amillennialism: There is no literal millennium, the 1,000 years is symbolic. It stands for the whole time between the life of Jesus on earth and his second coming. There is a biblical millennium, (Cox). The saints are raised with Christ at the new birth, this is the first resurrection, (Eph 2:6, Col 2:12, Col 3:1), and they reign with Christ in life (Rom 5:17).

c. Postmillennialism: Christ returns after (post) the millennium. The millennium is the triumph of the gospel in this present age, sometimes a literal 1,000 years.

For a balanced discussion which comes down in favour of the premillennial view see Pawson, the amillennial view is described by Cox. Berkhof is also worth reading.

34.1. Specific problems with the passage:

There are a number of specific problems with the passage:

i. This is the only mention of a period of a thousand years in Revelation, many of the other time periods in Revelation follow a formula, 42 months etc. The period of a thousand years (10 * 10 * 10) means a complete period of time, but it also indicates a long period of time. There are few other periods of a thousand years in scripture, see Psa 90:4, Eccl 6:6, 2 Pet 3:8.

ii. It refers to Satan being bound for a thousand years to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years was ended. Satan is elsewhere in Revelation referred to as deceiving the nations (12:9, 13:14, 16:13-14 see also 2 Cor 11:3). Clearly Satan is still deceiving the nations now, there are false prophets and false Christ's still around. The false prophet in Revelation is clearly an emissary of Satan who deceives the people of the earth. The deception by Satan spoken of here is without the false prophet who is in the lake of fire (v 10).

iii. If there is a thousand year reign of Christ on earth (although the earth is not mentioned) together with the saints this is the only place in scripture that describes this. It is unwise to get our theology from an obscure passage in Revelation without backing from other clear passages of scripture. Clear passages of scripture must be

used to shed light on obscure passages and not the other way round. The NT does not give support for the idea of a thousand year reign of Christ apart from Rev 20, the main support comes from the OT.

iv. It speaks of two resurrections, the first in which the saints reign with Christ for a thousand years and a second general resurrection for the rest of the dead at the end of the thousand years. Usually only one resurrection is spoken of in scripture, see Dan 12:1-4, 12:13, Mat 22:31, Luke 14:14, 20:35-36, John 5:25-29, 11:24, Acts 23:6, 1 Cor 15, 2 Cor 4:14, Phil 3:11, 1 Thess 4:13-18, Heb 6:2, Rev 11:18, 20:12-13. However there is also some hint that there is a resurrection for the righteous only see; Luke 20:35-36, 2 Cor 4:14, Phil 3:11, 1 Thess 4:16-17.

v. The battle in Rev 20:7 seems to be parallel with others battles in Revelation (Rev 16:14, 17:14, 19:17).

Rev 16:14-16 The three unclean spirits out of the mouth of the dragon, beast and false prophet.

Rev 17:14-17 The ten kings and the beast

Rev 19:17-21 The beast and the kings of the earth

vi. Rev 20:7 - *Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth--Gog and Magog--to gather them for battle* - This is also referred to in other passages: The passages in Rev 16:14 and Rev 19:17 are clearly the same battle as Rev 20:7 they are all supported by Ezekiel 38 and 39. The parallelism argues that the thousand years is the gospel era. See also comments on Rev 12:7.

34.2. The argument of parallelism (Hendriksen).

The book of revelation consists of seven parallel sections that cover the current Church dispensation. i.e.

1. Christ in the midst of the lampstands (1:1-3:22)
2. The vision of heaven and the seven seals (4:1-7:17)
3. The seven trumpets (8:1-11:19)
4. The persecuting dragon (12:1 - 14:20)
5. The seven bowls (15:1-16:21)
6. The fall of Babylon (17:1 - 19:21)

7. The great consummation (20:1-22:21)

The following table shows some parallel situations regarding the Devil in Revelation.

Rev 11-14	Rev 20
12:5-12. In connection to Christ's birth, death, ascension and coronation, Satan is hurled down from heaven. His accusations lose every semblance of justice	20:1-3. Satan is bound and cast into the abyss; his power over the nations is curbed. Instead of the nations conquering the Church, the Church begins to conquer (evangelise) the nations.
11:2-6, 12:14 ff. A long period of power and witness bearing for the church, which is nourished away from the face of the serpent (Satan). The devil's influence is curbed.	20:2 A long period of power for the Church, Satan having been bound. He remains bound for a thousand years, that is, during this entire gospel age. (In heaven the souls of the redeemed are living and reigning with Christ, 20:4-6.
11:7 ff., 13:7 A very brief period of most severe persecution. This is Satan's little season: the most terrible and also the final manifestation of the persecuting power of antichrist.	20:7 ff. A very brief period of most severe persecution: Satan marshals the army of Gog and Magog against the church. This is the battle of Har-Magedon
11:17,18 14:14 ff. The one and only second coming of Christ in judgement.	20:11 ff. The one and only second coming of Christ in judgement.

34.3. Premillennial interpretation:

The arguments for the premillennial interpretation.

1. This is the most straightforward reading of the text.
2. It demonstrates the type of government that could happen under Christ and his church.
3. It shows up the wickedness of humanity who join with the devil when he is released.

4. The whole passage from Rev 19:11 concerns the period from the second coming to the judgement, it is part of the same sequence, depicting the judgement of the beast and the false prophet; then the judgement of Satan; which continues with the judgement of mankind (20:11) and the new heaven and earth (21:1). Notice the sequence of 'I saw' which occurs seven times in 19:11, 19:17, 19:19, 20:1, 20:4, 20:11, 21:1

5. Satan does not seem to be bound now, he is still deceiving the nations.

6. The passage concerning Satan is separate to that concerning the fate of the beast and the false prophet. See v10, which indicates that the devil was thrown into the lake of fire *after* the beast and false prophet.

7. While there are no other NT references to it apart from Revelation there are a number of OT scriptures that support this view.

8. It was the view held by the early church fathers although Berkhof maintains that as many were amillennialists as advocates of chiliasm.

9. It is required to fulfil various OT prophecies.

The premillennial interpretation sees the vision of the white horse of Rev 19:11 and the subsequent battle of Rev 19:19 depicting the one and only second coming in which the antichrist (the beast) and false prophet are defeated and thrown into the lake of fire. Their armies are also killed. Then Satan is bound for a thousand years, during which the Church reigns on earth, after Satan's release he gathers the nations against the saints. There is no battle because fire from heaven consumes the nations and the Devil. He does not have the beast and false prophet to help him because these are already in the lake of fire. The devil is consigned to the lake of fire, there is a general resurrection of the dead and the judgement starts. Part of Jewish thought is that there will be a Sabbath reign of God in the earth for a thousand year at the end of human history which would last for six thousand years. The idea being that a thousand years is one day in God's sight (Ps 90:4, cf. 2 Pet 3:8).

OT references in favour of Premillennialism:

(Psa 72) Of Solomon. Endow the king with your justice, O God, the royal son with your righteousness. {2} He will judge your people in righteousness, your afflicted ones with justice. {3} The mountains will bring prosperity to the people, the hills the fruit of righteousness. {4} He will defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy; he will crush the oppressor. {5} He will endure as long as the sun, as long as the moon, through all generations. {6} He will be like rain falling on a mown field, like showers watering the earth. {7} In his days the righteous will flourish; prosperity will abound till the moon is no more. {8} He will rule from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth. {9} The desert tribes will bow before him and his enemies will lick the dust. {10} The kings of Tarshish and of distant shores will bring tribute to him; the kings of Sheba and Seba will present him gifts. {11} All kings will bow down to him and all nations will serve him. {12} For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. {13} He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death. {14} He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight. {15} Long may he live! May gold from Sheba be given him. May people ever pray for him and bless him all day long. {16} Let grain abound throughout the land; on the tops of the hills may it sway. Let its fruit flourish like Lebanon; let it thrive like the grass of the field. {17} May his name endure forever; may it continue as long as the sun. All nations will be blessed through him, and they will call him blessed. {18} Praise be to the LORD God, the God of Israel, who alone does marvellous deeds. {19} Praise be to his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen. {20} This concludes the prayers of David son of Jesse.

See all of Zec 14, esp. 14:1-9, 16.

(Zec 14:1-9) A day of the LORD is coming when your plunder will be divided among you. {2} I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city. {3} Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. {4} On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. {5} You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him. {6} On that day there will be no light, no cold or frost. {7} It will be a unique day, without daytime or nighttime--a day known to the LORD. When evening comes, there will be light. {8} On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half to the eastern sea and half to the western sea, in summer and in winter. {9} The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name.

(Zec 14:16) Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.

(Zec 8:20-23) This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Many peoples and the inhabitants of many cities will yet come, {21} and the inhabitants of one city will go to another and say, 'Let us go at once to entreat the LORD and seek the LORD Almighty. I myself am going.' {22} And many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the LORD Almighty and to entreat him." {23} This is what the LORD Almighty says: "In those days ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, 'Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.'" An Oracle

(Micah 4:2-8 NASB) And many nations will come and say, "Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD And to the house of the God of Jacob, That He may teach us about His ways And that we may walk in His paths." For from Zion will go forth the law, Even the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. {3} And He will judge between many peoples And render decisions for mighty, distant nations. Then they will hammer their swords into plowshares And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they train for war. {4} And each of them will sit under his vine And under his fig tree, With no one to make them afraid, For the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken. {5} Though all the peoples walk Each in the name of his god, As for us, we will walk In the name of the LORD our God forever and ever. {6} "In that day," declares the LORD, "I will assemble the lame, And gather the outcasts, Even those whom I have afflicted. {7} "I will make the lame a remnant, And the outcasts a strong nation, And the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion From now on and forever. {8} "And as for you, tower of the flock, Hill of the daughter of Zion, To you it will come-- Even the former dominion will come, The kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem.

(Isa 2:2-4) In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. {3} Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. {4} He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

(Isa 11:2-10) The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him-- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD-- {3} and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; {4} but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. {5} Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist. {6} The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. {7} The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. {8} The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. {9} They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. {10} In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.

(Isa 65:20-25) "Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. {21} They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. {22} No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands. {23} They will not toil in vain or bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them. {24} Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. {25} The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain," says the LORD.

(Jer 23:5-8) "The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. {6} In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness. {7} "So then, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when people will no longer say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of Egypt,' {8} but they will say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the descendants of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.' Then they will live in their own land."

Commentary (Premillennial):

20:1 And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. 2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. 3 He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

20:4 I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5 (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

Rev 20:7 When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth--Gog and Magog--to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. 9 They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. 10 And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

v1 - *And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain.* - This introduces a new section with 'I saw an angel coming down out of heaven'. This is not the same angel from the fifth trumpet, 9:1, who is a bad angel, probably Satan. The angel here comes down from heaven, he does not fall, he seized Satan and binds him with authority from God. Notice the similarity with Jude 6 in which the fallen angels are bound with chains until judgement day.

v2 - *He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.* - Notice that Satan is given all four titles he is known by in the book, the dragon (12:3 ff.), that ancient serpent (12:9), who is the devil (2:10, 12:9), or Satan (2:9, 2:13, 3:9, 12:9). Satan is bound by an angel from heaven with the authority of God who is stronger than Satan. In the same way Jesus bound Satan when he was on earth, Luke 11:22. This is the first of six references to the thousand years in the book, all of which occur in the first seven verses of chapter 20. The term millennium comes from the Latin *mille* meaning thousand and *annus* meaning year. In common with the rest of the symbology of Revelation the thousand years is not literally a thousand years but a complete period of time (10*10*10).

v3 - *He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended.* - The angel unceremoniously throws Satan into the Abyss and locks and seals it with the purpose to stop him deceiving the nations as he had been doing before. The beast out of the earth, who is the false prophet deceives the nations elsewhere in Rev 13 and is the emissary of Satan. But Satan can do so only when the thousand years are over, thus with the beast and false prophet in the lake of fire and Satan bound the nations cannot be deceived into believing a lie. The nations referred to here are the remnant left from chapter 19, see Zec 14:16. They are no longer deceived into giving the beast the worship belonging to God, because he and the false prophet are in the lake of fire. The Devil is known as the deceiver because he deceived Eve, 2 Cor 11:3. All other references in the NT refer to people as deceivers apart from 1 Tim 4:1, which describes how in the latter days 'some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons'.

The Greek word *planao* is used in 20:3, 8 and 10 of the devil deceiving the inhabitants of the world. The same Greek word is also used of Jezebel misleading God's servants in 2:20; of Satan in 12:9; the signs caused by the second beast which deceive the inhabitants of the earth in 13:14; of the whore in 18:23; the false prophet in 19:20. Thus while Satan is instigator of deception he uses men, in the shape of false

prophets and the world. Some other NT occurrences of the word *planao* refer to men i.e. false prophets and false Christ's e.g. Mat 24:5, 11, 24:24.

The Greek word for abyss, *abussos*, is also used in Luke 8:31 (the demons in Legion beg Jesus not to cast them into the Abyss), Rom 10:7 ('Who will descend into the deep?'), Rev 9:1, 9:2, 9:11 (Fifth trumpet), 11:7 (beast from Abyss attacks two witnesses), 17:8 (The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and will come up out of the Abyss and go to his destruction.), 20:1.

v4 - *I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.* - Paul tells us in 1 Cor 6:2 that the saints will judge the world. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years, we are told in the next verse that this is the first resurrection (of the righteous). We take it that this is the resurrection of the body for the saints when Christ comes again, although John says he saw the *souls*, if they are to reign on earth they must also have bodies. The souls he saw are the souls of the martyrs seen in 6:9, the reference to those who had been beheaded simply means that they were martyred because of their testimony and their obedience to the word of God. In 5:10 it tells us that the saints will reign on the earth. The twelve apostles will judge the twelve tribes of Israel at the renewal of all things when Jesus sits on his glorious throne Mat (19:28). 2 Tim 2:12 tells us that if we endure with Him then we will also reign with Him. The word Martyr means witness, we are all witnesses but not all will suffer the death of the body as a witness.

They had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands, they were then killed (cf. 13:15), but they had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name, 15:2, and they came to life at the first resurrection which occurs at the second coming. They are the counterpart to those who *had* worshipped the beast and his image (14:9) and whose names were not in the book of life (13:8). This passage is most likely inspired by Daniel in which the saints will receive a kingdom, Dan 7:22; see also Dan 7:9 in which 'thrones were set in place' and Dan 7:27 'Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High'. This kingdom of the king will be one that will last for ever and ever, Dan 7:14, 27. The importance of this passage is that it shows that those who die for their faith come to life again and reign with Christ.

v5 - *(The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection.* - The first resurrection is for the righteous when Jesus comes again, Luke 14:14, 1 Thess 4:16. The second is a general resurrection at the end of the thousand years for the righteous and the wicked, see Dan 12:1-2, John 5:25-29. It has frequently been observed that if one resurrection is literal then the other one must be or else words lose all their meaning, see Walvoord.

v6 - *Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.* - Blessed and holy are those having a part of the first resurrection, they are blessed because the second death which is the lake of fire has no power over them, they are holy because they had not worshipped the beast. Looking at Rev 20:14-15 then by definition those who are in the book of life take part in the first resurrection. According to the letter to the church in Smyrna those who overcome will not be hurt by the second death, Rev 2:11. In 1:6 all believers have been made a kingdom and are priests to serve God. In 5:10 the elders praise the Lamb because he purchased men for God and has made them to be a kingdom and to be priests to serve God and they will reign on the earth. The emphasis of this verse would seem to be that all believers will reign with Christ for a thousand years. What is most likely is that those who are martyred will judge and the rest will reign with Christ.

v7 - *When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison* - He must be set free for a short time to deceive the world (v3). It is worth noting that in Ezekiel 38-39 and Revelation the assault follows the period of the Messianic kingdom. In Ezekiel 36-37 Israel is restored to the land; then comes the warfare in chapters 38 and 39. This is followed by a portrayal of the eternal state under the figure of a rebuilt temple in the New Jerusalem (Mounce).

v8 - *and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth--Gog and Magog--to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore.* - After his release he goes out to deceive the nations as before v3 and gathers the nations for battle although it is God who gathers them (Ezek 38:4, 38:9). The Four Corners of the earth indicates the universality of the nations that he gathers. In scripture Gog and Magog are only mentioned together in Ezek 38:2, where Gog is of the land Magog, they are mentioned separately in Gen 10:2, 1 Chr 1:5, 5:4. Their main occurrence in scripture is in Ezek Ch 38 and 39. It is Satan's final little time. To gather them for battle, Zech 14:1, Psa 2. In scripture the expression 'in number they are like the sand on the seashore' means that their number cannot be counted (Gen

22:17, Josh 11:4, 1 King 4:29, Jer 33:22, Heb 11:12). It should be noted that Ezek 38 and 39 are also used to describe the war of 19:19. Compare the carrion eating the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty men of 19:17-18, 21 with Ezek 39:17-22.

v9 - *They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them.* - They marched across the breadth of the earth again indicates the universality of those who attack God's people. They surrounded God's people, Ezek 38:16. Probably a period of intense persecution, camp refers to the camp in the wilderness, Deu 23:14, Num 2:2. Fire came down from heaven, compare with Ezek 38:22, in which God executes judgement with 'plague and bloodshed and burning sulphur' against Gog, in 39:6 God says he will 'send fire on Magog and on those who live safety in the coastlands so that they will know that he is the Lord'. For other examples of fire from heaven see: Gen 19:24, Lev 10:2, Num 11:1, 16:35, Ki 1:10, 1 Chr 21:26, 2 Chr 7:1, Luk 17:29, 2 Thess 1:7, Rev 13:13, 18:8. The city he loves is likely to be Jerusalem, Zech 14:16. Once again the city is equated with its people, see the New Jerusalem. Compare God's fire from heaven with the counterfeit fire of the beast from the earth in 13:13 with which he deceives the inhabitants of the earth.

v10 - *And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.* - This completes the destruction of this trio, in 19:20, the beast and false prophet were also thrown into the lake of burning sulphur. According to this verse there is a time sequence between the beast and false prophet having been thrown into the lake of fire and the devil being thrown into the lake of fire. Just as he accused the believers day and night, 12:10, he will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Contrast their fate with that of the Seraphim who worship God day and night, 4:8, and the saints who serve God day and night (7:15).

34.4. Amillennial Interpretation:

Satan is bound for a thousand years, which represents the current gospel age during which his kingdom is plundered as people hear the gospel and respond. The first resurrection is the new birth in which a person is raised with Christ and reigns with Christ. The second resurrection is the general resurrection, which occurs at the end of the thousand years at Christ's Second Coming when Satan is finally defeated. This

passage is a parallel passage to Rev 19, which shows the defeat of the beast and the false prophet, this passage concentrates on the demise of Satan.

The argument for an amillennial interpretation.

1. This is the only place in scripture that depicts a millennial reign of Christ, the rest of the NT is silent about it.
2. We should not take our theology from a symbolic book, particularly where it is obscure. We should interpret obscure passages in the light of clearer passages of scripture, not the other way round.
3. The battle with Gog and Magog seems to be the same battle as in Rev 19:19 in which birds gorge themselves with the flesh of generals and mighty men, both refer to Ezek 38 and 39.
4. The NT shows the saints reigning with Christ now, the saints are now raised with Christ, the first resurrection is the new birth.
5. This section 20:1-10 should be viewed as parallel to the other passages describing the destruction of Babylon the great (Ch 17 & 18) and the destruction of the beast and false prophet (Ch 19).
6. 2 Pet 3:10 warns us that on the day of the Lord 'The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.'

NT theology:

The amillennialist interpretation takes note of the NT theology in which we have been raised with Christ now and reign with Him now. Note in the Eph 2:1-6 passage

***Eph 2:1-6** As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. 4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved. 6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,*

1. We were once dead in transgressions and sins, v1.
2. We followed the ways of the world and the Devil, v2.
3. God made us alive with Christ, v5.
4. He **raised** us up with Christ where we are seated with him in the heavenly realms, v6.

In the light of these NT scriptures this satisfactorily depicts Rev 20:4-5. The first resurrection is the new birth. Only over those who are reborn does the second death have no power.

Rev 20:6 Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

John 5:24 indicates that we have crossed over from death to life when we believe.
John 5:24 "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

Rom 5:17 clearly shows that we reign with Christ now.

Rom 5:17 For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

Col 1:13 to 3:4. This section most accurately describes what Rev 20 is saying, this refers to the triumph over Satan on the cross, the new birth, i.e. the resurrection of our spirit, which was dead to God and is now alive. The other scriptures on the resurrection (1 Cor 15:12, 1 Cor 15:35, Phil 3:11, 1 Thess 4:17,) refer to the resurrection of our body at Christ's second coming. We reign now with Christ in the heavenlies where the Devil has been defeated. Colossians depicts the situation as with Ephesians for all Christians now, we were raised with Christ at the new birth when we became Christians and we are seated with Christ in the heavenlies, our bodies are on the earth, but spiritually we dwell with Christ in the heavenly sphere, later at the resurrection of our bodies we will join him in heaven.

1. The plundering of the Devils kingdom happens when the gospel is preached and people respond.

Col 1:13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,

(Acts 26:17-18 NIV) I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them {18} to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

2. We have already been raised with Him, made alive with Him, later our bodies will be raised like His in glory at his second coming, this is the second resurrection.

Col 2:9-14 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, 10 and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. 11 In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, 12 having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. 13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

Col 3:1-4 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

3. He disarmed the powers and authorities at the cross.

Col 2:15 And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

4. The method of plundering Satan's kingdom, is through the gospel.

Col 1:23 if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

(Acts 26:17-18) delivering you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, {18} to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'

Other aspects of NT theology:

The power of God for salvation is the Gospel, Rom 1:6:

Rom 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

Christ was elevated far above every power and dominion at his resurrection, Eph 1:21:

Eph 1:19-22 and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,

(Phil 2:9-10 NIV) Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, {10} that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

Therefore we do not fight the Devil we stand our ground, Eph 6:13:

Eph 6:11-13 Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

We resist the devil by standing firm in the faith, the context is persecution, 1 Pet 5:9: *1 Pet 5:8-10 Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. 10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.*

The believers in heaven overcame the devil by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony, 12:11.

Rev 12:11 They overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.

Commentary (amillennial):

20:1 And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. 2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. 3 He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

20:4 I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5 (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

Rev 20:7 When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth--Gog and Magog--to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. 9 They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. 10 And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

v1 - *And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain.* - This introduces a new section with 'I saw an angel coming down out of heaven', note there is no 'then I saw' to link it in time sequence with the previous passage. This is not the same angel from the fifth trumpet, 9:1. Notice the similarity with Jude 6 in which the fallen angels are bound with chains until judgement day. However it is more likely to be a good angel who binds Satan.

v2 - *He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.* - In Luke 11:21 Jesus is talking about plundering the strong man, Satan and taking away his goods, but first the strong man must be bound by someone stronger than him, i.e. Christ. This is what is happening in the Gospel age,

Satan's goods are being plundered. Whenever the gospel is preached and men are converted then the devil's goods are plundered, they know the truth that sets them free. Some of those who once worshipped the beast are now found in heaven, i.e. every tribe and language and people and nation. The preaching of the gospel coincides with Satan fall from heaven, Luke 10:17. The binding of Satan here is the equivalent to other passages in Revelation: 12:7, 12:10, compare with Luke 10:18. This took place during the ministry of Jesus but was legally secured at his death, Heb 2:14.

v2 - *the thousand years* - Not literally a thousand years but a complete period of time (10*10*10). Comparing the battles of Rev 19:19 and 20:8 they are the same battle. Therefore the thousand years refers to the gospel age.

v3 - *He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended.* - In the gospel age the gospel will give light to the Gentiles. In the OT the gospel was to the Jews, now in the NT it is to be for all mankind and therefore Satan's kingdom is to be plundered. The beast out of the earth deceives the nations elsewhere in Rev. But Satan does only when the thousand years are over. The Devil is known as the deceiver because he deceived Eve (2 Cor 11:3). All other references in the NT refer to people as deceivers apart from 1 Tim 4:1.

v4 - *I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.* - John saw the souls of those beheaded e.g. John the Baptist. This could indicate the start of the millennium, since John was the last of the pre-gospel age, he is the most famous figure in scripture for being behead. Chilton sees the reference to the beheaded as referring to John the Baptist and therefore including the OT saints who were martyred, especially the prophets. He saw souls not bodies so it is likely they are in heaven and not on the earth, just as he saw the souls of the martyrs under the altar in heaven. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years, we are told in the next verse that this is the first resurrection (of the righteous).

v4 - *I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge.*
- All but two mentions of thrones in Revelation refer to thrones in heaven.

v4 - *And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God.* He saw souls not bodies so it is likely they are in heaven and not on the earth, just as he saw the souls of the martyrs under the altar in heaven. The mention of beheaded reminds us of John the Baptist the last of the prophets. In John's theology the NT martyrs are a continuum of the old testament prophets who were martyred see Rev 16:6, 18:24.

v4 - *They had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands* - They are to be contrasted with those who worshipped the beast, who will be tormented for ever and ever, Rev 14:11

v4 - *They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.* - The context indicates that this reign is in *heaven*, he saw the *souls* of those beheaded. The word Martyr means witness, we are all witnesses but not all will suffer the death of the body as a witness. Rom 5:17 indicates that we reign in life with Christ now in this life. But note that Rev 5:10 indicates that the saints will reign on the earth. They came to life spiritually refers to the new birth formerly they were dead in trespasses and sin, the new birth is the first resurrection of the spirit, the second resurrection is of the body.

v5 - *(The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection.* - The first resurrection is the new birth. The second is a general resurrection for the righteous and wicked, (Acts 24:15) it will be a bodily resurrection. The rest of the dead come to life on the last day (Dan 12:2, 13), see Rev 20:12-15.

v6 - *Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.* - Looking at Rev 20:14-15 then by definition those who are in the book of life take part in the first resurrection. Remember God's promise to the church at Smyrna to those who overcome, they will not be hurt by the second death (Rev 2:11). For NT references to the first resurrection see:

(Eph 2:4-6 NIV) But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, {5} made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved. {6} And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,

(Col 2:12-13 NIV) having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. {13} When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins,

(Col 3:1 NIV) Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

v7-8 - *When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth--Gog and Magog--to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. - He must be set free for a short time v3. After his release he goes out to deceive the nations as before v3.*

v8 - *Gog & Magog* - This seems to be the same battle as in Rev 19:19, both passages are supported by the same Ezek Ch 38 and 39 passages, it is Satan's final little time. Compare Ezek 39:17-21 with Rev 19:17-18, See also Rev 9:1, 11:7, 16:14, 19:19. Magog is first mentioned in Gen 10:2 as a son of Japheth, a son of Noah, then in Ezek 38:2 as Gog of the land of Magog. Gog is frequently referred to in Ezek 38 and 39 and nowhere else except Rev 20.

v8 - *to gather them for battle* - See Zech 14, this is quite clearly connected with the second coming of Jesus, see also Rev 16:14.

v9 - *They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. - The city he loves would be Jerusalem. A period of intense persecution, camp refers to the camp in the wilderness, Ezek 38:16. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them, Ezek 38:22, 2 Thess 2:8, Dan 12:1.*

v10 - *And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. - The completes the destruction of this trio, 19:20, the beast and false prophet are also thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, all his enemies have been destroyed (1 Cor 15:23-26). According to this verse there is a time sequence between the beast and false prophet having been thrown into the lake of fire and the devil being thrown into the lake of fire. Just as he accused the believers day and night, 12:10, he will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Contrast his fate with that of the Seraphim who worship God day and night, 4:8.*

35. The dead are judged - the great white throne (20:11)

Rev 20:11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15 If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

v11 - *Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. - God is Spirit and therefore earth and sky cannot dwell in his presence. Notice the similarity with the effect of Christ's presence at the second coming recorded in the sixth seal (6:14) 'The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place', and the seventh bowl (16:20) 'Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found'. His throne is white indicating the holiness of the person seated on it. Daniel saw a throne and 'the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze' the whiteness of his clothing indicating purity and the whiteness of his hair indicating age and wisdom.*

v12 - *And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. - In Daniel's vision of the Ancient of Days it is a court scene and books were also opened (Dan 7:10). The books record what each man has done. The book of life records whether a man has saving faith in Jesus. The books contain the record of each man's actions, and they were judged by what they had done (Mat 16:27, Acts 17:31, Rom 2:6, 1 Cor 4:5, 2 Tim 4:1, 1 Pet 4:5, Jude 1:14-15).*

v13 - *The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. - Hades is the abode of the dead (Isa 24:22). The mention of sea giving up its dead is to emphasise that every one will be judged, there is no escape. Again as in the previous verse this verse indicates that each person is judged by what he has done.*

v14 - *Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death* - Hades contains all the people who have died, Hades gives up its dead and then it is thrown into the fire because its job is done, it is no longer needed. Physical death no longer occurs so therefore death was thrown into the fire to become the second death. Death and Hades form a couplet as in Rev 6:8 because after death Hades becomes the abode of the dead, neither are needed and so they go to the lake of fire. The Lake of fire is where the beast, the false prophet and the devil are already in torment. The last enemy to be destroyed is death, 1 Cor 15:26.

v15 - *If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.* - The lake of fire was prepared for the devil and his angels (Mat 25:41), those who side with Satan join him eventually (Rev 13:8, 20:10). The only way to avoid going to the lake of fire is to be in the book of life (Ps 69:28, Phil 4:3, Rev 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 20:12, 21:27), that is to be an overcomer in this life and over the beast and his image (Rev 3:5, see also 21:7-8). Those whose names are in the book of life will be delivered (Dan 12:1) and will live in the new Jerusalem (21:27). The sinners in Isa 33:14 ask 'Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?'

This verse should be seen in the context of *all* the NT teaching. It shows the end of those who persist in rebellion against God. However the NT is clear that Jesus came into the world to save mankind, John 3:16-21, Rev 1:5-6. See also the comments at the end of the section on 'The message of Revelation'.

Scene 8: Jerusalem the bride.

New heavens and new earth (21:1)
 The new Jerusalem (21:9)
 The river of life (22:1)
 I am coming soon (22:7)
 Warning (22:18)
 Final benediction (22:20).

36. New heavens and new earth (21:1)

Rev 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

21:5 He who was seated on the throne said,

"I am making everything new!"

Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." 6 He said to me:

"It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. 7 He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. 8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death."

Genesis starts with the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth. Here in the last two chapters of the last book in the bible we find a new beginning as God makes everything new. There are many parallels with the first few chapters of Genesis; there is a new heaven and new earth, we find a spring, a river and the tree of life. As God brought Eve and presented her to Adam we find here a bride coming down from heaven beautifully dressed for her husband. God Himself dwells with man just as he walked with Adam in the cool of the day. There are some differences, man

dwells in a city rather than a garden. The description of the new heaven and new earth in which the bride lives ends with a description of the second death and those who go there.

Wilcock points out that there is a close connection between this passage, which acts as a summary, and the remainder of the book:

1. 21:2 = 21:10-21 - God's city - the new Jerusalem
2. 21:3 = 21:22-27 - God's dwelling - the new Jerusalem
3. 21:4, 5a = 22:1-5 - God's world renewed - the river and tree of life
4. 21:5b = 22:6-10 - God's word validated - these words are trustworthy and true
5. 21:6a = 22:11-15 - God's work completed
6. 21:6b, 7 = 22:16, 17 - God's final blessing
7. 21:8 = 22:18,19 - God's final curse

The eschatological blessings of the beatitudes are also found in Revelation 21-22: {Mat 5:3} "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. cf. Rev 21:1

- {4} Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. cf. Rev 21: 4
- {5} Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. cf. Rev 21:1
- {6} Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. cf. Rev 21:26-27
- {7} Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
- {8} Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. cf. Rev 22:4
- {9} Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. cf. Rev 21:7
- {10} Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. cf. Rev 21:1
- {11} "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. {12} Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (all of Rev 21-22 cf. 2:8).

v1 - *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.* - This follows immediately upon the judgement scene in which the devil, the beast and false prophet, and all whose names are not in the book of life are consigned to the lake of fire and earth and sky fled from His presence (20:11). A new heaven and new earth is first promised in Isaiah in a wonderful description in 65:17-25 and in 2 Peter 3:12 who speaks about the destruction of the earth and a new heaven and earth were righteousness dwells.

The first heaven refers to this present universe apart from the earth (cf. 2 Pet 3:12). This is a new beginning, just as in Gen 1:1 God created the heavens and the earth, now there is a completely new creation, the old creation has been liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God (Rom 8:19-22). The word 'new' (*kaine*) means new in quality, fresh, rather than recent or new in time (*neos*), Johnson. This present earth with its sin, pain and suffering is not our permanent dwelling. We see in this and future sections the heavenly reward for those who were persecuted, Mat 5:10-12.

v1 - *no longer any sea* -The sea is one of seven evils John speaks of as being no more, the others being death, mourning, weeping, pain (v4), curse (22:3) and night (22:5), (Morris). There is no longer any sea because the world and its people are no more, see Rev 17:15, in Revelation the sea is very much connected to the people of the world and their judgement, therefore it has no place in the new order of things. The beast also came out of the sea, tossing and turning of peoples and nations, that is political ferment (xxxx) and the prostitute sat on many waters representing peoples, multitudes, nations and languages. The sea is also the recipient of the plagues associated with the second trumpet and second bowl. Isa 57:20 compares the wicked to the tossing sea which cannot rest. The sea is the source of the satanic beast (13:1) and the place of the dead (20:13) and is not appropriate to the new earth (Johnson). The storms, death and destruction associated with the sea are at odds with the calmness and peace of the New Jerusalem, God's paradise. That there is no sea in the new order contrasts with the lake of fire in which the wicked dwell.

v2 - *I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband* - This the second time that we find a reference to the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. The New Jerusalem is first mentioned in Rev 3:12 where to be a permanent part of it (a pillar) is to be the reward for those who overcome. It is alluded to as the city with foundations in Heb 11:10-16 and Heb 12:22-23. The new Jerusalem is the heavenly city that Abraham was searching for, Heb 11:10, without the rest of the church he could not become perfect, Heb 11:40 and neither can we. The New Jerusalem is a holy city, nothing unclean shall enter is (Isa 52:1, Rev 21:27). The Holy city is usually a term for earthly Jerusalem, (Neh 11:1, Mat 4:5, 27:53) but in Revelation the earthly Jerusalem persecutes the saints (11:8). The New Jerusalem is also Mount Zion the city of God (Ps 48, Isa 4:3, 35:8-10, 51:11, 60:14-22, Joel 3:17). In Gal 4:25-26 Paul comments 'But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother' and contrasts her to 'the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children'.

The church is clearly referred to here as the New Jerusalem, and as the bride, in Rev 19:7 the bride refers to the saints. The church is known as the bride, in Eph 5:25-27, husbands are to love their wives as Christ loves the church. Christ is clearly the husband, in 19:7 it refers to the wedding of the Lamb, later we find the Lamb enthroned within the city, 21:3 and they reign forever and ever. The virgins represent the church in the parable of the ten virgins who are waiting for the bridegroom who is Christ, Mat 25:1. The New Jerusalem is again described as the bride, the wife of the Lamb in Rev 21:9-10. The church has to come out of heaven from God because the church was His idea from start to finish and He is the one who cleanses and prepares her. The New Jerusalem is to be contrasted to the harlot dressed in purple and scarlet who sits on the beast and is the worldly city Babylon that is from the earth. As a bride she is beautifully dressed for her husband, in 19:8 we find that fine linen, bright and clean was given her to wear, which stands for the righteous acts of the saints. We also find later that in the description of the new Jerusalem she shone with the glory of God (v11) she is decorated with every kind of precious stone (v19) and pearls (v21) and gold (v18). There is a parallel with Gen 2:21-22 in which Eve was made from Adam's rib and brought to Adam by God. Here we find the church, which was formed through the blood of Christ, his side was pierced on the cross and now we find His bride coming from God prepared for her husband.

v3 - *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God."* - The voice is that of God who speaks later in verse 5. This verse speaks of the intimate fellowship between God and His people, an intimacy for which all his people yearn, it is seen later when his servants will see God's face (22:4). For God to dwell with man is the aim of the gospel, the fulfilment of God's covenant with man and his plan of salvation. It takes man to before the fall (Gen 3:8) when God and man walked in the garden together, only here Satan is not present to tempt mankind, it is a new start to life that will continue eternally without the possibility of another fall. The city is the same as seen in Ezekiel in Ezek 48:35. The covenant to be our God is found in many places in scripture starting with Abraham (Gen 17:7) and finding its fulfilment in Revelation: Gen 17:7, Exo 20:2, 25:8, Lev 26:11-12, Deu 5:2, Jer 24:7, 30:22, 31:33, Ezek 11:20, 37:27, Zec 10:10, 13:9, 2 Cor 6:16, 1 Thess 4:17, 5:10. There is play on words here because *the dwelling* (Gk *skênê*) of God and he will *live* (Gk *skênoô*) with them, because *skênoô* is the verb form of the noun *skênê*. In addition the word dwelling is usually translated tabernacle which alluded to the earthly tabernacle in which God was supposed to dwell. Heaven has come to earth, God will dwell with man in the new earth.

v4 - *He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.* - Just as He lives with His people so He Himself will wipe every tear from their eyes. This verse has struck a chord with God's people throughout the ages, it speaks to man's deepest being, we weep in this life but in the life to come God Himself will wipe away our tears as a mother wipes away the tears from her child. The curse of pain (Gen 3:17) and death (Gen 2:17) has been revoked, it is the fulfilment of Isa 25:8, 35:10, 51:11, 65:19. The old order of pain and suffering has passed away in the demise of the old earth and old heaven, 2 Pet 3:12-13, the new heaven and new earth will be a home of righteousness and there will be no more death or pain. This is a restatement of Rev 7:15-17, it is stated in the set of negatives. The inverse of these negatives will be eternal life, rejoicing, laughing and joy.

v5 - *He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."* - God is making everything new just as he makes a new earth and new heavens, v1. Everything is new, a new heaven and new earth but it is different to the Eden situation because Satan is no longer around to tempt mankind. The earth will be populated with people who have chosen righteousness against evil. God's people have been bought with the blood of Jesus. Isaiah 65:17 tells us that 'the former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind', the old order of things has passed away completely even from our memories. God makes this pronouncement and tells John to write down the next statement because the words of God are trustworthy and true (cf. 14:4, 19:9, 22:6). This new order of creation is so good that it is worth dying for in this life, 1 Cor 15:19, because there is a better life after death for the saints whose names are written in the book of life. We are intended to understand that this world with its pain and suffering will not last for ever, there is something better to look forward to.

v6 - *He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life - 'It is done' the redemptive plan of God is completed, just as Jesus said 'it is finished' when he had completed his redemptive work. He has restored all things to their rightful place, all causes of evil have been dispatched and righteousness reigns. Just as he completed his work of creation on the seventh day (Gen 2:2), now he has completed his work of restoration. Contrast the use of the words 'it is done' (*gegonan*) with its use in regard to judgement in 16:17 (Johnson). He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, Isa 44:6; this is the second time this expression is used the first is in 1:8 (I am the Alpha and the Omega) and the last is in 22:13 (I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End). On the first*

statement there is only one statement of this truth, the second time it is repeated twice in a different way and the third time it is repeated three times in different ways. The water of life is free; this is God's free grace, this is repeated later in Rev 22:17, this is a welcome relief in a book so full of judgement but it reminds us of God's willingness that to anyone who wants a place in the new earth that he is willing to freely give it (Rom 8:32). To him who is thirsty, God will satisfy that thirst from the water of life, this is also promised in Isa 55:1-3. There is a hint here to the streams that watered the earth in Gen 2:6. This verse reiterates what has already been said in 7:17 in which the 'Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water'. While Jesus was on earth he promised to those who were thirsty, and came to him, and believed in him that streams of living water will flow from within them, John 4:14, 7:37-39, he was talking about the Holy Spirit which was to be poured out on the disciples at Pentecost, Acts 2:33. While the book is here showing us the church in its ideal state in heaven, it is also true that the Holy Spirit is given to the individual as a guarantee or down payment of his inheritance (Eph 1:13-14) in heaven (1 Pet 1:4). Later in the book the spring becomes the river of the water of life (22:1). Just as the giver of the water of life lives forever so will the receiver. The tree of life by which man might live for ever is watered by the river of life (22:2 cf. Gen 3:22) .

v7 - *He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.* - He who overcomes is the title for God's people, see the seven fold inheritance of the overcomers in the seven letters to the seven churches. Those who overcome just as Jesus overcame, 3:21, will inherit all this, referring to the previous six verses in contrast to what the cowardly inherit in the next verse. The inheritance is spoken of many times in the NT (Eph 1:14, Col 3:24, Jam 2:5, 1 Pet 1:4). Here in the second part of the verse is a reference to sonship, which emphasises the personal relationship between the believer and God. God established his covenant with Abraham to be his God and the God of his descendants (Gen 17:7) if we belong to Christ we are Abraham's descendants and heirs to the same promise (Gal 3:29), this finds its final fulfilment here in Revelation (Mounce).

v8 - *But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death.*" - Note the contrast of the cowardly who are in the lake of fire with those who overcome from the previous verse (see also those who overcome in 2:11) who have the right to drink from spring of the water life (see also the river of life in 22:1). The cowardly are also those who did not repent when afflicted by the first six trumpet plagues (9:20-21) compare this list of sinners with Paul's in 1 Cor 6:9-10 and Gal 5:19-21. They are the impure that will

never enter the New Jerusalem, only those are in the Lamb's book of life can enter (21:27). The second death is meant to contrast with the eternal life of those who drink the water of life, only those in the Lamb's book of life avoid the second death (20:14-15). It is the opposite of the experience of those who overcome in verse 4 the second death is a place of death, mourning, crying, pain, and tears. It should be noted that God's plan of redemption has made it possible for men to avoid the second death through the representative death of Jesus Christ, hell was created for the devil and his angels, but in the end Revelation makes clear that men either worship God or the devil through his henchmen, those who worship the devil and follow his ways as listed in this verse will inevitably join him. In particular from this list we find the two features that most characterise the devil, which are murderer and liar (John 8:44). In 13:14 we find the beast out of the earth deceiving the inhabitants of the earth and in 20:8 we find the devil deceiving the nations.

37. The new Jerusalem (21:9)

Rev 21:9 One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. 11 It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. 12 It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. 13 There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. 14 The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Rev 21:15 The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. 16 The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long. 17 He measured its wall and it was 144 cubits thick, by man's measurement, which the angel was using. 18 The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. 19 The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, 20 the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. 21 The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass.

Rev 21:22 I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. 24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendour into it. 25 On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. 26 The glory and honour of the nations will be brought into it. 27 Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

The bride has earlier been mentioned (21:2) and is now described in greater detail. The bride, is the New Jerusalem, the Church, it is the holy city because God's people are a holy people. Here we see the Church as God sees the Church in its final complete form. When Christ appears the true glory of the church will be revealed. See Col 1:27, 3:4 for a description of the church as God sees it. The New Jerusalem is the city of God where God himself dwells together with the Lamb with His people. Some see that this also relates to the church in its ideal form *now* rather than in the future (Milligan), however the preceding passage depicts a new order of things which detracts from his argument. Also the New Jerusalem depicts the rewards to those who overcome in the seven churches which are clearly future. However the church now is a bride *under preparation* while we see here the bride *fully prepared* and therefore perfect, without spot or wrinkle. We should expect to see aspects of the new Jerusalem which are true of the church ideally now. We should also note that there is no mention here of either the living creatures or of the elders they were last mentioned in 19:4 when the great prostitute was judged. If the elders symbolise the ideal church then there is no need for them here because the glorified church is depicted as the new Jerusalem.

v9 - *One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."* - This is presumably the same angel who showed John the punishment of the great prostitute (Rev 17:1) who now shows John the bride and her inheritance in contrast to the punishment of the prostitute. We have already seen in verse 2 the bride introduced as the 'Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband'. Here the husband is introduced as the Lamb. Now we are to be shown the bride in greater detail. The wife of the Lamb contrasts with the prostitute who sits on the beast.

v10 - *And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.* - John is carried away in the Spirit to a great mountain to gain a new perspective on the bride and he sees the New Jerusalem descend from heaven and from God, 3:12, 21:2. Compare this to when he was carried away in the Spirit to a desert to see the woman on the beast, 17:3, he was also in the Spirit in 1:10 and 4:2. Ezekiel had a similar experience to John when he was carried away to a very high mountain where he saw some buildings that looked like a city and he saw a man with a measuring rod (Ezek 40:1 ff.), much of John's vision in Rev 21-22 contains details found in Ezekiel 40-48. The bride is the New Jerusalem. In contrast John saw the prostitute from the perspective of a desert, that John is carried to a great mountain to see the New Jerusalem emphasises the

grandeur of the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is called the 'city of my God' in 3:12. In Heb 12:22 it says that we have come to 'Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God'. The mountain is probably an illusion to Mount Zion one of the hills that Jerusalem is built upon and from which one can view the city.

The idea of a city is that it is God's community of the elect, in contrast to the community of the world. Another NT metaphor for the church is a house or building in which Christ dwells (Eph 2:19-22, 1 Pet 2:4-5, Heb 3:6) the idea being that the church is God's household or family (1 Tim 3:15, Gal 6:10, Eph 3:14-15, 1 Pet 4:17). In the NT teaching there is much emphasis on how God's people should behave towards one another: be devoted to one another (Rom 12:10), honour one another (Rom 12:10), live in harmony with one another (Rom 12:16), love one another (Rom 13:8), accept one another (Rom 15:7), serve one another (Gal 5:13), forgive one another (Col 3:13), encourage one another (1 Thess 5:11), etc.

v11 - *It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.* - The Jasper recalls the description of God on His throne in Rev 4:3. The New Jerusalem, which is the Church, shines with the glory of God because God was in it, see v 22,23. The glory of God shining on His people is depicted in Isa 58:8 and 60:1. Isa 61:10 refers to the believer as a bride who adorns herself with her jewels, see also the description of the city in verses 19-21.

v12 - *It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.* - The gates are guarded by angels (Isa 62:6) and high walls so that nothing impure can enter, v27, and eat of the tree of life, just as the tree of life was guarded by angels after Adam fell, Gen 3:24. The twelve angels guard the way to the tree of life. Only this time not all men are excluded, those who wash their robes may enter and eat of its fruit (Chilton). The great high wall is similar in effect to the great chasm that separates the righteous from the wicked, Luke 16:26. This description of the city comes from Ezek 48:30-35. Here are the names of the twelve tribes of Israel on the gates representing the OT church, salvation is from the Jews (John 4:22) and supremely from Jesus who was born a Jew and is the gate for the sheep (John 10:7). Salvation is from the Jews (John 4:22), the only way into the city is via the gate and Jesus is the gate, cf. the pearl in verse 21. God has prepared the New Jerusalem for OT saints like Abraham, who was 'longing for a better country--a heavenly one', Heb 11:13-16. Later in verse 14 we see that the foundations have the names of the twelve apostles on them. It shows that the church is composed of both OT (Jewish) and NT (Gentile) saints.

v13 - *There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west.* - See the similar description given by Ezekiel, Ezek 48:30-35, the name of the city is: **THE LORD IS THERE**, it is his dwelling place. These gates also had the names of the twelve tribes of Israel on them. The gates face in each of the four directions of the compass indicating that those within come from all over the earth (cf. 5:9, 7:9, 21:26).

v14 - *The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.* - Notice the striking parallel with Eph 2:19-22, the church is 'built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets', and 'In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord'. The new Jerusalem is the fulfilment of this verse. The New Jerusalem is both the OT (twelve tribes of Israel v12) and NT church (built on the foundations of the apostles v14) built to become a dwelling in which God lives, Eph 2:22. The church has become one, both Gentile and Jew, fulfilling Eph 2:15; Old and New Testament saints as Jesus prayed, John 17:23.

v15 - *The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls.* - In 11:1 John was given a measuring rod and told to measure the temple of God and count the worshippers there, he was told not to measure the outer court because it was given to the Gentiles who will trample on the holy city for 42 months. In the description of the New Jerusalem which is the holy city (21:2), the gates are named after the twelve tribes of Israel and the foundations are named after the twelve apostles and has no temple because God and the lamb are its temple (21:22). We can now see that the earlier measuring was to measure or count the saints. The measuring here indicates the perfection and shape of the New Jerusalem. The gold of the measuring rod indicates the cost and purity of the New Jerusalem.

v16 - *The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long.* - Note, the only other cube in the bible was the Holies of Holies in Solomon's temple which was overlaid with gold (1 Ki 6:20) 'The inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty wide and twenty high. He overlaid the inside with pure gold, and he also overlaid the altar of cedar'. The number 12,000 also occurs in the census for every tribe of Israel, 7:5. The city is square as is the city described by Ezekiel, Ezek 48:30-35, whose twelve gates were named after the tribes of Israel (Reuben, Judah, Levi; Joseph, Benjamin, Dan; Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun; Gad, Asher and Naphtali), each side having three gates. The name of the city is **THE LORD IS THERE**, cf. 21:3, 21:22, 22:3 in which God will dwell with His people. Ezek 43:16 also depicts the altar

hearth as square twelve cubits by twelve cubits. The measuring of the temple in 12:1 was also a kind of census because he was told to count the worshipers there. Here we find another measuring which gives the number 12,000, which also occurs in the census of the twelve tribes in 7:5. The dimensions here 12,000 stadia in length, width and height emphasises its perfect completeness. Horton makes the interesting observation that if these measurements are taken literally the city would have sides 1,380 miles long and if it contained twenty billion people each one would have a cubical space one half of a mile on each side.

v17 - *He measured its wall and it was 144 cubits thick, by man's measurement, which the angel was using.* - The nearest equivalent is the 144,000 in Rev 7:4. That is 12 * 12 which is the equivalent to the OT * NT this once again emphasises the complete nature of the church.

v18 - *The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass.* - The gold reflects the purity and value of the Church, it is transparent like glass so that the glory of God can shine throughout the city. Jasper represents the glory of God, 21:11. As pure as glass emphasises the lack of imperfections or defects, that is the holiness of the church, cf. Eph 5:27.

v19 - *The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone* - In verse 14 the foundations had the names of the twelve apostles on them, here they are decorated with precious stones, Isa 54:11, Solomon's temple was also adorned with precious stones, 2 Chr 3:6. The Ephod that the high priest wore was decorated with four rows of three precious stones, Exo 28:21, one for each of the twelve tribes, each one has the name of the tribe engraved on it, this is to remind him that he is mediating for the twelve tribes. So not only do the foundations have the names of the twelve apostles on them they also have the names of the twelve tribes on them thus indicating the complete nature of the church. The precious stones here and the pearls and gold in v21 can be contrasted with the woman who was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls (17:4), one is the faithful wife the other the adulterous harlot.

v19-20 - *The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.* - The signs of the zodiac have exactly these stones associated with it but in the reverse order.

v21 - *The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass.* - Pearls are objects of great price but they are also made through the suffering of the mollusc, the idea is that the only way into the city is through the suffering of Christ on the cross. Jesus calls himself the gate in John 10:7-11, there is no other way into the city the walls are too high to climb. The Great Street of the New Jerusalem is also mentioned in 22:2 and down the middle of it flowed the river of the water of life. The great street is in contrast to the street of the great city where the bodies of the two witnesses lay, 11:8. In Solomon's temple the priests walked on gold (1 King 6:30).

v22 - *I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.* - The earthly form of a temple is no longer needed because God himself will dwell with his people, 21:3. God will live with, and walk among the saints, we see here the fulfilment of 2 Cor 6:16 "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people" and a literal fulfilment of Eph 2:22 "you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit". This shows that we have come full circle from Genesis when God walked with Adam, the tabernacle in the desert, the temple of Solomon, and the temple within the individual to God again dwelling with man. Faith has become seeing (praise God).

v23 - *The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.* - Contrast the light here with the fall of Babylon the whore 'The light of a lamp will never shine in you again' 18:23. This idea is found in Isa 60:19, this idea is repeated later in Rev 22:5. The glory of God is seen through Jesus who is the lamp, the radiance of God's glory 2 Cor 4:4, Heb 1:3. The idea of the Lamb being its *lamp* also comes from the image of the church being a lampstand (1:20), Jesus is the lamp, the church is the bearer of this lamp. Jesus is the light of the world and the church is to shine in the world, showing Jesus to the world. Note: the word used for lamp here and in 18:23 and 22:5 (KJV sometimes uses candle) is the Greek *luchnos* which is a portable lamp (using oil and a wick) usually set on a lampstand, Greek *luchnia*, which is translated lampstand in NIV (candlestick in KJV) and used of the seven churches and the two witnesses (11:4). Compare with Mat 5:15 'Neither do people light a lamp (*luchnos*) and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand (*luchnia*), and it gives light to everyone in the house'. Jesus is the true light (John 1:9) and is the light in the new Jerusalem (see John 8:12).

v24 - *The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendour into it.* - The citizens of the city of God are now described. This verse is a reference to Isa 60:3 see also Psa 72:10, the redeemed come from every nation (Rev 7:9) and so therefore nations are mentioned here. This should not be taken to imply universalism which is against the whole tenor of the book, only the glory and honour of the nations will be brought into it (21:26) anything unclean will not enter (21:27).

v25 - *On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there.* - Normally the gates of a city are shut at night to protect the inhabitants, there is continuous day because of the continuous presence of the Lamb so there will be no night and there will also be perfect security, Isa 60:11, Zec 14:11. The gates are guarded by angels to prevent anything impure from entering, 21:12. There is perfect security as there will be no thieves, Mat 6:20, these will be outside the city.

v26 - *The glory and honour of the nations will be brought into it.* - As in the verse above the idea comes from Isa 60:11, 'Your gates will always stand open, they will never be shut, day or night, so that men may bring you the wealth of the nations--their kings led in triumphal procession'. See also Rom 2:7 in which 'those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honour and immortality', God will give eternal life. In contrast nothing impure will enter, v27.

v27 - *Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.* - The new heaven and new earth will be a home of righteousness 2 Pet 3:12-13, the wicked will not enter Isa 52:1, 35:8-10. This is in accord with Paul's teaching that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God, 1 Cor 6:9, Gal 5:19. Only those who wash their robes will have the right to go through the gates into the city, 22:14, that is those who are cleansed by the blood of Jesus. Those in the Lamb's book of life are those who have overcome, Rev 3:5, and have not had their names blotted out from the book of life. There are angels at the gates and great high walls to stop the impure entering the city, 21:12. In contrast to the impure who will never enter the city, the followers of the Lamb in 14:4-5 kept themselves pure, no lie was found on their lips, they are blameless.

38. The river of life (22:1)

22:1 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. 3 No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever. 6 The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place."

In the garden of Eden man became like God knowing good and evil, but he was cut off from the tree of life. He became his own God and his source of life was within himself rather than coming from God resulting in futility and emptiness. As a result of this emptiness people fill their lives with things, pleasures and idols. Here in Rev 22 we now find God and the Lamb, as the source of life for man, man is no longer cut off from the life of God as Adam and Eve were. Man could eat from the tree of life and live forever because God lives forever. Jesus said that 'this is eternal life to know God and Jesus whom he has sent' (John 17:3). To know God is to know him intimately as Adam knew Eve. To the wicked Jesus said 'depart from me I never knew you' (Mat 7:23).

v1 - *Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb* - The provisions and nourishment of the citizens of the new Jerusalem are now described. This verse reminds us of the river watering the Garden of Eden, Gen 2:10. The picture comes from Ezekiel's vision (Ezek 47:1 ff.). The river of the water of life symbolises eternal life, the spring of the water of life has already been mentioned in Rev 21:6, it has now become a river and the free gift of the water of life occurs again in Rev 22:17, the emphasis being that eternal life is a free gift. The water of life flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb who are the source of all life (John 5:26). In Psa 46:4 'There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells'. The water of life is Christ himself, he is the source of the water producing eternal life (John 4:14). There could be a connection with the sea of glass, clear as crystal before the throne in 4:6. The expression 'clear as crystal' is also used of the new Jerusalem in 21:11.

v2 - *down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.* - This city has a great street, the great city where the two witnesses were killed also had a street, 11:8, only this one is paved with gold, like transparent glass, 21:21, the martyrs will walk on this street for all eternity. In Isa 35:8 it is called a highway, 'it will be called the Way of Holiness, the unclean will not go on it but only the redeemed'. 'They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away', Isa 35:10. The river of life, whose source is Christ, waters the tree of life which gives eternal life to everyone who eats of its fruit (Gen 3:22). This brings us full circle back to Genesis: Jesus the tree of life in Genesis is now the tree of life in Revelation, he is the beginning and the end.

Again we go to our pre-fall state, thanks to our representative, the Lamb who was slain. Man is no longer barred from the tree of life as he was in the garden after he sinned (Gen 3:22), he may eat of the tree and live forever, for the fruit of the tree conveys eternal life. The twelve crops of fruit yielding its fruit every month indicates an abundance, the number twelve could correspond to the twelve tribes or twelve apostles but it is more likely to be a regular supply. The tree get its water from the river of the water of life, and so therefore it is the tree of life, Ezek 47:12. In the letter to the church at Ephesus God promises that to him who overcomes He will give 'the right to the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God', 2:7, thus the new Jerusalem is also the paradise of God. It is a new Garden of Eden. In 22:14 those who wash their robes also have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. In 22:19 if anyone takes away words from this book of prophecy 'God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city'. The leaves are for the healing of the nations, who are within the New Jerusalem, Rev 21:24, probably John has a poultice in mind here, again he is referring to Ezek 47:12 'Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing'.

v3 - *No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.* - There will be no Adamic curse which involved mankind in painful toil and death, it also banished mankind from the Garden of Eden and from the tree of life which would enable him to live forever (Gen 3:17-24). The curse is now revoked so that mankind can take hold of the fruit of the tree of life and live forever. The throne of God and of the Lamb is not remote in heaven but on earth in the New Jerusalem, God's dwelling place is with man, heaven has moved to the earth. Instead of painful toil His servants will serve him as they also served him on the former earth, 1:6, 5:10, 7:15. Compare with 5:13 'To Him who sits upon the

throne and to the Lamb'. There will be plenty to do in heaven, 'his servants will serve him'.

v4 - *They will see his face, his name will be on their foreheads* - To see God's face was denied Moses Exo 33:20. To see God's face is to enjoy his favour (Job 33:26, Psa 17:15, 67:1) it is the reward of the pure in heart (Mat 5:8). To see God's face is to be like Him, the saints will be transformed into his likeness, 2 Cor 3:18, 1 John 3:2. His name on their foreheads is once again a reference to the seal and the 144,000 who represent all the redeemed (Rev 3:12, Rev 14:1), the seal indicating ownership and intimacy.

v5 - *There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.* - A reiteration of Rev 21:23-25 the continuous presence of the Lord will be their light and so there will be no more night. Night is abolished because it is associated with evil, light is associated with that which is good. Jesus was betrayed at night, night is when sin is committed Rom 13:12, 1 Thess 5:5-8. The saints are sons of the light (1 Thess 5:5). God himself dwells in unapproachable light, 1 Tim 1:16. Compare those who reign forever and ever with the fate of those who follow the beast and who are tormented day and night forever. Just as when the seventh trumpet sounded it was announced that Christ will reign forever and ever, 11:15, so the saints who serve him will also reign with Him for ever and ever, 1 Thess 4:17. Those who remain faithful will reign with him, 2 Tim 2:12, compare to the reward to those who overcome in Laodicea, they will sit with Jesus on his throne (3:21). Because He reigns forever and ever so will the saints, see John 14:9 "Because I live, you also will live", see also Dan 7:18.

v6 - *The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place."* - The angel stresses the fact that these marvellous words are trustworthy and true just as God had in Rev 21:5. This repeats Rev 1:1, God has sent his angel to show his servants 'what must soon take place', this is again one of the keys to Revelation. Soon means in the biblical sense of 'I am coming soon'. A true prophet prophecies according to the Holy Spirit rather than what their own spirit is saying (2 Pet 1:21). This picture of heaven is true, it can be trusted, and it is worth dying for. This is a picture of heaven which 'No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him' 1 Cor 2:9. It is the place prepared for us by Jesus John 14:2-3.

39. I am coming soon (22:7)

Rev 22:7 "Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book." 8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. 9 But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!" 10 Then he told me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near. 11 Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy."

Rev 22:12 "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. 14 "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. 15 Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood."

Rev 22:16 "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star."

17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

v7 - *Behold, I am coming soon!* - Jesus is coming soon. Amen. This is repeated twice more, just as Revelation started with a reference to the Second Coming so it concludes with three more references. In the first reference, 1:7, there is mourning for the peoples of the world, but in the final verses there is the blessed hope of heaven for the church.

v7 - *Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book.* - The sixth of the seven blessings associated with the book. This one is similar to the first blessing in 1:3 in which the reader is encouraged to take to heart what is written in it. The book is primarily pastoral to encourage the church through its ordeal, therefore it is a practical

rather than a theoretical work about the future. Those who keep the words of the prophecy in this book will inherit what has just been described. Compare with the blessings of the beatitudes.

v8 - *I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me.* - John uses the phrase 'I John' also at the start of the book, 1:9. John once again emphasises the fact that he heard and saw these things, he did not make them up. The first time John fell at the angels feet to worship him was after the scene of the great multitude singing Hallelujah to God, and blessing on those invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb and the angels confirmation that these are the true words of God (19:1-10). Again John sees stunning visions of heaven and again the angel confirms that these words are trustworthy and true, Jesus announces that he is coming soon and John is so overwhelmed by these visions that he attempts to worship the angel who brought the visions to him.

v9 - *But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!"* - This is the second time that John worships an angel, the first time was when the angel also confirmed that these are the true words of God, 19:9. On both occasions he is rebuked because the angel is a fellow servant and John is told to worship God. The angels command to John, as it had been to mankind (14:7), is to worship God, this is a theme of the book, most of mankind prefer to worship the beast and in doing so they choose the lake of fire. Here we can see that John is considered to be a prophet by the angel, prophets are given prominence over apostles in this book, probably because the book is a prophecy (1,3, 22:7, 10, 18-19). The servants of God are those who keep the words of this book and inherit its blessings.

v10 - *Then he told me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near.* - The words of this prophecy are not to be sealed because the things prophesied about will soon occur, this is also emphasised in Rev 1:1 and 22:6. Compare with Daniel who is told to seal up the words of the scroll because the time is distant, Dan 12:4. We are meant to know and understand the message of Revelation even though parts of it are obscure.

v11 - *Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy.*" - The time for repentance is past. Mankind has made its decision on earth,

whether for good or for evil, this is now cast in stone for eternity. See also Dan 12:10 and Ezek 3:27.

v12 - *"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.* - Once again Jesus Himself emphasises His Second Coming, bringing His rewards with Him (Isa 40:10, 62:11-12). The rewards are to those who overcome in the letters to the seven churches and also see Mat 5:12 which deals with rewards for those who are persecuted, and Mat 16:27 in which He will reward each person according to what he has done at His return, this again emphasises personal responsibility, see also Psa 62:11, Prov 19:17, 24:12, Rom 2:6, Rev 20:13. The book is not just a prophecy, it is also an epistle emphasising godly living, faithfulness and endurance, together with the rewards for those who live in this manner. His reward has just been described in the preceding sections.

v13 - *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.* - 'the Alpha and the Omega' is a repetition of Rev 1:8, 21:6 where it is clearly used of God. 'the First and the Last' is used of Jesus Christ in 1:17 and 2:8, it is used of God in Isa 44:6 and 48:12. 'the Beginning and the End' is used of God in 21:6. Only in this verse it is emphasised three times, in the earlier renditions it is emphasised once and twice respectively. Alpha and the Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, meaning the beginning and end of history (and everything in between). He is *the* Beginning because there is no beginning before Him since He eternally exists. He applies this to Himself, it is a divine attribute, this verse is one of the strongest proofs of the deity of Christ in the bible, it is significant that it comes only 9 verses before the end of the bible. Compare with Melchizedek (Heb 7:1) who is 'Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever.' Heb 7:3.

v14 - *Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.* - This is the last of seven blessings in the book and this reminds us of Rev 7:14 where they wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb. i.e. receive forgiveness of their sins through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. To have a right to the tree of life is to have eternal life. They may only enter the city through the gate to get to the tree of life, the gate is Jesus (John 10:7-11) who is the pearl of great price (Mat 13:45), the city is the New Jerusalem in heaven. The only answer to man's sin is to find forgiveness through the blood, which is through the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross. Each person who wants to enter the city must enter through the gate (Jesus) and have eternal life must first wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb (7:14).

v15 - *Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.* - Nothing unclean is allowed in the city, (1 Cor 6:9-10, Gal 5:19-21, Col 3:5-6, Isa 35:8, 52:1), because it is a holy city, the city of God, but only those written in the Lamb's book of life, see Rev 20:15, 21:8, 27. Those who are outside are barred from the tree of life which get its water from the river of life whose source is God and the Lamb. Without Christ there can be no life for Christ is our life. The only alternative to life is death, the second death in the lake of fire (Chilton).

The phrase loves and practises falsehood, typifies the mark of the beast, i.e. on the forehead (loves falsehood) and on the hand (practises falsehood). The table below compares the various lists of sins in Revelation.

Rev 9:20	Rev 21:8	Rev 22:15
Idolatry	Idolaters	Idolaters
Murder	Murderers	Murderers
Magic Arts	Practise magic arts	Practise magic arts
Sexual immorality	Sexually immoral	Sexually immoral
Theft		
	Cowardly	
	Unbelieving	
	Vile	
	Liars	
		Falsehood

v16 - *"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches.* - This testimony has come from Jesus via his angel and is for the churches, i.e. the churches of Jesus Christ, the community of the saints (cf. 1:1, 10:1).

v16 - *I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.*" - He is the beginning and the fulfilment of prophecy. For the Root and Offspring of David see Isa 11:1. The morning star is referred to in 2 Pet 1:19 and as a reward to those who overcome Thyatira, 2:28.

v17 - *The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.* - Both the Spirit and the church are involved in the gospel invitation, the Church speaks and the Spirit makes it effective. Two witnesses are required to make

the truth of this book sure, the Spirit and the bride. This is a final offer of salvation. The salvation of God is the free gift of God, Rom 5:15-17, 6:23, and is offered to those who are thirsty, Isa 55:1, John 7:37-38. This is a welcome reminder of the gospel in a book so full of judgement, it is also apt for the finish of the last book in the bible. It makes it clear that God is not unwilling that people obtain eternal life, see 1 Tim 2:1-6, John 3:16. Jesus says that no one who comes to him will he drive away (John 6:37).

40. Warning (22:18):

22:18 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. 19 And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

v18-19 - Here we have a solemn warning not to tamper with the words of this prophecy. This book is the Word of God and should not be tampered with, in 1:1 we see that the author is God. This is a reminder of Deu 4:2 in which Moses while giving the law to the Israelites commands them not add or to subtract from the commandments, see also Deu 12:32, 29:20, Prov 30:6, Jer 26:2.

41. Final benediction (22:20)

Rev 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. 21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.

v20 - *He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus* - Jesus himself testifies to the truth of this prophecy. Once again, yes, Jesus is coming soon. 'Amen. Come, Lord Jesus', refrains John. Equivalent to the Aramaic *maranatha* (Our Lord Come) of 1 Cor 16:22. The Second Coming of Jesus has been one of the great themes of the book and occurs in the first chapter (1:7) as well as the last. This is a reminder that the time is near and we should be prepared, see the blessing on the one who keeps the words of this prophecy in 22:7.

v21 - *The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.* - This is a final benediction to God's people, it compliments the greeting in 1:4 in which grace and peace come from the Lord and the Spirit to the seven churches. Once more a reminder that salvation is by grace and grace alone, Amen.

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