

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF

REVELATION

By
Wayne E. McMorrان
Berean Bible Church

310 North Halcyon Road
Arroyo Grande, CA 93420

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The NIV has been used as the primary English reference in this study since NAS is not now available. This is unfortunate since the NAS is a better translation for detailed Bible study.

While many references have been used in the preparation of this study, the primary reference is the Bible. To be more specific, this study is based primarily upon the Nestle-Aland NOVUM TESTAMENTUM Graece (1962 Edition). The Old Testament references are based primarily on the Biblia Hebraica, Seventh Edition (1951), edited by Rudolf Kittel and others. The cross references between the Old and New Testaments is based on the Septuagint as published by Samuel Baxter and Sons Limited.

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INDICES

REVELATION CHAPTER ONE

Introduction - The Title

The title of this book varies depending on the translation you read it in. The title in the KJV is The Revelation of St. John the Divine, while the NAS and the RSV has The Revelation to John and the NIV simply has Revelation. Let us turn, then, to the title as it is in the Greek.

The Greek title is apokalupsis 'joanou (ΑΠΟΚΑΛΥΨΙΣ 'ΙΩΑΝΟΥ), literally, the "apokalupsis to John.". The actual English word we get from this is the Apocalypse. It is a compound of the Greek word apo (απο) prefixed to the verb kalupto (καλυπτω) which means, literally, to remove the covering. It is a fairly common word in the NT and is usually translated as here, "revelation".

Many believe this book to be very mysterious and hard to understand. It is not supposed to be. To the contrary, it is supposed to reveal things. There are things in the Bible that have been mysterious. For example, the book of Daniel is not easy to interpret. At the close of the book we find the following words:

But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge." Daniel 12:04

Daniel's book was sealed. In fact, it hasn't been until the last forty or fifty years that much of the book of Daniel has been interpretable. Then, other things have been a mystery. Paul writes, for example,

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. Romans 11:25

Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, Romans 16:25

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-- 1 Corinthians 15:51

This book is not supposed to be a mystery, it is a revelation. Let us proceed in this study with this understanding.

The Preface

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, who testifies to everything he saw--that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. 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.

Revelation 01:01-03

The real title of the book should be obvious from the first phrase. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ. It was Christ who revealed it. It was God who gave it to Christ to reveal. This is interesting in the light of what Jesus said during His earthly ministry. At that time it had not been revealed even to him.

"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Matthew 24:36
Mark 23:32

As we said to begin with, this book is a revelation. God is here telling us what we did not know before. Pay careful attention to the phrase "what must soon take place." This book was written over 1900 years ago. Are we to consider that something that will not take place for over that length of time is "soon?"

I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" Luke 18:08

Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists. Acts 12:07

and saw the Lord speaking. 'Quick!' he said to me. 'Leave Jerusalem immediately, because they will not accept your testimony about me.' Acts 22:18

There is a difference between the concept of the imminent return of Jesus Christ and the immediate return. Christ did not say when he was to return. He did not know when He was to return. However, the return is sure to take place without warning and quickly. This is what is meant by the imminent return. But this leads to the concept of the immediate return. Since He will return, since it will be swift, without warning, all we can do as Christians is to believe it may be very soon so as to be prepared.

The Greeting

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, 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, 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. 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.

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

Revelation 01:04-08

Here is the formal greeting. It like a letters and writings of the day, begins with the name of the author. This is followed by the addressees and is concluded with the benediction.

The (human) author was John. Of course, from what we read in the introduction, the real author was Jesus Christ who delivered the message to John to transcribe. John who? John is a common name so we might assume that the author could have been any one of a number of Johns. He could, of course, be John the Baptist since he had already lost his head. The fact that no further description, such as "John, the son of ..." provides us with an immediate clue. No one but John the beloved apostle" could be the author. No one else would sign this with nothing more than the name "John."

The specific recipients of the letter are the seven churches of Asia Minor. These are specifically named in Chapter Two. More specifically, they are all located in what is now Western Turkey and can be encircled by a circles less than 100 miles in diameter. This is shown in the figure on the next page. We shall say more about these churches later.

For now, it is important to recall that, while this letter is addressed to these seven churches, there is a blessing promised for all who read it. So, in the wider sense, it is

addressed to all of us.

The benediction is not uncommon to N.T. books but much more details. Note that it comes from God, from him who is, and who was, and who is to come. In other words God spans the ages from eternity past to eternity future. God has always existed and always will. Also included in this are the seven spirits before his throne.

Seven spirits are mentioned in several places in this book and we will make specific comments on them as we meet them. For now, we note that seven spirits are also mentioned in several places in the Gospels.

Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation." Matthew 12:45

and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Luke 08:02

In all of the Gospel appearances, the spirits are demonic. Satan always counterfeits what God has. God has seven ministering spirit, so does Satan. We shall find out more about these seven later.

Last but not least in the benediction is Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Christ is described in three ways.

The Faithful Witness

Once for all, I have sworn by my holiness--and I will not lie to David-- that his line will continue forever and his throne endure before me like the sun; it will be established forever like the moon, the faithful witness in the sky."
Selah Psalm 89:35-37

The Firstborn from the Dead

And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. Colossians 01:18

The Ruler of the Kings of the Earth

which God will bring about in his own time--God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 1 Timothy 06:15

We have noted that God always was, is and always will be. The same is true of Jesus, He was the faithful witness in the sky, He came to be the firstborn from among the

dead, and He will return to be the King of Kings.

The benediction also mentions the work of Christ who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father. Note that loves is present tense. In the Greek the word is a participle, "our lover." The term describes who Christ is, his character, more than what he does. Because He is characterized is "our lover", He has done two things for us. First he freed us. "Freed" is also a participle, but an Aorist Participle. Christ is characterized as the one who has already, once and for all freed us from sin. But there is a third part. He has also made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve. A kingdom is a collection of people who are ruled by a king - this is one of the common bonds that we have as Christians. It also defines our responsibility as Christians. We are to be "priests who serve."

In the O.T., it was Aaron and his descendants who served."Have Aaron your brother brought to you from among the Israelites, along with his sons Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, so they may serve me as priests. Exodus 28:01

But that is not so today. In Ezekiel we read...

"The Levites who went far from me when Israel went astray and who wandered from me after their idols must bear the consequences of their sin. They may serve in my sanctuary, having charge of the gates of the temple and serving in it; they may slaughter the burnt offerings and sacrifices for the people and stand before the people and serve them. But because they served them in the presence of their idols and made the house of Israel fall into sin, therefore I have sworn with uplifted hand that they must bear the consequences of their sin, declares the Sovereign LORD. They are not to come near to serve me as priests or come near any of my holy things or my most holy offerings; they must bear the shame of their detestable practices. Ezekiel 44:10-13

Today, you and I are the ones who are to serve God. God chose Abraham from all of the other peoples of the earth because He wanted Abraham and his seed to serve Him. Jesus Christ has saved us from out of the unsaved of the world so that we may serve Him.

The benediction closes with the notice that Christ will be coming in the clouds. This is not something new. Daniel wrote, many years ago,

"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. Daniel 07:13

Daniel saw an event like this in his day - in a vision. We will not see it in a vision, we will see it in reality. Jesus attested to this in the Gospels.

"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.

Matthew 24:40

"Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Matthew 26:64

Then, of course, there is the promise of another coming in the clouds.

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. 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. 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. 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. 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.

1 Thessalonians 04:13-17

In none of these cases are the clouds rain clouds. What, then are they?

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Hebrews 12:01

The clouds are the clouds of spirits - angelic spirits and spirits of the saints. The benediction closes with the promise of His return and that is what this book is all about. The final words echo the beginning words, "who is, and who was, and who is to come. This is further expanded by the terms alpha and omega, the first and last letters in the Greek Alphabet. We shall see this notation several more times. It is to be taken as synonymous with beginning and end.

Lastly, Christ is described as the almighty. The Greek word is pantokrator (παντοκρατωρ) The word is common in this book. Otherwise, it appears only once in the N.T.

"I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

2 Corinthians 06:18

The word is found many places in the O.T. where it replaces the Hebrew word shadday (שׁדַּי). It is first found when God spoke to Abraham.

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless. Genesis 17:01

In theological terms, it refers to the fact that the Lord is omnipotent (all powerful). It is of importance that the power of God be recognized in view of the events that will be described in this book.

The Occasion of the Book

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. On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, 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."

Revelation 01:09-11

The revelation came to John while he was on the island of Patmos. This is shown on the map to the right. While it is considered to be part of Greece, it is very near Turkey and only about 70 miles from Ephesus.

Why was John there He says, because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. Acts 11:19-21

The apostles all suffered great persecution and, by the time this revelation came to John, he was exiled on this small island between Turkey and Greece.

One the sabbath day, John says "I was in the Spirit." What does that mean? We often read of being filled with the Spirit, but that means the Spirit is in us. John puts it the other way around.

In each of the four Gospels, and in Acts, we read the following:

"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Matthew 03:11

I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." Mark 01:08

John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Luke 03:16

I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' John 01:33

For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." Acts 01:05

The disciples were "baptized with the Holy Spirit" at Pentecost. Now the Greek verb baptizo (βαπτίζω) means to immerse, to submerge, to be covered with. So, then, they were all in the Spirit that day. Now, we are all baptized in the Spirit, but some of us do not give the Spirit much room to move around in. On this particular day, John was made especially sensitive to the working of the Holy Spirit.

Christ appeared to John with a loud voice like a trumpet. The trumpet is always associated with such an appearance, especially, ...

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. 1 Thessalonians 04:16

John's instructions where to "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea." Note carefully the word see. This is uncommon!

There a number of scriptures such as those below where the Lord instructed a prophet to write down what he heard, what the Lord dictated to him.

"Now write down for yourselves this song and teach it to the Israelites and have them sing it, so that it may be a witness for me against them." Deuteronomy 31:19

The LORD said to me, "Take a large scroll and write on it with an ordinary pen: Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. Isaiah 08:01

"This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Write in a book all the words I have spoken to you. Jeremiah 30:02

"Take a scroll and write on it all the words I have spoken to you concerning Israel, Judah and all the other nations from the time I began speaking to you in the reign of Josiah till now. Jeremiah 36:02

This is, to my knowledge, the only place where prophecy was written according to sight.

This also explains why some of the book seems so mysterious. John described as well as he could what he saw. He could write only in terms he knew. To take an example, if the Lord showed him a helicopter flying across the sky, John could not very well have written, "I saw a helicopter!" The closest thing he might have found to describe it would be a very large grasshopper.

Finally, John was instructed to send what he wrote to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. Note the article the. Why these seven churches? There were other churches, some more prominent, in the area. There was the church at Colossia, there was a church at Hieropolis. There must have been others. The other churches could have benefitted as well. There must be a reason for these seven. This we shall discuss when we go through Chapters Two and Three.

John's Vision of Christ

I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, 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. 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.

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. 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.

Revelation 01:12-18

This is a rather bizarre description of Christ. It is also rather lengthy. What is very interesting about this description is its bearing on Chapters Two and Three. To demonstrate this, I have reproduced the above passage below, with inserts from the next two chapters.

I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands . . . <<Ephesus: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands:>> . . . , 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. 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 . . . <<Thyatira: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.>> . . . , and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars . . . <<Sardis: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars>> . . . , and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword . . . <<Pergamum: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword.>>. . . His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

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. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! . . . <<Smyrna: These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again.>> . . . And I hold the keys of death and Hades. . . . <<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.>>

The only missing church in the above expansion is Laodicea, a point we shall consider later. The key here is that the description of Jesus Christ here is a description of his attributes and His works. These will be manifest in the next two chapters.

The Interpretation of the Vision

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

Revelation 01:19-20

We shall conclude this chapter with the means of transporting the message. Jesus states that the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches. Now, what does that mean?

Consider the following angels.

This is the one about whom it is written: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you." Matthew 11:10

It is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way"-- Mark 01:02

After John's messengers left, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind?" Luke 07:24

This is the one about whom it is written: "'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'" Luke 07:27

And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; Luke 09:52

To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 2 Corinthians 12:07

In the above six verses, messenger is the translation of the Greek word angellos (αγγελως). This is the literal meaning of the word. An angel is simply a messenger when it is human. Normally, when it is evident that the messenger is not human, the word is transliterated, angel. The problem is that, here, we don't know which it is.

Some believe that each church has a guardian angel. That could be, but it does not follow that this "angel" would deliver John's scroll. It would more likely be a human messenger. Some believe (mostly pastors) that it refers to the pastors of these churches. At any rate, I believe the scroll was entrusted to men who were to take it to each of the churches.

REVELATION CHAPTER TWO

Introduction

Before we begin looking at the details for each of the seven churches, we need to make some general observations. We also need to determine why these seven churches were chosen.

We present three theories, three that appear to have merit. First, there is no question that these were real churches. John was instructed to write real advice to real churches. They were to profit from this advice but, apparently did. None of them exist today. The second theory, which is consistent with the theme of the book is that each church represents a church age. Ephesus represents the first century church. Laodecia represents the final apostate church. This theory we will pursue.

A third theory, which I have not seen proposed anywhere, is that, just as these churches reflect different eras in The Church of Jesus Christ, they can also represent various stages in the life of a local church. It is this concept which needs to be considered lest our church becomes like the Laodecian church.

The second matter of introduction is the breakdown of the writing to each church. The breakdown is as follows:

- 1) CHRIST'S APPEARANCE TO THE CHURCH
- 2) CHRIST'S ASSESSMENT OF THE CHURCH
- 3) CHRIST'S ADMONISHMENT OF THE CHURCH
- 4) CHRIST'S ADMONITION TO THE CHURCH
- 5) CHRIST'S PRAISE FOR THE MEMBERS
- 6) CHRIST'S PROMISES TO THE BELIEVERS

Note that the first four parts deal with the church as a body, the fifth relates to the individual members and the sixth to specific members. With this outline in mind, we will proceed with the study.

EPHESUS

"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

Revelation 02:01A

Before we look at the message to each church, with its six component parts, we need to look at the title itself. The name in Greek is Ephesos (Εφεσιος). What does it mean. I have found only one reference which ventures to attach significance to the name,

Revelation, 35 Simple Studies on the Major Themes in Revelation by M. R. DeHaan (a reliable author). According to him it means the Desired One. I wish I could authenticate this since we will find meanings for the other names, but I can't. Let us take it is being true. This church is assumed to represent the Apostolic Church, the church of the first century. I believe that it also describes the early years of any local church.

Christ's Appearance to the Church

These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands:

Revelation 02:01B

Christ presents himself to this church as the one who holds the seven stars. From chapter one we saw that these stars represented the seven "angels" or messengers of these seven churches. Likewise, we learned that the seven golden lampstands represent the churches.

First, he holds the seven stars. The Greek word is *krateo* (κρατεω) which has a primary definition of to have power or to rule over. It is used to indicate a very firm "hold". We see this in the following passage where either the verb or the related noun is found.

...and they plotted to arrest Jesus in some sly way and kill him.

Matthew 26:04

Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him."

Matthew 26:48

He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

Colossians 02:19

So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.

2 Thessalonians 02:15

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

Hebrews 04:14

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

Luke 01:51

...and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, Ephesians 01:19

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Ephesians 06:18

Each of the seven messengers ("angels") is held secure in His hand. This is a fact that is reiterated over and over again in the Bible.

I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.
John 10:28-29 Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. Psalm 73:23

...even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. Psalm 139:10

For I am the LORD, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you. Isaiah 41:13

Each of us is, likewise in Christ's hand, never to be let go. But then, with reference to the churches (the lamp stands) He walks among them. The Greek word is peripateo (περιπατεω), a compound word, the prefix of which means "around" and the verb means "to walk". It is seldom used in the N.T. without the prefix - when it is it is usually translated "to tread upon". Christ does not "tread upon" the seven churches, he walks around among them. There is, however, no mention of his "holding onto" the churches. Christ deals with people, not organizations. This will become evident later on.

Christ's Assessment of the Church

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. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.

Revelation 02:02-03

Christ has a number of good things to say about this church. First, he praises three things regarding them:

- 1) deeds
- 2) hard work
- 3) perseverance

These are all rather common words in the N.T. What is interesting is that these three characteristics appear together in only one other passage. This passage, however, tells us much about the church at Ephesus (which by the way, was not a church in the way we think of a church - it was really a number of groups who met together and were, collectively, the "church" at Ephesus).

We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Thessalonians 01:03

Recalling the following passages,

By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Matthew 07:16

Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. Matthew 07:20

The three outward characteristics of the Christians at Ephesus showed what their inward conditions were. They had, first of all, faith. The faith led to love and the love led to hope. In other words, it must have been a very good church. Let's see what else is said in the way of commendations.

We find three more things said about them. These are that they:

- 1) could not tolerate wicked men,
- 2) tested those who claimed to be apostles but were not,
- 3) have found them false.

First they would not tolerate wicked men. In every church, each member has been given one or more Spiritual Gifts for the benefit of the church. There is one gift that is not often mentioned. Paul mentions it once, however,

If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? 1 Corinthians 12:17

Some people have been given the gift of smelling. They have noses that pick up the scent of things that are beginning to sour. This sense is essential so that evil men may be spotted early, before they have a chance to damage the church.

Once these evil men are spotted, they are to be tested. How do we test people? How do we test anything with respect to God? Paul did not know which way the Lord would have him go on (at least) one occasion and so it is written,

When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. Acts 16:07

They made plans to go, but the Lord closed the door. Thus they had a clear indication from the Lord that they were to go in another direction. We are also to test ourselves. Paul writes,

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you--unless, of course, you fail the test? 2 Corinthians 15:05

How do we know they are not true apostles? We have already indicated this in the first part - by their fruit you shall know them. All that is necessary is to watch these people for a time and see what sort of fruit they bear.

There are yet three more things that describe this church. They...

- 1) have persevered
- 2) have endured hardships for Christ's name
- 3) and have not grown weary

The first item, then, in the newer translation is persevered. We have already considered this term in the first group of characteristics. The word here is a noun. The verb is in the present tense and means to have or to possess. They continued to demonstrate this perseverance that we noted earlier.

The second item is that they endured hardships. It is all one word in the Greek. The KJV has labored. The Greek word is *bastazo* (βασταζω), literally, to take up with the hands. It is the same word used in the last section concerning not "bearing" evil men.

It is interesting that the verb is in the Aorist tense. It would indicate that they had done this but were not necessarily presently bearing up. We are supposed to!

And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. Luke 14:27

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load. Galatians 06:02-05

The newer Greek translations simply have this word, to bear, the hardships is implied. Part of the implication is from a fourth term, not found in the "better" Greek manuscripts. We shall consider it anyway. It is the Greek term *kopiao* (κοπιω) and is in the perfect tense - indicating that they have labored in the past and continue to do so. We find other who did this and that we, too, should be doing it.

In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Acts 20:35

Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord. Romans 16:12

He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. Ephesians 04:28

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28

The church at Ephesus was characterized as a hard working church. Finally, in this hard work, they did not become weary, the last term. The Greek verb is kamno (καμνω) which may mean to be weary or to be sick (James 3:5). It is also a perfect tense. The author of Hebrews warns us,

Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. Hebrews 12:03

When you put all nine of these characteristics together, you have a church which would seem to be perfect - if that is possible. What could be lacking?

Christ's Admonishment of the Church

Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.

Revelation 02:04

For all of the good that Christ praised the church for, there was still something that this church was lacking. More important, it was something that they had possessed and lost! They forsook it. What was it that they had abandoned? Christ says it was their first love. We shall simply point out that the Greek term here for love is agape (αγαπη), the word for the love that comes from God.

Now, note that He does not say that they abandoned love. The Greek phrase is important here, it is ten agape sou ten pronen (την αγαπην σου την πρωτην) with the adjective (first) in the second attributive position, a rather unusual one. If one were to attempt to paraphrase the meaning of this construction, it might read something like, "your love, your very first love."

Now, the important question here is this first love a thing or a person? I believe it is a thing, a certain kind of love. On the other hand, such a love is directed toward a particular individual. There is only one Biblical way of describing what Christ is speaking of.

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth--for your love is more
delightful than wine. Song of Solomon 01:02

Take me away with you--let us hurry! Let the king bring me into his
chambers. We rejoice and delight in you; we will praise your love more
than wine. How right they are to adore you! Song of Solomon 01:04

Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away. If one were
to give all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned. Song of Solomon 08:07

The love that is spoken of here (the XX has agape in these passages) is that of the first love between a bride and groom. It is not that mature love that inspires psychologists to write books on how to restore to the first, passionate love. The members of the church had a love for Christ. True love can never be abandoned, but it may grow dim.

What, do you suppose, caused the church to lose its first love? What caused it to lose its original vision of Christ? We have already been told! We have been told of their...

- 1) deeds
- 2) hard work
- 3) perseverance

...and that they...

- 4) could not tolerate wicked men,
- 5) tested those who claimed to be apostles but were not,
- 6) had found them false.
- 7) had persevered
- 8) had endured hardships for Christ's name
- 9) had not grown weary

The church at Ephesus was a busy church. They had all sorts of activities going - too many. This is what quenches first-love. It quenches it in a marriage. On the honeymoon, there is nothing to do but make love. But then, as time goes on and there are children to raise, more responsibilities at work, civic and church duties to perform, and all the rest, there is no time for the kind of love that was shared during the honeymoon.

Beware, Christian brothers and sisters, that you do not go so wrapped up in serving the Lord that you lose your love for Him. There will always be work to do. One must make

time for just being alone with Christ and sharing in His love.

Christ's Admonition to the Church

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.

Revelation 02:05

What terribly strong words for such a good church! Remember the height from which you have fallen! Paul wrote concerning love that . . .

Love never fails (falls). But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 1 Corinthians 13:08

Here the word fails is the same Greek word, *pipto* (πιπτω) which literally means to fall, but when something falls, it fails.

Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. 2 Peter 03:17

These two verses may seem contradictory. Paul says the love never fails. Peter says that we need to be on our guards so that we will not fail. There is no contradiction. God's love towards us never fails. Our love toward him can.

Christ's admonition is that they should return to the things they did at first. In other words, the church had slipped away from its original state. It did so because it got caught up in activities and lost its view and love of Christ. They were, therefore, to repent. The Greek verb is *metanoieo* (μετανοεω). The prefix means to exchange and the verb itself means to think. In other words, Christ is telling them to readjust their way of thinking. They needed to stop and take a look at their attitudes and priorities.

The warning is that, if they did not do this, their lampstand would be removed. Now, there is no mistake as to what that means. In Chapter One we found that the lampstands stood for the churches. It means that the church would be taken away. There would be no more church at Ephesus.

The church at Ephesus had been a very good one. Paul had led the people away from false doctrine...

And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that man-made gods are no gods at all. Acts 19:26
Because of the love and concern that the Ephesian church had for Paul, on one occasion he chose to sail past it so that he would not have to cut their hospitality short...

Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus to avoid spending time in the province of Asia, for he was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem, if possible, by the day of Pentecost. Acts 20:16

On the other hand, he did not want to completely skip seeing them so...

From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. Acts 20:17

Paul enjoyed spending time there...

But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, 1 Corinthians 16:08

He sent his beloved Timothy there to be its pastor...

As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer. 2 Timothy 01:03

... and also his good friend Tychicus...

I sent Tychicus to Ephesus. 2 Timothy 04:12

Outwardly, there was nothing lacking in the church, but inwardly, the church was starving Christ for the affection that He desired. They had lost sight of what the church was all about - the bride of Christ.

There is no church at Ephesus today! It is gone. They did not repent. What happened to all of its membership? Remember that Christ walks among the churches, but He grasps hold of the messengers.

Christ's Praise for the Members

But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Revelation 02:06

There were members in the church whose love for Christ had not dissipated that they no longer had a hate for those who opposed him. These members hated the Nicolaitans. Now, should they be hating people? Were they not to love their enemies? Are we not to love our enemies? Why is Christ praising them for this?

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

Matthew 05:43-44

There it is in black and white, we are to love our enemies.

You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy."

Hebrews 01:09

Here, however Christians are praised and blessed for being hateful. The difference is that we are to love our enemies. We are not told to love evil. We are not told to love God's enemies. Who were the Nicolaitans? We shall find out about them in the third church. Here they were no problem because they were seen for what they were and hated. Later, in the church at Pergamum, we will find the members following their practices. We shall consider these then.

Christ's Promises to the Believers

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.

Revelation 02:07

We have considered that the church at Ephesus represented the Apostolic church, the first century church, a church that began with a great deal of love and zeal. It also represents a new local church which also begins in the same manner. That church is with us no more. We move on to the next. But at the close of each section for each church is a note to the churches (plural), a note to all believers of any church or any age.

The promise is that, if we overcome, we will be given the right to eat of the tree of life. For each of the seven churches there is a message for those who overcome. The text here doesn't say what we are to overcome. Let's check elsewhere. First, we can become overcomers because Christ has led the way.

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. John 16:33

Paul writes...

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Romans 12:21

It is interesting that all of the other references are from John.

I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one. 1 John 02:13-14

You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. 1 John 04:04

...for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. 1 John 05:04-05

Hence we learn that we are to overcome evil, the evil one, and the world. We do so by being born of God, because God is greater than the world, and because we know God. If we overcome, the promise is that we may eat of the tree of life. Now where is this tree. As far as we know, the Garden of Eden is gone.

And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." Genesis 03:22

After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. Genesis 03:24

The garden is no longer where it was and neither is the tree. But it will reappear some day...

...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. Revelation 22:02

We shall consider this when we reach the context of it. The important point for now is that the tree continues to exist and we will be partakers of it - if we overcome.

SMYRNA

"To the angel of the church in Smyrna write:

Revelation 02:08A

The second church is the church at Smyrna. The name in the Greek is smyrna (σμυρνη). The word is found as a common noun in two places in the N.T.

On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.

Matthew 02:11

He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds.

John 19:39

The Greek word is derived from the Hebrew word myrrh (מר) which is found in a number of places in the O.T., some of which are below.

Before a girl's turn came to go in to King Xerxes, she had to complete twelve months of beauty treatments prescribed for the women, six months with oil of myrrh and six with perfumes and cosmetics.

Esther 02:12

All your robes are fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia; from palaces adorned with ivory the music of the strings makes you glad.

Psalms 45:08

I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.

Proverbs 07:17

My lover is to me a sachet of myrrh resting between my breasts.

Song of Solomon 01:13

As may be seen, myrrh is a very valuable and desired item. It was used by lovers, by the dead, and as gifts to royalty. Myrrh, however, in its natural form is of little use. Before its fragrance appears and it may be used, it must be thoroughly crushed. This was the case with the church that followed the Apostolic church. It was thoroughly persecuted - ground down and crushed. Let us take a look at it.

Christ's Appearance to the Church

These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again.

Revelation 02:08B

Christ appears to this church as the First and the Last. More importantly, as the one who died and came to life again. Why should He appear this way? Because, of all the churches, this is the one that needed the assurance of a resurrected life the most. It provides the same assurance that Paul gave to the Thessalonians.

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. 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. Therefore encourage each other with these words.

1 Thessalonians 04:16-18

Christ's Assessment of the Church

I know your afflictions and your poverty--yet you are rich!

Revelation 02:09A

As has already been noted, this church suffered great persecution. Christ here mentions two terms related to this. First, they suffered afflictions. This is not surprising.

"Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. Matthew 24:09

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." John 16:33
John 16:33
Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Acts 11:19

The Apostolic Church suffered persecution. Churches in various lands today suffer persecution. It has always been so. But this particular church, and the church at the end of the first century suffered widespread persecution.

Then the term poverty is mentioned. This term is found in one other N.T. passage, along with the word for persecution.

And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. 2 Corinthians 08:01-02

It is interesting that Paul writes that their extreme poverty resulted in a rich generosity. Christ tells this church --yet you are rich! Most of the times this term is used in the N.T. are used in a negative way.

"But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort" Luke 06:24

This is not always the case, however.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. 2 Corinthians 02:08-09

It all depends on what one counts as riches. If it is material things, then the riches are not to be desired. But there are spiritual riches to be obtained through Christ. This is what the church at Smyrna obtained.

Christ's Admonishment of the Church

There is no admonishment of this church. It was too busy being persecuted to get itself into trouble. I am not really being facetious. The times when churches get into trouble is when things are going well and people have too much time on their hands. Then they have time to get into things that had not ought to.

Christ's Admonition to the Church

Since there is no admonishment, there is no admonition.

Christ's Praise for the Members

I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 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.

Revelation 02:09B-10

This doesn't sound like praise. It starts out rather badly. If they thought they already had tribulation, they had only seen the tip of the ice berg. It would get worse. The Devil would cause some of them to be imprisoned. They would also be persecuted for ten days. What is meant by ten days? Perhaps there was a literal ten day persecution for the local church at Smyrna. But the prosecuted church, running from 100 to 300AD, suffered ten periods of persecution.

These are the ones under:

1) Nero

2) Domitian

3) Trajan

4) Marcus Aurelius

5) Severus

6) Maximum

8) Decius

8) Valerian

9) Aurelian

10) Diocletian

Interestingly, the tenth persecution lasted ten years!

The promise in this passage was that, for the faithful, there would be a reward, the crown of life.

There are a number of crowns in the N.T. The Greek word is *stephanos* (στεππηανος). The term refers to a garland or wreath. It does not refer to the type of crown a king would wear, other than the King of Kings.

They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him.

Mark 15:17

It is normally an award to an athlete.

Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

1 Corinthians 09:25

Crowns may also be figurative.

Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!

Philippians 04:01

For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you?

1 Thessalonians 02:19

But the Lord offers us a number of spiritual crowns.

Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day--and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

2 Timothy 04:08

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

James 01:12

And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

1 Peter 05:04

There are three in all mentioned in the Bible, as seen above. These are the crowns of (1) righteousness, (2) life, and (3) glory. The crown of life is the only one mentioned twice. Put these all together and what do you have? The promise of glory because we

are alive in Him because we have inherited His righteousness.

Christ's Promises to the Believers

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.

Revelation 02:11

The promise here is that we will not be hurt by the second death. The term only appears in this book. We will consider it more fully later. For now, we look at its definition.

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.

Revelation 20:06

The promise is made that, if we are overcomers, we will not participate in the events described later in this book. We will be those who participate in the first resurrection as spoken of by Paul in 1 Thessalonians.

PERGAMUM

"To the angel of the church in Pergamum write:

Revelation 02:12A

The name (appears) to come from a compound of the Greek word gamos (γάμος) which means married and the prefix per (περ) which, we attached to a noun such as this has the meaning thoroughly. The first word is found in Matthew 22 many times.

"The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet
for his son. Matthew 22:02+

and in John.

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.

John 02:01-02

Thus the term would mean thoroughly married. This seems like a strange name, but it happened and still happens. It first happened in 313 A.D. when Constantine made the church the "national church". The church and state were no longer separated. This we will pursue as we continue. Christ's Appearance to the Church

These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword.

Revelation 02:12B

Christ appears here as the one with the sharp, double-edged sword. Such a sword appears in the Scriptures in several passages.

Now Ehud had made a double-edged sword about a foot and a half long, which he strapped to his right thigh under his clothing.

Judges 03:16

May the praise of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands, to inflict vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples, to bind their kings with fetters, their nobles with shackles of iron, to carry out the sentence written against them. This is the glory of all his saints. Praise the LORD.

Psalms 149:06-09

For the lips of an adulteress drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword.

Proverbs 5:03-04

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Hebrews 04:12

In all of these passages it is represented as that which is extremely sharp and capable of making the finest incision. It would be capable of dividing the marriage found in this church. Hence this appearance of Christ.

Christ's Assessment of the Church

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.

Revelation 02:13

The first thing we note is the position of the church - where Satan lives, where Satan has his throne. Where, then, is Satan's throne? Where does he live?

The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it." Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil." "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face." The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger." Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD. Job 01:07-12

The inference of this passage is that Satan has dominion over the earth (currently) and only those things set apart by God are immune to Satan's attack. It is also evident that God, on occasions, even allows Satan to exercise power over His people. Then, we also note from the above passage and the one below, what Satan's current role is.

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. Zechariah 03:01

And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. 1 Corinthians 11:14

Satan is actively trying to break our relationship with God. But the church at Pergamos had moved into Satan's realm. They had allowed themselves to become a part of the world order.

In spite of this, the church itself had remained faithful to God. But this condition did not last, as we will see later.

Christ's Admonishment of the Church

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. Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

Revelation 02:14-15

Now we come to some of the consequences of this marriage. They had members who were holding to the teachings of Balaam. This fellow Balaam lived a long time before this.

The Moabites said to the elders of Midian, "This horde is going to lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field." So Balak son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time, sent messengers to summon Balaam son of Beor, who was at Pethor, near the River, in his native land. Balak said: "A people has come out of Egypt; they cover the face of the land and have settled next to me. Now come and put a curse on these people, because they are too powerful for me. Perhaps then I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the country. For I know that those you bless are blessed, and those you curse are cursed." Numbers 22:04-06

The Moabites had called upon this fellow to put a curse on Israel. But God prevented him from doing so. Finally, Israel took care of this fellow.

In addition to those slain in battle, the Israelites had put to the sword Balaam son of Beor, who practiced divination. Joshua 13:22

e note here not only his death, but his trade in life. He practiced divination. Peter warns about men who hold similar professions.

They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness. 2 Peter 02:15

So, some of the members of the church got caught up in divination and other similar practices. Now the Nicolaitons are mentioned again. In Ephesus they could not tolerate them. No mention is made of them at all in the letter to Smyrna. But finally, they have become tolerable and certain members have followed their ways. We know nothing of this practice other than what might be derived from the name. The first part of the name comes from the Greek word for overcome which we see at the close of each of these seven letters. The last part of the word is the common Greek word for people - we get the term laity from it today. Literally, the Nikolaitons were people overcomers. They were those who assume authority over others. It was during this period of church history that the Apostolic line rose up with various "church officials".

Christ's Admonition to the Church

Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

Revelation 02:16

If the members of this church did not separate themselves from these bad influences and teachers of false doctrine, Christ would come and fight against them with the sword we noted earlier. Here, however, it is the sword of my mouth. We shall see this expression used several times in the later part of this book. Other than that, the only reference is in Isaiah.

Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations: Before I was born the LORD called me; from my birth he has made mention of my name. 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. He said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendor."
Isaiah 49:01-03

From this we gather that Christ is not referring to an actual sword, but a spiritual sword which is wielded by his words.

Christ's Praise for the Members

There was no admonishment for the church at Pergamos. Now, for this church there is no praise. As we proceed through the ages, the church becomes poorer and the praise less and less - up to a point.

Christ's Promises to the Believers

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.

Revelation 02:17

The promise given to believers now is made up of two gifts, (1) hidden manna and (2) a white stone with a name written on it. With respect to the manna, we have the

following:

The people of Israel called the bread manna. It was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey. Exodus 16:31

The Lord provided the people of Israel manna in the wilderness. But that was to be temporary.

The manna stopped the day after they ate this food from the land; there was no longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate of the produce of Canaan. Joshua 05:12

It ceased when they entered the land of Canaan. So, then, what is the hidden manna?

Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever." John 06:57-58

Jesus Christ is the hidden manna. It is Him which we will receive. Then there is the white stone. Now there are two Greek words used for stone or rock. These are very common but neither is used here. Instead it is the word psepheos (ψηθος) which is found in only one other place in the N.T.

And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. Acts 26:10

The relation between these two verses is that it was a stone used for a particular purpose. In ancient times, such stones were used in deciding the fate of those standing in judgement. If a black stone was drawn, the fate was death. If a white stone was drawn, the fate was acquittal. This stone also has a name written on it known only to the one who receives it. What is this name? I don't know because I have not received one yet! It is a new name, not the new name. I would conclude, then, then when I receive such a stone, the name will be different than the name on your stone. It is a new name, so I suspect it will not be a name already known (to me, anyway). It may very well be a new name that God has given us when we receive our resurrection bodies. This book has much more to say about names as we continue.

THYATIRA

"To the angel of the church in Thyatira write:

Revelation 02:18A

The fourth church is Thyatira. This is the church of the Dark Ages, extending to the sixteenth century. Dehaan claims the name means Continual Sacrifice, but again, we can not confirm this.

Christ's Appearance to the Church

These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.

Revelation 02:18B

Christ here appears to the church with two specific characteristics. The first is eyes that were like blazing fire.

God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

2 Thessalonians 01:06-08

God appears as the one who promises to punish those who oppose his saints. Why does He appear this way? We shall see as we look at the message to this church. Secondly, He appears as one whose feet were like burnished bronze.

His body was like chrysolite, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude. I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision; the men with me did not see it, but such terror overwhelmed them that they fled and hid themselves. So I was left alone, gazing at this great vision; I had no strength left, my face turned deathly pale and I was helpless. Then I heard him speaking, and as I listened to him, I fell into a deep sleep, my face to the ground. A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. He said, "Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you." And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling.

Daniel 10:06-11

This time it is His feet. Christ uses his "feet" to come to this church to bring terrible judgement on those who oppose the teaching of sound doctrine. As we read this passage from Daniel, we get a picture of how awesome Christ may be when He comes

to render judgement. What can we do to seek vengeance upon our enemies?

Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. Romans 12:19

Christ's Assessment of the Church

I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.

Revelation 02:19

Note the similarity between this assessment and that at Ephesus. Comparing we have:

Ephesus	Thyatira
I know your deeds	I know your deeds
your hard work (of love)	your love
deeds (of faith)	and faith
perseverance	perseverance
left the first love	doing more than at first

It would appear that this church regained, at least some of, what it had to begin with. Christ commends them for having the qualities that the church at Ephesus had and without leaving what they did at first. There is a lot of good to say about this church. But there is condemnation too.

Christ's Admonishment of the Church

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. I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling.

Revelation 02:20-21

They still had a problem. The problem's name was Jezebel the alleged prophetess. What her relationship with the woman of the same name in the O.T. might be, we do not know. We do know what she was teaching. She was teaching that it was alright to eat food sacrificed to idols.

Now the N.T has quite a bit to say about this. At the Council of Jerusalem, it was

decided that Gentile believers did not have to be circumcised and follow the other Jewish laws, except...

It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things. Farewell. Acts 15:28-29

Now, this is all rather silly since there is nothing wrong with the food. And in the first century there was a real good supply of fresh meat. But then Paul had this advice.

Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know. But the man who loves God is known by God. So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one. 1 Corinthians 08:01-04

You see, Paul is admitting that an idol is nothing and hence the food is not really polluted. But he goes on.

But not everyone knows this. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat such food they think of it as having been sacrificed to an idol, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do. Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol's temple, won't he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols? So this weak brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. 1 Corinthians 08:07-12

There is the doctrine of the "weaker brother" that says that, even if something is ok for you to do, do not do it in front of someone for whom it would be a problem.

It is also interesting to note that sexual immorality is almost always accompanied with the food from idols. It follows! If the meat from an idol temple is ok to use, then why not the temple prostitute as well? Christ would not, and will not, tolerate people who cause weaker brothers to fall.

Christ's Admonition to the Church

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. 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.

Revelation 02:22-23

In the beginning of this section we spoke of the Lord coming to exercise judgement. Here the text gets specific. Those who do not repent will suffer intensely. The KJV has great tribulation. The same (Greek) words are found later in this book, but also in the following:

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

Matthew 24:21

Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance.

Acts 07:11

The first of these is yet to come. The second was in God's first separation of His people from the World. In other words, if they do not repent, they will suffer the "second death" as they enter the time of the Great Tribulation. We shall be seeing this later.

As far as the church is concerned, Christ's actions will prove who He is. Paul also speaks of this when he writes...

And he who
searches our hearts
knows the mind of
the Spirit, because
the Spirit intercedes
for the saints in
accordance with
God's will.

Romans 08:27

We note from the O.T.

But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

1 Samuel 16:07

Christ's Praise for the Members

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

Revelation 02:24-25

There is no specific praise in this section. There is an implied praise in that He commends them for not holding to the teaching of Jezebel. In addition, he recognizes their condition. He says I will not impose any other burden on you.

There are several burdens mentioned in the N.T. for believers and we shall note them. First, the apostles recognized that most Christians would have burdens to carry and were careful not to add, unnecessarily to this.

It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: Acts 15:28

Then, Paul indicates that we should distribute this burden to the extent possible.

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 06:02

But what makes carrying this burden worth while? There is one other "burden" in store for us!

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 2 Corinthians 04:17

Here "outweighs" is from the same Greek word. It is a "burden" if it is something difficult to deal with. It is "glory" when it is something very pleasant to deal with.

Christ ends this with the advice for us to "hold in there!"

Christ's Promises to the Believers

To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations-- 'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery'--just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

In each of the seven letters, there is a word for those who overcome. This church is an exception. Here it is to him who overcomes and does my will to the end. This promise is not to those who are just "overcomers", but to those who really hold on and do Christ's will to the end.

If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames. 1 Corinthians 03:12-15

We will all be saved through faith, and only through faith. We are overcomers because Christ overcame death for us. But those who do more than simply overcoming, who "build up treasures in heaven" will receive more. Christ promises that this person will receive the same type of awesome authority in the age to come that He now possesses. But He also adds a strange promise, the promise of obtaining the morning star. Let us consider some stars.

... "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." Matthew 02:02

A star marked the birth of Christ.

"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." Matthew 24:29

One may question whether these stars are astronomical bodies or spirits? We shall save this question until much later in the study - this book has much to say about stars.

The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor. 1 Corinthians 15:41

Here Paul is using stars in the astronomical sense to describe the saints. But finally, we will see...

"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." Revelation 22:16

In the last verse of the Bible, Jesus calls himself the morning star. We must note, however, that the Greek word for morning here is not the same as in our passage. None-the-less, we identify Jesus as the morning star and the promise to him who overcomes and keeps on doing Christ's will, will have close access to Him.

REVELATION CHAPTER THREE

This chapter is a continuation of Chapter Two so we shall commence it without comment.

SARDIS

"To the angel of the church in Sardis write:

Revelation 03:01a

The name of the fifth church is Sardis. This comes from the Greek Sardeis (Σαρδεῖς). According to DeHann, the word is derived from the Greek word for remnant. There is no way to verify this that I know of. It appears to be related to the name of the stone, the Sardius, a ruby red stone. At any rate, it typifies the church of the reformation age (not the reformed church, as we shall see).

CHRIST'S APPEARANCE TO THE CHURCH

These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.

Revelation 03:01b

There is a similarity in the appearance of Christ here and His appearance to the church in Ephesus.

. . .who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands...

There is, to begin with, something missing. Here there is no mention of His walking among the seven golden lampstands. For one thing, typically speaking, there were no longer seven. Further more, as each church gets further from the truth, it gets further from where Christ walks. Then, there is something added. He not only holds the seven stars, but also the seven spirits of God.

What is not obvious in the English texts is the change in words for "holds." The KJV makes a slight distinction "holdeth" and "hath". The word used here is echo (εχω), a very common word which means, simply, to have. It is a less strong word than the one in Chapter Two. The seven spirits were mentioned in Chapter One and we will deal with them later.

The point for now is that there is a looser hold on the church at Sardus than the hold on the church at Ephesus.

CHRIST'S ASSESSMENT OF THE CHURCH

I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.

Revelation 03:01c

Deeds here is the same word we have seen before, works. The assessment hardly needs any enlargement. The church looked like it was alive, it had all the hustle and bustle of a living church, but the spirit was dead. When a body dies, its spirit leaves it. This, perhaps, is why Christ appears as the one having the seven spirits. Perhaps the spirit of this church was not longer in the hands of the church but in Christ's hands.

CHRIST'S ADMONISHMENT OF THE CHURCH

Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent.

Revelation 03:02-03a

There is no clear distinction between the admonishment and the admonition of this church, my distinction here is somewhat arbitrary.

Christ says "Wake Up!

The word is found in other admonitions in the N.T.

"Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong." 1 Corinthians 16:13

So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. 1 Thessalonians 05:06

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 1 Peter 05:08

Christ says "strengthen what you have!" This advice is also given elsewhere.

I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong--
Romans 01:11

Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past,
Romans 16:25

We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith.
1 Thessalonians 03:02

This church had become complacent. They were content with what they (thought) they had. There were asleep. At Ephesus and some of the other churches they were aware of people who were teaching false doctrine and hated them. This church is oblivious to all of that.
CHRIST'S ADMONITION TO THE CHURCH

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.

Revelation 03:03b

This is not the only passage where Christ uses this metaphor.

"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."
Matthew 24:42-44

...for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief.

1 Thessalonians 05:02-04

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. 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.
2 Peter 03:10

We have already spoken of the immanent return of Christ. This passage reinforces this concept.

CHRIST'S PRAISE FOR THE MEMBERS

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.

Revelation 03:04

There were a few people in this church who were not guilty of being asleep. These were Martin Luther and the rest of the reformers who woke up to the fact that the church was not what it was supposed to be.

CHRIST'S PROMISES TO THE BELIEVERS

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

Revelation 03:05-06

The overcomer in this age will not have his name "blotted out" of the book of life. This term appears only once outside of this book.

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, 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. Colossians 02:13-14

God is not willing that any should die. When Christ died, in effect, all of our names were written in the book of life. But those who do not truly repent will have their names blotted out. You see, it is not a matter of what we have to do to get our name written down in the book. Christ did that. It is what we have to do to keep from having it blotted out.

PHILADELPHIA

"To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:

Revelation 03:07a

There is no question as to what the name of this church means. It is a compound of the Greek word phileo (φιλεω) which means "love", human love, and delphos (δελφος) which means "brother". Thus, the word means "brotherly love". Paul uses it twice, Peter twice and the author of Hebrews once.

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Romans 12:10

Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. 1 Thessalonians 04:09

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. 1 Peter 01:22

Keep on loving each other as brothers. Hebrews 13:01

...and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 1 Peter 01:07

Brotherly love is good, God's love (agape) is better. The last passage above would indicate this. The church at Ephesus had left its first love (agape), they still had some love. This church is typified, by title, as being a loving church, but there is no indication here of God's love.

CHRIST'S APPEARANCE TO THE CHURCH

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.

Revelation 03:07b

Christ appears to this church with a key. Christ holds a number of keys.

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Matthew 16:19

"Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering." Luke 11:52

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 well of living water. Revelation 09:01

Christ holds the keys to heaven, to Hell, and to the knowledge that can save one from the later and bring him to the former. Christ appears this way as He is about to use this key to open a door.

CHRIST'S ASSESSMENT OF THE CHURCH

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. 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.

Revelation 03:08-09

This church possessed two things and did not possess two other. It had deeds and it kept God's word. The church at Sardus had not completed its work and, hence had not kept God's word. This church did. What it did not possess was strength (it had little strength) and they were not deniers of the faith (they did not deny His name). This was the Church of the Open Door.

Paul had such a doors opened for him on many occasions. Sometimes it was physical.

But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. Acts 05:19

Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. Acts 16:26

But usually it was a more spiritual matter.

On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened the door of faith to Acts 14:27. Because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me. 1 Corinthians 16:09

Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me, 2 Corinthians 02:12

And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Colossians 04:03

In the 19th century, God did open a door. The door was opened to the great missions movement, spearheaded by men like Hudson Taylor and the others. The great missions movement began with this church, the church of "brother love."

Christ can, did, and still opens doors. He can also shut doors.

"Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.' "But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.'"
Luke 13:24-25

He says the church is weak. But this is not necessarily a bad characteristic. Paul wrote...

For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. 1 Corinthians 01:25-29

Weakness in ourselves is not important. Being strong in Christ strength is. They were strong in the faith. They did not deny the faith. As a result, those who did, Christ promised, would bow at their feet. When will this be? The answer is found later in this book.

CHRIST'S ADMONISHMENT OF THE CHURCH

There is none.

CHRIST'S ADMONITION TO THE CHURCH

There is none.

CHRIST'S PRAISE FOR THE MEMBERS

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

Revelation 03:10-11

This verse has been controversial through the ages. What does it mean? Premeillennialists have insisted that this is the promise that the church will be raptured and not pass through the Great Tribulation. Is this correct?

One of the keys to understanding the true meaning of this verse is the word "keep", from the Greek verb *tereo* (τερηω) which basically means "to guard" or "to take care of". It also is used for "to keep", "to observe" and "to reserve". We will take a look at two places where it is used in the N.T.

I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name--the name you gave me--so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled. "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. 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. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

John 17:11-15

If the word has the same sense as it has in the above passage, the Post Millennialists may be correct. If the word means "protect", as translated above, it does not mean to take out of by rather to protect in. In other words, the promise would be that, during the years of tribulation, Christ would protect us.

On the other hand, we have the following passage where the word is used.

if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.

2 Peter 02:09

In this passage, the word clearly means "to remove from". So, we still have not come to an answer. I believe the answer to the question comes from the Greek of John 17:15. Christ says "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one." The two underscored prepositional phrases use the same preposition *ek* (εκ) "out of". Christ, in that instance, prayed that the Father would take them "out of" the influence of the evil one, not that He would take them "out of" the

domain of the evil one, the earth. The situation is, again, like the case of Job where he was in the world but God had put a hedge around him so that Satan could not get in.

In this passage in Revelation, however, the phrase is applied to the world and the trial that will come upon it, and not to the one who brings the trial. In fact, the rest of the phrase indicates that those who are on the earth will, without exception, be tried. John writes that the trial is going to come upon "the whole world", not just those not protected by Christ. In order to be consistent, those whom Christ is protecting must not be part of "the whole world" and hence must have been removed.

I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. Christ says He is "coming soon". Soon is from the same Greek word we saw in 1:1 regarding the things which were "soon to take place." We take this as a promise that, when the things that will be described in the rest of this book begin to occur, He will come. He says for us to "hold on to what we have" until then. When he comes, he will take us to be with Him and we will receive the crowns we noted earlier.

CHRIST'S PROMISES TO THE BELIEVERS

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

Revelation 03:12-13

The members of the church in Philadelphia "had little strength." When Christ comes for us we will become as pillars. We will also be marked as belonging to God the Father, of Christ, and the New Jerusalem. We will hence be marked as citizens of this New Jerusalem and members of God's family. This will be seen when we reach the end of the book.

LAODICEA

"To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:

Revelation 03:14a

The name of this church is easy to figure out. It is a compound of the Greek word laos (λαος) and the Greek word dike (δικη) which (appears) to have to notion of ruling or

governing. Hence "people governed" which speaks of a democracy. It has to opposite sense of the work Nikolaitan. The church, through the centuries has gone from a church which was ruled by Christ, to a church ruled by the religious leaders and, finally, to a church ruled by the people.

Before we go on, this has bearing on the governance of churches today. There are three basic types of church as far as governance is concerned: the episkopos church (from which the name "Episcopal") which is ruled by its religious head (i.e. the Roman Catholics, the Episciplian, the various "Orthodox" churches, etc.), the presbutos churches (from which the name Presbyterian) which is ruled by the Elders (either elected by the congregation or elected by the other elders), and the congregational type of church where the congregation rules.

Which of these is correct? There is no Biblical basis for a "democratic" church. The New Testament makes it clear that the church is to be controlled by the Elders. Practically speaking, how can a "babe in Christ" be effective in determining what the church will and will not do? The first type of church has no Biblical basis either. The one and only head of the church is Christ. Under Him are elders who are responsible to Him, and only to Him.

The Laodicean church is the modern, apostate church. This will become evident soon.

CHRIST'S APPEARANCE TO THE CHURCH

These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.

Revelation 03:14b

There is a contrast here. We have noted that the Laocdecan church is the modern "democratic" church. But Christ appears as the "ruler of God's creation." He is supposed to be the ruled, but is not. This leads to His assessment of this church.

CHRIST'S ASSESSMENT OF THE CHURCH

I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!

Revelation 03:15

As we have gone through the previous six churches, some were good and there was no condemnation. Some were bad and there was no praise. But this church is neither. It is easy to see why Christ might wish that they were hot - on fire for the Lord. It is easy to see why He would want it to be a good, sound church.

But why would He rather it were cold than in between? The answer is that a cold church is of no use to Satan. A cold church will not be effective in drawing in the people.

CHRIST'S ADMONISHMENT OF THE CHURCH

So, because you are lukewarm--neither hot nor cold--I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

Revelation 03:16-17

What comes between hot and cold? Lukewarm!

And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward." Matthew 10:42

Cold is refreshing.

He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. Acts 18:25

Having a great fervor gets things accomplished. But lukewarm is never found in the N.T except here. Think about it for a moment! You are in a restaurant and order a cup of hot tea. By the time it gets served, it has cooled off and you tell the waiter, "Take this back and get me so HOT tea!". On the other hand, you may have ordered ice tea. By the time it is served, the ice has melted and it has warmed to room temperature. Again, you call the waiter over and ask for some "cold tea". It is good hot - it is good cold. Some things are good hot, some are good cold, a lot of things are good either hot or cold. But there is practically nothing that is good when it is lukewarm. This includes churches.

The picture is very graphic. One taste of this church and Christ spews it out of His mouth. It is wretched. The church thought it was rich - worldly rich. But Christ's opinion

was far different. First they were wretched and pitiful. We find each of these terms in one other passage each.

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? ~~Revelation~~ Revelation 07:24

If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. 1 Corinthians 15:19

Both words are very strong. The first word is found in an interesting passage in Isaiah.

Woe to you, O destroyer, you who have not been destroyed! Woe to you, O traitor, you who have not been betrayed! When you stop destroying, you will be destroyed; when you stop betraying, you will be betrayed. Isaiah 33:01

The second word is interesting in that it is a derivative of the word eleos (ελεος) which is the word for mercy...

May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day! You know very well in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus. 2 Timothy 01:18

he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, Titus 03:05

Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. Hebrews 04:16

The word here, derived from this word, refers to those who need this mercy. Those who are to be pitied.

CHRIST'S ADMONITION TO THE CHURCH

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. 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.

Revelation 03:18

Where are they supposed to obtain these riches? Jesus has already told us.

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Matthew 06:19-21

CHRIST'S PRAISE FOR THE MEMBERS

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.

Revelation 03:19-20

Many take this verse as a personal invitation to receive Christ - by opening the door of their hearts. It is proper to do so. But the real intent of this verse is to show that Christ is no longer in the church. He has been excluded. He waits at the door, hoping that the church will let him in.

CHRIST'S PROMISES TO THE BELIEVERS

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

Revelation 03:21-22

This is the final promise to the believer. We shall see these promises carried out later in this book.

REVELATION CHAPTER FOUR

In Revelation 1:19, John was commanded to write down what he saw, namely, what is now, and what is to take place later. In chapters Two and Three, we covered the things which are "now". As we begin this chapter, we begin the things that are to "take place later. We have completed the history of the church age, and we now move on.

What Takes Place Next?

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."

Revelation 04:01

Meta tauta (Μετα ταυτα) ... "After these things". What things? After Christ had revealed to John, in a more-or-less usual manner, the things "that are", He begins to reveal to John, in a very unusual manner, the things which would take place later. Up to this point, the vision was of things on the earth as they were at the time John wrote this book. Now, however, Christ is calling John to a new level of understanding. Christ who, as we have seen previously) holds keys to the doors of heaven and of The Pit, opened a door for John and invited him to enter for a future revelation.

Note carefully the words I will show you what must take place after this. Christ did not show John the things which might happen or would probably happen or that He wanted to happen. No, it was the things which had to happen. God has already ordained that they should happen and so they will surely happen just as surely as the son will rise tomorrow - more surely, because one day the sun will not rise!

The Throne

At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne. 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. 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.

The first item that John saw as he passed through the door was a throne. Our word is derived from the Greek word here, thronos (θρονος). The word is found many times in the remainder of this book. It is found a number of times elsewhere. Just a few are cited below.

But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne, ~~Matthew~~ Matthew 05:34

All of heaven is, figuratively speaking, God's throne. But we are being more specific here..

Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Matthew 19:28

We shall have occasion to refer to this passage again later in this chapter when we find that there are twenty-four thrones around Christ's. But, speaking of Christ's throne, we have...

...He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, Luke 01:32

This, however, is not the same throne (or, at least, the throne is not in the same place as) the throne we have here. Thrones are mentioned many times in the O.T. many of these references are to actual thrones of the kings of Israel or of other nations. But there are also references such as the following.

To translate the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan even to Beer-sheba. 2 Samuel 03:10

This was the promise to David of an everlasting throne.

And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. 2 Samuel 07:12-13

There are also passages which are more general, such as...

The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men. Psalm 11:04

Other prophets had an experience similar to John's.

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Isaiah 06:01

And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. Ezekiel 01:26

Three stones are mentioned in connection with the throne. The three are also found in the book of Exodus.

Then mount four rows of precious stones on it. In the first row there shall be a ruby, a topaz and a beryl; in the second row a turquoise, a sapphire and an emerald; in the third row a jacinth, an agate and an amethyst; in the fourth row a chrysolite, an onyx and a jasper. Mount them in gold filigree settings. Exodus 28:17-20

The name ruby replaces carnelian in this passage, but the Greek words are the same. Two of the stones are mentioned in Ezekiel.

You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: ruby, topaz and emerald, chrysolite, onyx and jasper, sapphire, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. Ezekiel 28:13

In the later case, the stones were used to adorn the Lord in the garden. In the first case, they were to represent the (three of) the twelve tribes of the Lord's people. In any case, they represent the majesty of Christ.

Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. Now we are presented with a curious fact. Surrounding the throne were, not twelve other thrones, but twenty-four other thrones with elders seated in them. Why twenty-four? There are no (significant) places in the Bible where this number is mentioned.

The number twelve is very prominent in the Bible. For two (or three?) reasons.

And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. Genesis 17:20

All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them, giving each the blessing appropriate to them. Genesis 49:28

He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out

evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Matthew 10:01-02

There were twelve tribes of Israel. There were to be twelve tribes of Ismael. There were twelve apostles. No Bible commentator that I have seen will make any firm stand on the significance of the twenty-four. The most common thought is that there are twelve elders from each of the tribes of Israel and the other twelve are (or represent) the twelve apostles. This seems to be a reasonable concept, but not conclusive.

First, until after the Great Tribulation, God will not be dealing with the Jews and so one might wonder why the Jew might be represented here. Perhaps there is a deeper meaning to this number. To seek this we refer to the first two passages above. There were to be twelve tribes among the Jews, there were to be twelve among the "Gentiles" who descended from Ismael. Now, I am not saying that the other twelve represent the tribes of Ishmael. No, the deeper meaning may be that God's plan of governance rests upon the governance of twenty-four elders. Israel and Ishmael are just types of this order.

The Four Creatures

Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. 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. 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."

Revelation 04:06-08

Before the throne was a sea of glass. No, read it carefully, it says that it looked like one. It is difficult to trace other appearances of this in terms of the words used here. The term from crystal, *krystallos* (κρυσταλλος) can be traced to a passage in Ezekiel and from there we can proceed to several other passages. Citing from the KJV we have the same word...

And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creature as the colour of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above ~~the~~ Ezekiel 01:22

In the NIV this passage reads as below.

Spread out above the heads of the living creatures was what looked like an expanse, sparkling like ice, and awesome. Ezekiel 01:22

Here it is translated ice which, of course, is a crystal. At any rate, it is used to describe the firmament (KJV) or expanse (NIV) that was associated with living beings in Ezekiel's vision. Tracing this expanse to other passages, we have the following.

And God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water." So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so. God called the expanse "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning--the second day. Genesis 01:06-08

For the director of music. A psalm of David. The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Psalm 19:01

Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens. Psalm 150:01

Spread out above the heads of the living creatures was what looked like an expanse, sparkling like ice, and awesome. Under the expanse their wings were stretched out one toward the other, and each had two wings covering its body. When the creatures moved, I heard the sound of their wings, like the roar of rushing waters, like the voice of the Almighty, like the tumult of an army. When they stood still, they lowered their wings. Then there came a voice from above the expanse over their heads as they stood with lowered wings. Above the expanse over their heads was what looked like a throne of sapphire, and high above on the throne was a figure like that of a man. Ezekiel 01:22-26

Whatever the "sea of glass" is, it has been around since the creation and is always associated with God and His glory.

If the twenty-four elders presents a problem, what about these four living creatures? We will not get far seeking the meaning of the term "living creatures." The term is simply the Greek word zoa (ζωα) from which we get zoology. It just refers to things which are alive and makes no distinction as to what type of being it might be.

We find reference to these what is apparently the same creatures in Ezekiel.

I looked, and I saw a windstorm coming out of the north--an immense cloud with flashing lightning and surrounded by brilliant light. The center of the fire looked like glowing metal, and in the fire was what looked like four living creatures. In appearance their form was that of a man, but each of them had four faces and four wings. Their legs were straight; their feet

were like those of a calf and gleamed like burnished bronze. Under their wings on their four sides they had the hands of a man. All four of them had faces and wings, and their wings touched one another. Each one went straight ahead; they did not turn as they moved. Their faces looked like this: Each of the four had the face of a man, and on the right side each had the face of a lion, and on the left the face of an ox; each also had the face of an eagle. Ezekiel 01:04-10

Note that these had the same four faces. We shall consider the significance of these faces. They had the face of a lion. What does the Bible say about the lion?

You are a lion's cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him? Genesis 49:09

The people rise like a lioness; they rouse themselves like a lion that does not rest till he devours his prey and drinks the blood of his victims. Numbers 23:24

If I hold my head high, you stalk me like a lion and again display your awesome power against me. Job 10:16

Proud beasts do not set foot on it, and no lion prowls there. Job 28:08

For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, like a great lion to Judah. I will tear them to pieces and go away; I will carry them off, with no one to rescue them. Hosea 05:14

The lion is the "king of the beasts." It is noted for its ferocity and swiftness. Then there is the ox.

They brought as their gifts before the LORD six covered carts and twelve oxen--an ox from each leader and a cart from every two. These they presented before the tabernacle. Numbers 07:03

Deliver my life from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs. Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild oxen. Psalm 22:20-21

Our barns will be filled with every kind of provision. Our sheep will increase by thousands, by tens of thousands in our fields; our oxen will draw heavy loads. There will be no breaching of walls, no going into captivity, no cry of distress in our streets. Psalm 144:13-14

Where there are no oxen, the manger is empty, but from the strength of an ox comes an abundant harvest. Proverbs 14:04

The oxen is the lion's counterpart among the domesticated animals. It is the strongest of all of the animals used by man (at least in that part of the world, there is the Elephant and some larger animals, but not in the Mid-East).

Finally, there is the eagle.

'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Exodus 19:4

"Saul and Jonathan—in life they were loved and gracious, and in death they were not parted. They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. 2 Samuel 01:23

but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. Isaiah 40:31

The eagle is the counterpart of the lion among the bird kingdom. There is one point concerning these creatures we have not considered.

Of all the animals that walk on all fours, those that walk on their paws are unclean for you; whoever touches their carcasses will be unclean till evening. Leviticus 11:17

Some time later, when he went back to marry her, he turned aside to look at the lion's carcass. In it was a swarm of bees and some honey, which he scooped out with his hands and ate as he went along. When he rejoined his parents, he gave them some, and they too ate it. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey from the lion's carcass. Judges 14:08-09

The lion is among the class of unclean animals.

"These are the birds you are to detest and not eat because they are detestable: the eagle, the vulture, the black vulture, Leviticus 11:03

Likewise, the eagle is unclean among the birds. The fourth faces was that of a man who, between the time of Adam and the time of Christ, was also "unclean". But these creatures with these faces stand before God's throne. Whatever God blesses is blessed. If God can send His only Son to die to make us clean, He can also sanctify the lion and the eagle. The ultimate meaning of these creatures is to be found in the rest of this chapter.

Worship of Him Who Sits on the Throne

Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, 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: "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

Revelation 04:09-11

The significance of the creatures is seen in this passage. They represent "all things created." You see, they represent all forms of life: (a) wild animals, (b) tame animals, (3) birds, and (4) man. "But," you say, "this is not complete; what about the sea life and the insects?" These we will consider later. Why they are not represented here will become clear later in the book.

Thus, when all the created beings bow down to Christ and worship him (as represented by these creatures), the twenty-four elders, acknowledging God's evidenced majesty, bow down also.

We talked about the crowns that Christians can earn earlier in this study and the question was raised, what will we do with them? Here is the answer. They are given to us so that we will have them to present before the judgement seat of Christ. In the message to the believers in Thyatira, the promise to him who overcame and did God's will was to rule with Him. This is the case with these twenty four elders. These are they who earned crowns and the right to sit with Christ.

To conclude this chapter, we have not gained any insight into the future. What, then, have we gained? What we have seen is the majesty of Christ. We have seen the authority of Him who is going to bring upon this earth the things that will take place later.

REVELATION CHAPTER FIVE

The Seven Sealed Scroll

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.

Revelation 05:01

The next item which John saw was a sealed scroll. The KJV has "book", but they didn't have books in John's day. It was the first century's equivalent, a scroll. The scroll was written on, on both sides, and sealed. Let us begin with the seals. We find some parallel concepts in Isaiah and in Daniel.

For you this whole vision is nothing but words sealed in a scroll. And if you give the scroll to someone who can read, and say to him, "Read this, please," he will answer, "I can't; it is sealed."

Isaiah 29:11

"The vision of the evenings and mornings that has been given you is true, but seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future."

Daniel 08:26

"Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.

Daniel 09:24

But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge."

Daniel 12:04

Daniel's knowledge of future events was to be sealed up until the time of the end. God did not want the details known. It is now time to make these details known. But there is far more to this than that.

"The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants. Throughout the country that you hold as a possession, you must provide for the redemption of the land. "If one of your countrymen becomes poor and sells some of his property, his nearest relative is to come and redeem what his countryman has sold."

Leviticus 25:23-25

Dr. Dehaan, in his studies on this book has the following to say.

Now this was the method of redemption. When a man had fallen into debt and lost his property or land, he was taken before the judges and a document was prepared which stated that the land had passed from the debtor into the possession of the one to whom he owed the debt. But this was not a permanent transfer.

When the Year of Jubilee came, the land was to be returned to the original owner. In the meantime, however, it could be redeemed and returned to him. This could be done in two ways. Either the man himself could pay the redemption price, which was unlikely, for he was now a servant, or it could be purchased back by a near relative an uncle or a closer kin. The papers, therefore, were written on two scrolls of parchment. On both of these were written the terms of the redemption of

the lost possession. One scroll was left open in the court of the Temple or Tabernacle for all to read, but the other was rolled up, sealed with seven seals and placed in the Temple to be brought out only when a kinsman redeemer gave evidence that he was willing and able to redeem it.

He would go to the court of the Tabernacle, read the terms of redemption as found in the open public scroll and then go to the priest or judge and demand that the sealed document be brought forth and the debtor be freed and his property returned. If this kinsman, the relative, were able to show that he was able to pay this redemption price and could meet all the conditions in the law, the sealed scroll was produced and he public tore open the seals and invalidated the mortgage and the man could return to his purchased possession.

ONE SCROLL SUBSTITUTED: As time passed the practice of using one scroll instead of two was adopted. Instead of two scrolls, one public and the other sealed, these were combined into one. One scroll or parchment was used, and the terms of the redemption of the property were written on both sides, within and without. When the scroll was rolled into a tube and sealed with the seven seals, the inside corresponded to the secret record and the outside containing the terms for the public and especially for an kinsman redeemer who might want to know the terms for redeeming the lost possession.

That is the picture in Revelation 5. There we see the judge of all the earth sitting on His throne and in His hand is this scroll written on the outside and the backside or inside and sealed with seven seals. It is, therefore, a book of redemption.

Revelation, 35 Simple Studies, pages 90-91

In other words, this scroll is the Title Deed for the Earth. Who has possession of the Earth today? Where is the Garden of Eden today? We will start with that. Both the Hebrew and the Greek word used to describe the garden describe a Royal Garden - a garden belonging to and for the pleasure of a king. It was an enclosed park, with high walls so that only those allowed by the king could enter.

No one has ever been able to find this garden. The reason is that it is no longer on Earth. It is now in heaven. To be more specific...

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know--God knows. And I know that this man--whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows-- was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell. 2 Corinthians 12:02-04

God's abode is no longer on earth like it was in Genesis 2. It is not in the air where the

birds fly nor in the universe where the sun, the moon, and the stars reside. It is in the third heaven - in Heaven.

On the other hand, we have the following.

I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me, John 14:30

...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. Ephesians 02:02

Satan is the ruler over the earth. He is the ruler over the air, where the birds fly, and the heavens where the Sun, the Moon, and the stars abide. Throughout the ages, Satan has been free to do his dirty work. He has title to the Earth and so does as he pleases - except to God's people whom God puts a hedge about (Job 1 and 2).

Before any of the things which are to come can come, the title has to be taken away from Satan. Hence we move to the next verse.

Who Can Open the Scroll?

And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?"

Revelation 05:02

The question is, who can open this scroll? Where is the kinsman-redeemer who can pay the redemption price and return the land to its rightful owner - to God? Did you ever wonder about that? The angels have. In fact, one day a mighty angel will ask this very question.

Note the way the question is phrased - a mighty angle, a loud voice. This is no ordinary angel. This was an angel who possessed both might and a strong voice. He obviously could not open the scroll or he would have done so. One might think, from their ominous nature, that one or all of the four beings might be able to do it, but they didn't. They could not. Neither could the twenty-four elders open it. None had the redemption price required to break the seals and open it. Who then?

Apparently, No One Can Open It!

But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside.

Revelation 05:03-04

To John's immense disappointment, no one was able to open the scroll. No one was even able to look inside and see what the terms were which were written there. So this is the end of the story. No one can open it and so John is doomed to spend the rest of his life weeping. But wait! There are three places where they looked: (1) in heaven, (2) on earth, and (3) under the earth. No wonder no one was found on earth or under the earth - that's Satan's domain. What about heaven? Note that it is singular not "heavens". The Prince and power of the air is not going to open the seals. So there is only one place left to look.

No one can open it, except one.

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." Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center 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.

Revelation 05:05-06

The one who is able to open the scroll is described in three ways. First He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, secondly, the Root of David, and third, a lamb. There this a basis in the Scriptures for each of these.

For I will be like a lion to Ephraim, like a great lion to Judah. I will tear them to pieces and go away; I will carry them off, with no one to rescue them. Hosea 05:14

The Lord promised He would be like a great lion to the tribe of Judah.

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. Isaiah 11:10

This passage does not mention David, but, of course, David was the son of Jesse.

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

Isaiah 53:1-2

Again, David is not mentioned, but this passage of Isaiah clearly speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" John 01:29

When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" John 01:36

Clearly, all three terms refer to none other than the person of Christ. But why these three terms? We have already discussed the lion. As the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, we see Christ pictured in power. As the Root of David, we see Him with authority since the Redeemer was prophesied to come from the seed of David. But then we see Him as a lamb. Now that is a contradiction of terms! 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. Isaiah 11:06

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.

Isaiah 65:25

The lamb and the lion are at the opposite extremes of the animal world. The Lion is the King of the Beasts. The lamb is one of the weakest.

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Philippians 02:05-08

In this scene before the throne, we see Christ in His majesty and also in His humiliation as he became our sacrificial lamb. He is the only one who could, and did, pay the price for our redemption and the right to open the seals on the scroll.

The Lamb takes the Scroll

He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. 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. 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. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

Revelation 05:07-10

As the lamb takes the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders again fall down in worship - this time in worship of the lamb. This time the elders have no crowns to lay down. Instead these each have two other objects: (a) a harp and (b) a bowl. The harp is not mentioned outside of this book in the N.T. (except for one other passage) but is mentioned frequently in the O.T. In the O.T. it is used, along with other things, to praise God. It was also used to calm the spirits of men. David, the psalmist, being a prime example as he soothed the tormented mind of Saul.

In this passage, the harp is evidently a sign of praise. The other item has various translations: a vial (KJV and Living Bible), a bowl (most of the rest). The Greek word is *philas* (φίλας) which is found only in this book of the N.T. The Greek word is found in the LXX a number of times where even the KJV has bowls. What they were were flat bowls like soup bowls. The significance of these bowls was not in the bowl itself, but what it contained. We are reminded of Paul's words...

In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.

2 Timothy 02:20-21

Here the bowls are filled with the prayers of the saints. Later we shall find bowls filled with something else. The praise was directed to the lamb because He, and only He had the right of redemption. He, and He alone had paid the price of redemption.

Praise from above, from here, and from below

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. In a loud voice they

sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" 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 honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"

Revelation 05:11-13

Thus this praise filled situation are added the voices of all other beings: all of the angels (the Greek idiom indicates this) and all of God's created beings. We are talking about universal praise.

By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. Isaiah 45:23

It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'" Romans 14:11

...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, Philippians 02:10

The chapter is concluded with the following word.

Amen

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

Revelation 05:14

The final word is amen. The root of this word is from the Hebrew word, amen (אמן). The majority of occurrences of this word in the O.T. are found in one passage which is quite significant.

"Cursed is the man who carves an image or casts an idol--a thing detestable to the LORD, the work of the craftsman's hands--and sets it up in secret." Then all the people shall say, "Amen!" "Cursed is the man who dishonors his father or his mother." Then all the people shall say, "Amen!" "Cursed is the man who moves his neighbor's boundary stone." Then all the people shall say, "Amen!" "Cursed is the man who leads the blind

astray on the road." Then all the people shall say, "Amen!" "Cursed is the man who withholds justice from the alien, the fatherless or the widow." Then all the people shall say, "Amen!" "Cursed is the man who sleeps with his father's wife, for he dishonors his father's bed." Then all the people shall say, "Amen!" "Cursed is the man who has sexual relations with any animal." Then all the people shall say, "Amen!" "Cursed is the man who sleeps with his sister, the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother." Then all the people shall say, "Amen!" "Cursed is the man who sleeps with his mother-in-law." Then all the people shall say, "Amen!" "Cursed is the man who kills his neighbor secretly." Then all the people shall say, "Amen!" "Cursed is the man who accepts a bribe to kill an innocent person." Then all the people shall say, "Amen!" "Cursed is the man who does not uphold the words of this law by carrying them out." Then all the people shall say, "Amen!"

Deuteronomy 27:15-26

In the above passage, the word is used to affirm the people's assent to the curses that are pronounced by God. The word amen here introduces the curses that the lamb brings upon the world at the end times. Here the four living beings and the elders pronounce their approval on what is to follow.

REVELATION CHAPTER SIX

The inference at the end of Chapter Five was that, as the lamb opened the scroll and took possession of the earth thereby, He would unleash the judgements listed on the inside of the scroll. This chapter, then, begins the first of these judgements. The first series of judgments to come on the earth are referred to as the seal judgements since each begins with the opening of one of the seals. There are other, worse judgements to come. This is when the seventh seal is opened so that the scroll might be opened. For now, we have the six judgments associated with the first six seals.

Introduction

Before we begin these judgements, we must establish some guidelines for interpreting what we read. What is to be taken literally? What is to be taken figuratively? One rule of interpretation, used by many conservative Christian scholars is this: Interpret everything literally unless the Bible indicates that it is to be taken figuratively. This is a good rule, but not one that is easily applied.

Let's consider a few examples.

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. Luke 22:19-20

Now, the Roman Catholics believe in the theory of Transubstantiation which says that, when one partakes of the bread, it literally is transformed into part of Christ's body and, likewise, the wine actually becomes part of the blood of Christ. Where does one get such a notion?

Does Christ say "The bread is a symbol of my body....this cup is a symbol of the new covenant in my blood..."? No, He says it is. But you have to interpret the Scriptures with the brain that God gave you. It was Christ's body that was holding up the loaf of bread. He didn't need to say the bread was to be taken as a symbol, it was obviously a symbol since it was not part of His actual body.

Consider the three passages below, one of which we shall be studying in this chapter.

The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. Joel 02:31

The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. Acts 02:20

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. Revelation 06:12-17. The first two passages prophecy what we will read in this chapter. They both say that the moon shall be turned to blood. Are we to take this literally? Is the moon going to become a vast ball of blood? If so, what kind of blood? Again, we must use the brain that God gave us. There would be no reason for the moon to actually become blood. It would serve no purpose in God's plans. The intent of these passages is what one would normally interpret it to be - the color of the moon became red.

In this chapter, we shall begin with four persons on four horses. Are we to take these as literal horses and literal persons? First, remember what John was told in Chapter One. Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. John was to write about what he saw. He really did, then, see four horses and four riders. But this does not mean they were actual living beings. They may have been visions and no realities.

So, then, do we take them as being literal or not? It really doesn't make much difference. The importance of them is in their significance. If they will actually be living beings when the scroll is opened is not the issue.

Seal #1 - The White Horse

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!" 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.

Revelation 06:01-02

The first seal, appropriately enough reveals a rider on a white horse. Now if this were a cowboy movie, he would have a white hat rather than a white horse - he is the "good guy". It is not really a "good guy", but one posing as such, a false Christ who sets out to conquer the earth which Christ has obtained title to. He appears with a bow - a symbol of warfare, and a crown, the symbol of authority.

The bow comes from the Greek word toxos (τοξος) which is not used elsewhere in the N.T. except as the translation for the rainbow. It is found frequently in the LXX and we have selected one interesting passage in which it occurs.

From Judah will come the cornerstone, from him the tent peg, from him the battle bow, from him every ruler. Zechariah 10:04

The Greek word is interesting in that it is the root of our word toxin. The bow, then, symbolized death that the man on the white horse would bring. This first rider does not bring actual war. In fact he brings peace by virtue of his authority and his bow.

Before we go on, we note the one word "come." This will appear in each of the first four seal judgments. To whom is it addressed? Is it a command for the rider or a command to John? The answer may be obtained by noting carefully the verbs. John writes "I heard..." What did he hear? He heard the command. As he obeyed the command, he writes "I saw...". Why does John have to be instructed to "come" each time? I believe because, like most people, he was reluctant to see that judgement what was to come.
Seal #2 - The Red Horse

When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" 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.

Revelation 06:03-04

The Lamb opens the second seal. The second living creature speaks. These first four seal judgements are related to each of the four living creatures. The judgements thus represent universal and complete judgement in the same sense that the number of the four creature does. This horse was fiery red. The KJV just has "red" as does the NAS. The Greek word, however, is used only here and one place later in this book. It is derived from the Greek word for fire and hence the NIV's fiery red. This rider's purpose was to take away peace from the world. The large sword as well as the color of the horse shows this.

It is important to note how these two riders complement each other. One has a bow, the other a sword. Both went out to make war.

And to you, as one who is over your brothers, I give the ridge of land I took from the Amorites with my sword and my bow." Genesis 48:22

I sent the hornet ahead of you, which drove them out before you--also the two Amorite kings. You did not do it with your own sword and bow. Joshua 24:12

Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt.

1 Samuel 18:04

If he does not relent, he will sharpen his sword; he will bend and string his bow. Psalm 07:12

Seal #3 - The Black Horse

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. 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!"

Revelation 06:05-06

The meaning of the first two horses was fairly clear. This is not so clear. This rider had a balance in his hand. What was its purpose? The Greek word for a pair of scales here is of little value. In all of its other occurrences in the bible it is translated as "yoke". Primarily, it is a beam which may be used for many purposes. The purpose here is to ration out food.

There are two parts of this picture. The first is that the average person would work for a full day for only a quart of wheat. This is well below the current "minimum wage." The other part has to do with oil and wine. These are items that belong to the rich. In other words, the rich will get richer and the poor will get poorer. It is interesting to note that in his commentary on this book, William R. Newell says the following:

We noticed not long ago in a Chicago newspaper a paragraph reading about as follows: "By modern methods of agriculture we have solved the question of famine. We can produce any amount of grain we decide to produce. Science has triumphed over the constant dread of less enlightened communities."

Now this book was written in 1935 - 56 years ago! By now we might have imagined there would not be one hungry person on the face of the earth. What happened? Man has to reckon with God and the day is coming when it will only get worse.

Seal #4 - The Pale Horse

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.

Revelation 06:08

There is no color assigned to this horse, it is called a pale one. Why it is thus translated is not certain. The Greek word here is chloros (χλωρος) and is the root of our word chlorophyll ("green leaf"). In the other three passages where this word is found it is translated "green."

Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. Mark 06:39

I would suppose that, since I have never seen a green horse, the translators used "pale" rather than green. On the other hand, I have never see a red horse either (not really red). Also note that just as black is the opposite of white, green is the opposite of red. It is not important if the horse was really green, or if John could find no other word to describe the appearance of this horse - its significance is what is important.

The meaning of the horse needs no explanation. Warfare and famine can lead only to death and destruction. By these four horsemen, one fourth of the world will be destroyed.

Many believe that the above statement, "one fourth of the world will be destroyed," as well as other statements we shall find point out the use of nuclear warfare in the end times. This is possible. While I was somewhat skeptical of this for other reasons we shall be discussing, I used to go along with this idea.

The recent war in Kuwait, however, has been most interesting in many ways. One need no have a very good memory to recall the vivid pictures of the land of Kuwait going up in flames. Hundreds of oil wells spewing forth fire and smoke. Now this was a "minor skirmish" and yet look at the devastation. Expand this to total world war and what do you have? Nuclear weapons are not essential to bring the devastation described here and elsewhere.

Note that it was men on horses that brought this about. John didn't see four men take of in Stealth Bombers - he saw men on horses. There is considerable evidence that the final destruction will be brought about through a ground war.

Before we conclude this section, consider an interesting passage from Zechariah.

I looked up again--and there before me were four chariots coming out from between two mountains--mountains of bronze! The first chariot had red horses, the second black, the third white, and the fourth dappled--all of them powerful. I asked the angel who was speaking to me, "What are these, my lord?" The angel answered me, "These are the four spirits of

heaven, going out from standing in the presence of the Lord of the whole world. The one with the black horses is going toward the north country, the one with the white horses toward the west, and the one with the dappled horses toward the south." When the powerful horses went out, they were straining to go throughout the earth. And he said, "Go throughout the earth!" So they went throughout the earth. Then he called to me, "Look, those going toward the north country have given my Spirit rest in the land of the north."
Zechariah 06:01-08

Seal #5 - The Martyrs

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. 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?" 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.

Revelation 06:09-11

In the above passage, the word testimony is taken from the Greek word *marturia* (μαρτυρία), the source of our word martyr. The word comes to have the meaning it has today because of what it meant to be a witness for Christ in ages past and, in some places, even today.

Long ago God promised that he would take vengeance on those who persecuted His people.

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD'S favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn,
Isaiah 61:01-02

The Apostle Paul instructed Christians not to take vengeance, that the Lord would take care of it.

Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.
Romans 12:19

So, up in heaven are a great many souls, from both O.T. and N.T. times who have heeded God's word and have waited for Him to avenge them. But the time has come when they begin to get anxious. Lord, when are you going to avenge our deaths?"

In response, the Lord clothed them in white robes.

But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. **Mark 16:04-05**

Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for it is now that God favors what you do. Always be clothed in white, and always anoint your head with oil. **Ecclesiastes 09:07-08**

Dressing them in white was meant to appease them. It was meant to make them comfortable for there was still more to be done. All of the martyrs had not been martyred yet. Where were these yet to be martyred Christians? Jews? Who? We shall wait for a while and see if the answer shows up.

They will not have to wait for long. For we go on to the sixth seal.

Seal #6 - Devastation and Fear

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, 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. 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. 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! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

Revelation 06:12-17

The first event connected with the sixth seal is a great earthquake. The Greek word is *seismos* (σεισμος) from which we get seismograph (earthquake writer). Earthquakes have accompanied some significant events in Biblical history. Christ's death and His resurrection were accompanied by earthquakes.

When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the

earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed,
"Surely he was the Son of God!" Matthew 27:54

There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from
heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. Matthew 28:02

The Lord used an earthquake to free Paul.

Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the
prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and
everybody's chains came loose. Acts 16:26

Jesus said there would be earthquakes in the end times.

Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will
be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning
of birth pains. Mark 13:08

There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various
places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven. Luke 21:11

Jesus said that the earthquakes would be accompanied by fearful events and great
signs from heaven. Here we are told what these signs will be. The signs from heaven
deal with the sun, the moon, and the stars. There are many significant Old and New
Testament prophecies regarding this. We begin with their significance.

And when you look up to the sky and see the sun, the moon and the
stars--all the heavenly array--do not be enticed into bowing down to them
and worshiping things the LORD your God has apportioned to all the
nations under heaven. Deuteronomy 04:19

Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars.
Psalm 148:03

Then the prophecy.

Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of
trouble come and the years approach when you will say, "I find no
pleasure in them"-- before the sun and the light and the moon and the
stars grow dark, and the clouds return after the rain; when the keepers of
the house tremble, and the strong men stoop, when the grinders cease
because they are few, and those looking through the windows are blind; when the
doors are shut, and the windows are closed; when the voice of the bird is
stilled, and the oxen low, and the sheep are dumb, when the fowls of the
air are scattered, and the beasts are perished, when the wild beasts cry
because there is no one to feed them. Ecclesiastes 12:01-03

See, the day of the LORD is coming--a cruel day, with wrath and fierce

anger--to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will break the pride of the arrogant. I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon will not give its light. All the shining lights in the heavens I will darken over you; I will bring darkness over your land, declares the Sovereign LORD. Ezekiel 32:07-08

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming. It is close at hand-- a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and mighty army comes, such as never was of old nor ever will be in ages to come. . . .They rush upon the city; they run along the wall. They climb into the houses; like thieves they enter through the windows. Before them the earth shakes, the sky trembles, the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars no longer shine. The LORD thunders at the head of his army; his forces are beyond number, and mighty are those who obey his command. The day of the LORD is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it? Joel 02:01-02,09-11

Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, trample the grapes, for the winepress is full and the vats overflow--so great is their wickedness! Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine. Joel 03:13-15

"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.'" Matthew 24:29

"There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Luke 21:25

I believe that this speaks of an actual, tremendous earthquake. I believe that the sun will and the moon will be darkened. Look at Kuwait at the end of the war. The oil fields were blown up by the Iraqi soldiers - but a giant earthquake could have done the same. The skies there are still dark at noon because of the smoke from the fires. Then there is the statement about the stars falling. This is harder to explain.

The Greek is not of much help. The Greek word means "to fall." It seems impossible that all of the stars would fall to the earth. It seems impossible that even a large number of stars would fall. Is this to be taken literally?

The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up. What does this mean? "receded" here is translated as "parted company in the only other place this word is found.

They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company.
Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus,

Acts 15:39

We can only assume that John wrote "what he saw." We can only assume that something fell to the earth and that this was accompanied by the removal (or hiding) of the stars. This would lead one to such a conclusion. What will actually happen, physically speaking, is very hard to discern. What the event will look like is not. What its affect on mankind will be is told to us.

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.

The above sentence begins with the kings of the earth and ends with the slave and the freeman. It includes everyone. The entire population hid in caves and other available places from the devastation. No! That is not what the text says. It says that they hid from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! As terrifying as the scene we have just witnessed may be, the most terrifying sight was that of God upon His throne.

Now wait! How could they see this? What does this passage say? The sky was rolled back like a window shade. If you key the sky out of the way (the first heaven) and the universe (where the stars are) out of the way (the second heaven), then one can look right into the third heaven. That was the terrifying sight that caused man to hide and wish he were dead.

They called on the mountains to fall on them and deliver them from this state. But they did not. Instead, the promised judgement awaits them. But it awaits us in the next chapter.

REVELATION CHAPTER SEVEN

Introduction

In the last chapter we saw martyrs asking the Lord, "how long?" They had been waiting patiently for the Lord to avenge their deaths and now they wanted to know how much longer they must wait.

The Lord promised it would not be long, but there were still others who would meet with the same fate and, until that happened, they must wait.

The Five Angels

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. 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:

Revelation 07:01-02

gain, we come to the number four. We have seen four living creatures. The significance then was universality. It is the same here and here it is spelled out for us. Each of four angels was standing on one of the four corners of the earth.

Now we have a problem. Should we take it literally that the earth has four corners? We all know that the world is round (unless you belong to the Earth is Flat Society") and has no corners. The reason I mention this is that there are those who scoff at the Bible and "all of the errors in it." "Here," they say, "is one, whoever wrote this didn't know that the earth was round and didn't have corners."

This is rubbish! First of all, it is a myth that everyone thought that the world was flat until Columbus came along. Educated men have known this for ages. It is true that the phrase appears elsewhere in the Bible.

He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; he will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth. Isaiah 11:12

"Son of man, this is what the Sovereign LORD says to the land of Israel: The end! The end has come upon the four corners of the land. Ezekiel 07:02

Classical literature also abounds with the phrase. The phrase is used, even today and is always taken to be figurative. That scoffers would insist that the authors of the Bible would have meant this literally is absurd.

The angels here, then, represent God's universal protection of the earth and its inhabitants until the time is right. A fifth angel then appears on the scene with a message for the other four.

The 144 Thousand Sealed

"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." Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel. From the tribe of Judah 12,000 were sealed,
from the tribe of Reuben 12,000,
from the tribe of Gad 12,000,
from the tribe of Asher 12,000,
from the tribe of Naphtali 12,000,
from the tribe of Manasseh 12,000,
from the tribe of Simeon 12,000,
from the tribe of Levi 12,000,
from the tribe of Issachar 12,000,
from the tribe of Zebulun 12,000,
from the tribe of Joseph 12,000,
from the tribe of Benjamin 12,000.

Revelation 07:03-08

If we go back to the book of Genesis and refresh our memories regarding the twelve sons of Israel and their tribes, we get the following information. Below are listed the sons for each of the four women. The sons are listed, for each woman, in the order of birth. The superscripts are the order in which they are listed above.

Leah:

1) Reuben¹ 2) Simeon⁷ 3) Levi⁸ 4) Judah² 9) Issachar⁹ 10) Zebulun¹⁰.

Leah's handmaid Zilpah: 7) Gad³ 8) Asher⁴.

Rachel: 11) Joseph¹¹ 12) Benjamin¹².

Rachael's handmaid Bilhah: 5) Dan 6) Naphtali⁵.

From the above we make the following observations:

- 1) The tribe of Dan is missing, replaced with Manassah (Joseph's son)
- 2) Of the first four born, only two are mentioned first.

- 3) Simeon and Levi are bypassed and Leah's handmaid's sons next.
- 4) Rachael's handmaid's "sons" comes next (Dan being replaced with Manasseh).
- 5) The rest of Leah's sons are listed next.
- 6) Rachael's sons are listed last.

What happened that Simeon and Levi got moved toward the end?

"Simeon and Levi are brothers--their swords are weapons of violence. Let me not enter their council, let me not join their assembly, for they have killed men in their anger and hamstringed oxen as they pleased. Cursed be their anger, so fierce, and their fury, so cruel! I will scatter them in Jacob and disperse them in Israel.

Genesis 49:05-07

Jacob's prediction was fulfilled. Simeon never really had a tribal territory and Levi, being made the priestly line, had no territory.

"Dan will provide justice for his people as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan will be a serpent by the roadside, a viper along the path, that bites the horse's heels so that its rider tumbles backward. "I look for your deliverance, O LORD.

Genesis 45:16-18

Dan was disgraced. On the other hand, Joseph received a double blessing through Ephraim (here referenced as Joseph) and Manassah.

One thing is certain. These are the twelve actual tribes of Israel. They are not people of English descent who refer to themselves as "British Israelites" nor are they Jehovah's Witnesses, or people of any other cult or religion.

These 144,000 men were sealed. What does this mean?

Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."

John 06:27

...set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

2 Corinthians 01:22

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit

Ephesians 01:13

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Ephesians 04:30

It is a sign that a person belongs to God. In the passage above it refers to Christians. In this passage it is Jews - the Christians have all been raptured. What is the purpose of this sealing? In order to understand the need for this, we must go on to the next section.

The Tribulation Martyrs

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. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." 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 worshiped God, saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!" Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes--who are they, and where did they come from?" -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.

Revelation 07:09-14

Let us begin this section by looking at the end of it. As John saw this great multitude he was asked, "where did they come from?" Good question! John's answer was, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation;" Now this is a problem with some meat to it. If the church does not go through the tribulation, and these people have "come out of it", who are they?

First, we have for the first time in this book the term great tribulation. There have been many tribulations in the world, especially for the Jews. But the Greek here is rather explicit. It reads *tes thlipsieos tes megales* (της θλιψεως της μεγαλης) = The Great Tribulation. In other words, a specific tribulation. There are a number of references to this in the Bible, we shall consider the most specific ones.

As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the

sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains. "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel--let the reader understand-- then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now--and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect--if that were possible.

Matthew 24:03-24

So Jesus spoke of it. The words great distress are a translation of the same words. Jeremiah also spoke of it.

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Write in a book all the words I have spoken to you. The days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will bring my people Israel and Judah back from captivity and restore them to the land I gave their forefathers to possess,' says the LORD." These are the words the LORD spoke concerning Israel and Judah: "This is what the LORD says: "'Cries of fear are heard--terror, not peace. Ask and see: Can a man bear children? Then why do I see every strong man with his hands on his stomach like a woman in labor, every face turned deathly pale? How awful that day will be! None will be like it. It will be a time of trouble for Jacob, but he will be saved out of it. "' In that day,' declares the LORD Almighty, 'I will break the yoke off their necks and will tear off their bonds; no longer will foreigners enslave them. Instead, they will serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them. Jeremiah 30:01-09

Then, the passage to which Jesus referred to in Daniel.

"His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation. With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him. "Those who are wise will instruct many, though for a time they will fall by the sword or be burned or captured or plundered. When they fall, they will receive a little help, and many who are not sincere will join them. Some of the wise will stumble, so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless until the time of the end, for it will still come at the appointed time. "The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place. He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the one desired by women, nor will he regard any god, but will exalt himself above them all. Instead of them, he will honor a god of fortresses; a god unknown to his fathers he will honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. He will attack the mightiest fortresses with the help of a foreign god and will greatly honor those who acknowledge him. He will make them rulers over many people and will distribute the land at a price. "At the time of the end the king of the South will engage him in battle, and the king of the North will storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships. He will invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood. He will also invade the Beautiful Land. Many countries will fall, but Edom, Moab and the leaders of Ammon will be delivered from his hand. He will extend his power over many countries; Egypt will not escape. He will gain control of the treasures of gold and silver and all the riches of Egypt, with the Libyans and Nubians in submission. But reports from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many. He will pitch his royal tents between the seas at the beautiful holy mountain. Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him. "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people--everyone whose name is found written in the book--will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. Daniel 11:31-12:03

Later, in this passage, Daniel gets very specific about this time.

One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, "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." I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, "My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?" He replied, "Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end. Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand. "From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days. "As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance."

Daniel 12:06-13

Three specific time periods are mentioned in this passage:

- 1) It will be for a time, times and half a time.
- 2) There will be 1,290 days.
- 3) The end of the 1,335 days.

Before we consider these, let us look at one more specific passage.

"Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. 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." Daniel 09:24-27

To the above three times, we can add a fourth.

4) Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people.

Now $70 \times 7 = 490$. But 490 what? The Hebrew word simply refers to a heptad. We have words for dozen and pair and so on. The Hebrew had a word for seven. Without going into a detailed study of the book of Daniel, the numbers refer to years.

The 490 years are, according to the above passage, divided into 49 years, 454 years (42 times 7), and 7 years, a total of 490 years. The first 483 years are history and God stopped his clock in 70AD. The clock is still stopped and will remain so until the time of the tribulation - 7 years.

But the above passage goes further. 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. The last seven years, the time generally referred to as the time of the Tribulation, are divided in half. There are two three-and-one-half year periods. Now how many days are there in 3.5 years? You may be surprised to know that there is more than one answer to this question.

- 1) "365 times 3.5" = 1276 to 1280 days according to our calendar. The variation depends on the time of the year and whether leap-year is included.
- 2) In terms of Hebrew months: 1259 to 1290 days, depending on how many "leap months." are in this time span and on when the time begins.
- 3) In "prophetic years" it is 42 times 30 or 1260 days.

Thus we have answer ranging from 1259 to 1290 days.

The first time being considered is three and one-half years, a "time" being a year and "times" being interpreted as two years. The second time mentioned, 1290 days is in accordance with the Hebrew calendar. The third time exceeds the second by 45 days and, since we are not studying the Book of Daniel, we will let this one pass.

We have, at least answered the question. The Great Tribulation will last for three and one-half years. The people John saw were saved "out of" the last half of the seven years of tribulation.

Now all Fundamentalist Christians (by definition) are Premillennialists. This means that we believe that the 1000 year reign of Christ is yet to come. There are those who are Postmillennialists and many who are Amillennialists. The last group does not believe in a millennium - after all, the word never appears in the Bible (they say). But the term 1000 years does and millennium is just the Latin word for it.

Some Fundamental Christians, however, have differing views with respect to the Rapture of the Church. There are those of us who claim a Pre-tribulation Rapture. There are those who hold to a Mid-tribulation Rapture and, a few who hold to a Post-tribulation Rapture. It is my opinion that the first two are the only ones that are at all consist with literal interpretation of the Scriptures. The Bible is quite clear that the Church will not go through "the tribulation". The only opening for differences of opinion is whether the references are to the Time of Tribulation (7 years) or, the Great Tribulation of three and one-half years.

If you hold the Mid-Tribulation view, you might assume that these martyrs who have just shown up are the Church. But there are several problems with this view.

None of the references to the Rapture indicate that we will be martyred in the process. In fact, Paul writes,

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. 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. 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. Therefore encourage each other with these words. 1 Thessalonians 04:15-18

Paul indicates that, if we are living at the time of the Rapture, we will never see physical death. Second, if you believe in a Pre-tribulation Rapture, then it makes no sense to say that the Church is saved out of The Great Tribulation.

Now, if you are observant, you might note that this passage in Revelation does not describe these people as being martyrs. They are only described as being cleansed by the blood of Christ. What indication is there that these are martyrs? The answer lies in the context. Remember what we read in Chapter Six?

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. 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?" 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.

Revelation 06:09-11

Then the 144,000 have been sealed. Sealed for what? They were sealed so that when death came upon the earth, they would not be slain. Just as those who had the blood on their door posts in Egypt were spared, so these that were sealed were spared. So, now, the only living inhabitants of the Earth are: (a) 144,000 Jews and non-saved people.

"How," you say, "will there be Christians to be saved out of the Great Tribulation if the church has already been raptured? Think for a moment! Suppose that one day you watch the news on TV and find that hundreds of thousands of American citizens are listed as missing. Then the news goes on to say that the most of the missing seems to be people who used to attend the various churches in the country. There will be those who will turn to the Bible (it won't be raptured) and find that what it says is true and will accept Christ. That, then, is where they will come from.

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language... Notice the terminology used here. The

people are described as coming from every ethnos (εθνος) and phule (φυλη) and laos (λαος) and glossa (γλωσσα). The first word does not require much explanation - we get ethnic from it. It describes people who have the same culture and habits. The second word is translated tribe and the Greek word refers to people with a common descendant and hence tribe is correct. The third word is a political word and describes people under a common rule. The last word describes people identified by the tongue they speak.

All of this put together means that these people come from every imaginable (and unimaginable) part of the Earth. It would appear, then, that this event can not take place until it is possible for all such people to be saved. It is necessary for each of these people to have access to the Word of God in their own tongue. This day can not be far off at the rate that translations are now appearing.

These people are also dressed in white robes, the same as the martyrs we saw previously. They also have palm branches in their hands. What is the significance of the palm branch? It only appears in two other places in the Bible.

They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna!"
"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Blessed is the King
of Israel!"
John 12:13

This does not answer our question. Why did they greet Jesus before with Palm Branches? Going back into the Old Testament, we find the following.

But the people have not returned to him who struck them, nor have they sought the LORD Almighty. So the LORD will cut off from Israel both head and tail, both palm branch and reed in a single day; the elders and prominent men are the head, the prophets who teach lies are the tail. Isaiah 09:13-15

The LORD has poured into them a spirit of dizziness; they make Egypt stagger in all that she does, as a drunkard staggers around in his vomit. There is nothing Egypt can do--head or tail, palm branch or reed. Isaiah 19:14-15

The Palm Branch is used to symbolize the head of something, the reed the tail. The first of the above two verses further defines it. It signifies the leaders of a nation. Why did they meet Jesus with palm branches? Because they thought He was coming to be their king rather than their savior. But the time is coming when He will be the King of Kings. And that time has come in heaven as John watches on. Jesus is being worshipped as king. This is amplified in the final passage of this chapter.

God's Tent for His People

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. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center 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."

Revelation 07:15-17

They worship Him and serve Him who sits on the throne. In return, He does a number of things. First, He spreads his tent over them. The KJV does not have anything about a tent.

Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. Revelation.07:15 KJV

The difference is in the Hebrew idiom where to spread ones tent means to dwell with. We have the same idea in the following verse. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 01:14

Here it means not only that the Lord will dwell with these people, but provide for them as well. He will provide them protection. He will provide food and water. They will lack nothing and there will be no more tears.

REVELATION CHAPTER EIGHT

In the last two chapters, we have seen six of the seven seals removed from the scroll. It is now time for the seventh seal to be opened. Each of the first six seals had some event associated with it. The seventh seal, itself, has a non-event associated with it (see below) but encompasses a multitude of events.

The Seventh Seal Opened

When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

Revelation 08:01

Someone has said "there will not be any women in heaven since they could not keep silent for a half an hour." Of course, men can not either! So, then, we ask what the meaning of this is? Maybe there will be no one in heaven! The answer to the meaning of this is in the period of time involved.

The Greek word for hour appears some 93 times in the N.T. (sometimes it is translated time). But the word half-hour occurs only here. It is the Greek word hemioron (ἡμιώραρον). The prefix "hemi" means half and the rest is the word for hour. Why did John simply say "an hour" or "for a little while" or "for a few minutes"? I believe that one must take the time to be literal and that there is a psychological explanation for it.

Take two or more people and place them in a room together (without a lot of serious work to do) and what will happen? They begin talking. I have yet to enter a classroom where I didn't have to get the class' attention so that would stop talking and listen to my lecture. People naturally talk.

Now, there may be periods of several minutes when talking will cease. But the human soul can not go for a full half-hour in silence. Someone will start talking. There are, however, exceptions to this in this is one of these. When do people not talk? I have arrived early at funerals where many people have gathered and sat for nearly a half an hour without anyone speaking (except maybe the undertaker, etc.). There are grave moments in peoples lives when talking is not the order of the day.

Here, with the opening of the seventh seal, (to put it bluntly) all Hell is going to break loose! God's fury is going to be unleashed upon the earth. It is a very grave situation. There are no Hallelujah's, no rejoicing, no comments - just silence. Can you picture the scene in heaven? Everyone is sitting (or standing) and staring at one-another, knowing what is to come next and how awesome it will be.

Perhaps we need to have some time of silences and contemplate what is to come and then, perhaps, be spurred into action!

The Seven Trumpets

And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. 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 smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel's hand. 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. Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them.

Revelation 08:02-06

The next judgments are all announced with the blowing of a trumpet. The trumpet is mentioned many times in the Bible. Sometimes it is in praise, with other instruments. We shall consider only the passages which have bearing on this one.

On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him. Exodus 19:16-19

The trumped sounded the alarm for the coming of the Lord to give the Commandments to Israel.

"Say to the Israelites: 'On the first day of the seventh month you are to have a day of rest, a sacred assembly commemorated with trumpet blasts. Leviticus 23:24

It wa used to call people to worship and to service (below).

When a trumpet blast is sounded, the tribes camping on the east are to set out. Numbers 10:05

But mostly, the trumpet was sounded to prepare for war!

The seventh time around, when the priests sounded the trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the people, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the city!"
Joshua 06:16

When he arrived there, he blew a trumpet in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went down with him from the hills, with him leading them.
Judges 03:27

Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him.
Judges 06:34

There are, however, many passages in which the trumpet sounds the coming of future judgement and destruction.

Woe to the land of whirring wings along the rivers of Cush, which sends envoys by sea in papyrus boats over the water. Go, swift messengers, to a people tall and smooth-skinned, to a people feared far and wide, an aggressive nation of strange speech, whose land is divided by rivers. All you people of the world, you who live on the earth, when a banner is raised on the mountains, you will see it, and when a trumpet sounds, you will hear it. This is what the LORD says to me: "I will remain quiet and will look on from my dwelling place, like shimmering heat in the sunshine, like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest." For, before the harvest, when the blossom is gone and the flower becomes a ripening grape, he will cut off the shoots with pruning knives, and cut down and take away the spreading branches. They will all be left to the mountain birds of prey and to the wild animals; the birds will feed on them all summer, the wild animals all winter.
Isaiah 18:01-06

In that day the LORD will thresh from the flowing Euphrates to the Wadi of Egypt, and you, O Israelites, will be gathered up one by one. And in that day a great trumpet will sound. Those who were perishing in Assyria and those who were exiled in Egypt will come and worship the LORD on the holy mountain in Jerusalem.
Isaiah 27:12-13

Oh, my anguish, my anguish! I writhe in pain. Oh, the agony of my heart! My heart pounds within me, I cannot keep silent. For I have heard the sound of the trumpet; I have heard the battle cry.
Jeremiah 04:19

"Son of man, speak to your countrymen and say to them: 'When I bring the sword against a land, and the people of the land choose one of their men and make him their watchman, and he sees the sword coming against the land and blows the trumpet to warn the people, then if anyone hears the trumpet but does not take warning and the sword comes and

takes his life, his blood will be on his own head. Since he heard the sound of the trumpet but did not take warning, his blood will be on his own head. If he had taken warning, he would have saved himself. But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet to warn the people and the sword comes and takes the life of one of them, that man will be taken away because of his sin, but I will hold the watchman accountable for his blood.'

Ezekiel 33:02-06

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming. It is close at hand--

Joel 02:01

These prophetic statements carry over into the N.T.

"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.' "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. 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.

Matthew 24:29-31

. . .in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

1 Corinthians 15:52

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.

1 Thessalonians 04:16

These three N.T. prophecies are of some concern here. They each speak of a trumpet sound signalling a great event. In Matthew, it is the coming of the Son of Man. In 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians it is the Rapture. The passage in Matthew doesn't sound like the Rapture unless you happen to believe in a Post-Tribulation Rapture (or, at least, Mid-Tribulation). Then the passage in 1 Corinthians says that the Rapture will occur on the last trumpet. This, again, might imply a Post-Tribulation Rapture.

To answer this question, we shall consider several facts. First, the Greek word translated last is eschate (εσχάτη) which often has a temporal significance, hence Eschatology, the study of "last things." It also means last in non-temporal senses. This is seen below.

I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny. ~~Matthew~~ Matthew 05:26

If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this

man your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place.

Luke 14:09

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."

Acts 01:08

he second point is the introduction of trumpets to the Israelites. This is found in Numbers 10.

The LORD said to Moses: "Make two trumpets of hammered silver, and use them for calling the community together and for having the camps set out. When both are sounded, the whole community is to assemble before you at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. If only one is sounded, the leaders--the heads of the clans of Israel--are to assemble before you. When a trumpet blast is sounded, the tribes camping on the east are to set out. At the sounding of a second blast, the camps on the south are to set out. The blast will be the signal for setting out. To gather the assembly, blow the trumpets, but not with the same signal. "The sons of Aaron, the priests, are to blow the trumpets. This is to be a lasting ordinance for you and the generations to come.

Numbers 10:01-08

There were various ways the trumpet call was to be used. But there was one final call which was used for the assembling of the people together. Is this the last trumpet? The answer may be summed up as follows: (1) if you attempt to equate the last trumpet with the seventh trumpet here, there are all kinds of difficulties since the events are not the same, and (2) we are living in a special age where God is dealing with the Gentile believers - God is not dealing with Israel (as a nation). When you and I hear the trumpet that signals the rapture, it will be the last trumpet call of this age. It will be the last that you and I hear.

So, the seven trumpet blasts we are about to witness are not the ones referred to by Paul. What is to follow is accompanied by (1) the prayers of the saints (in heaven) and with great signs upon the earth.

Trumpet #1 - A Third of All Vegetation Destroyed

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.

Revelation 08:07

The first catastrophic event, signalled by the first trumpet, was a destruction of one-third of the earth's vegetation. It is hard to imagine, but not as hard now that we have seen what a "scorched earth" policy can do in the hands of an evil man. Some believe that this is some sort of nuclear holocaust. This is not necessarily so. Hail and fire speak of natural disaster, not warfare.

Trumpet #2 - A Third of the Seas Polluted

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, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

Revelation 08:08-09

The first trumpet judgement affected the earth. The second the sea. In the past one might have wondered how a third of the living creatures might be killed. They seem to be protected by the sea itself. In the last few years, large oil spills in the oceans and other seas have shown how easily this might be accomplished.

John writes that something like a huge mountain was thrown into the sea. Whatever it really was, it was afire. What did John see? His description might easily fit a huge volcano with its molten lava flowing into the sea. It could also describe a huge gusher of oil, all aflame, pouring into the sea. Whatever it was, it destroyed a third of everything in or on the sea.

Trumpet #3 - A Third of the Inland Waters Polluted

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-- 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.

Revelation 08:10-11

The third trumpet brought a great star (or what appears like a great star, more likely a meteorite or a comet, etc.) called Wormwood. The Greek term is used only here in the Bible so the name does us little good. It was, obviously, a source of bitterness an

polluted the streams and lakes and water supplies. Not very long ago this may have seemed like an impossibility. Not one has to wonder if it is possible not to pollute the waters of the world.

So, now one-third of the earth, the oceans, and the inland waters have been destroyed or made useless. What is left?

Trumpet #3 - A Third of the Heavens Darkened

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. - As I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying in midair 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!"

Revelation 08:12-13

The final "third" has to do with the heavens; the Sun, the Moon, and the stars. It is hard to determine exactly what John saw. Whether or not these heavenly bodies were themselves affected, or whether their appearance on earth was, we can not say. The end result is the same - major darkness upon the face of the earth.

Now, one-third of everything has been affected. But an eagle flies over the scene and announces "woe, woe woe." Why three "woe's" - probably because there are yet three more trumpets and these will bring even greater judgment than the first. What these are will be found in the next several chapters.

REVELATION CHAPTER NINE

The first four trumpet judgements make up a group, as did the first four seal judgements. The remaining three trumpet judgements, like the seal judgements, are each different, with the seventh leading to a new sequence of judgements.

Trumpet #5 - The Great Abyss Opened

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. 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.

Revelation 09:01-02

If you think the previous judgments have been awesome, the ones we will now witness are even more so, hence the "woes" we saw in the last chapter. Here we have another star falling from heaven. In this case, however, there is no way that we can interpret this star as being literal. You can not give a literal star a key.

Let us begin by asking who this star is. (It is not a movie star!). Consider the following two O.T. passages.

"I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel. He will crush the foreheads of Moab, the skulls of all the sons of Sheth.

Numbers 24:17

This star is the Messiah, the King of Kings. ut then, the other passage.

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!saiah 14:12

This star is Satan. Satan is the great deceiver. The Lord appears as a star - so does Satan. The star we see here is Satan. How do we know? Because it is he who opens the bottomless pit, the place where he keeps his followers. We say it was Satan who received the key. Who from? Remember Chapter One?

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. Revelation 01:18

Christ has been holding the key. But now He gives it to Satan so that he can "do his thing!" Now, let us consider the Abyss.

The KJV has "bottomless pit" as does the NAS and the RSV. The NIV has "The shaft of the abyss." The word bottomless and abyss come from the Greek word abussos (αβυσσος) from which we get the word abyss. The words pit and shaft come from a Greek word for well or hole. We shall follow up on the first word. It is found in the following N.T. passage.

But the righteousness that is by faith says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) "or 'Who will descend into the deep?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). Romans 10:06-07

Following the word back into the O.T., we have the following references (among others).

Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. Genesis 01:02

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventeenth day of the second month--on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened.

Genesis 07:11

Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made a road in the depths of the sea so that the redeemed might cross over? Isaiah 51:10

To the roots of the mountains I sank down; the earth beneath barred me in forever. But you brought my life up from the pit, O LORD my God. Jonah 02:06

In some references it (appears) to refer to a deep source of water. In some references it definitely refers to the place of the departed dead - those who are not now in heaven. The abyss referred to here is definitely the place where Satan's followers have been held captive.

As it is opened, a great column of smoke arises from it. But that is only the beginning!

The Locusts

And out of the smoke locusts came down upon the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. 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 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.

During those days men will seek death, but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them. The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces. Their hair was like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. 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. They had tails and stings like scorpions, and in their tails they had power to torment people for five months. They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon. The first woe is past; two other woes are yet to come.

Revelation 09:03-12

Out of the smoke came "locusts like scorpions." What were these things that John saw? Locusts are not mentioned elsewhere in the N.T. except those that John the Baptist ate. There are several mentions of them in the O.T. Some are literal...

If you refuse to let them go, I will bring locusts into your country tomorrow. Exodus 10:04

The plague of locusts in Egypt was literal. Some are figurative...

Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood since the earth was founded? He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in. He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing. Isaiah 40:21-23

In this passage, the term is applied to people - as being insignificant in God's eyes. The term scorpion comes from the Greek word used here. The scorpion is not mentioned elsewhere in the N.T. except in one of Jesus' parables. Scorpions are found several times in the O.T., but the only figurative use is below.

And whether they listen or fail to listen--for they are a rebellious house--they will know that a prophet has been among them. And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them or their words. Do not be afraid, though briars and thorns are all around you and you live among scorpions. Do not be afraid of what they say or terrified by them, though they are a rebellious house. Ezekiel 02:05-06

In order to determine what it was that John saw, we look at the terms that describes these "locusts".

1) The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle,

- 2) On their heads they wore something like crowns of gold,
- 3) Their faces resembled human faces,
- 4) Their hair was like women's hair,
- 5) Their teeth were like lions' teeth,
- 6) They had breastplates like breastplates of iron,
- 7) The sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle,
- 8) They had tails and stings like scorpions,
- 9) They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon.

Let us begin by noting what John does not say. He does not say that they looked like horses. You must take the entire phrase, horses prepared for battle. The phrase prepared for battle appears several times in the Bible, two of which are noted below.

About forty thousand armed for battle crossed over before the LORD to the plains of Jericho for war. Joshua 04:13
 The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the LORD. Proverbs 21:31

In all cases, it refers not to the person or the horse, but what the person or horse is wearing. These "locusts" were wearing armor to protect them. They were heavily protected.

The twenty-four elders had "crowns of gold." There were those in the O.T. who had golden crowns.

He took the crown from the head of their king--its weight was a talent of gold, and it was set with precious stones--and it was placed on David's head. He took a great quantity of plunder from the city 2 Samuel 12:30

Mordecai left the king's presence wearing royal garments of blue and white, a large crown of gold and a purple robe of fine linen. And the city of Susa held a joyous celebration. Esther 08:15

But, again, this is not what John wrote. He said what appeared as crowns of gold. The term appears many times in the KJV of the book of Exodus.

"Have them make a chest of acacia wood--two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high. Overlay it with pure gold, both inside and out, and make a gold molding around it. Exodus 25:10-11

The KJV has "gold crown" rather than "gold molding". On top of all of the armament these "locusts" had, was some golden colored band. The next three items have to do with the heads. They had faces like those of men, hair like women's and teeth like those of a lion.

At this point we shall stop and ask if it is possible to determine what John actually saw? Let us decide that we may do one of two things (1) assume that these were literally locusts, or (2) that they were something that looked - in some manner- like locusts.

We may determine the following. (1) if they were really locusts, they were not like any locusts this world has ever seen before - in other words, if they were "real" locusts, it was (will be) some variety never seen before. (2) John was told to write down what he saw. It may be assumed, then, that he described what he saw as accurately as possible. If he saw something he had never seen before, and had no specific words to describe it, he would have to do the best he could with the terms he had.

Let us assume that they are not really locusts. This is an assumption, it may not be true. If the assumption is true, what did he see? First, they were airborne so they were either creatures that could fly, or aircraft. Let us assume the later. The fact that they were armed would make them military aircraft. (the gold band we will skip for now). Now about the face and head. If they were small aircraft, then perhaps John was able to see the pilot - hence the face of a man. Then there is the "hair of a woman". Until recent years this might have been hard to figure. Now, it is hard, sometimes, to tell a man and a woman apart based on the hair. Even more important, the Gulf War has shown us, for the first time ever, American women flying in combat. In the future, it may prove that women are better used in aircraft, leaving the men on the ground.

They had teeth like lions. If John saw the pilot, the pilot always has some sort of helmet on and hence, what would normally be were the mouth is, would be part of the helmet. The breastplates of iron would, again, speak of their armament. The wings and their noise would be what? The sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle. This could refer to the wings of s fixed wing aircraft with powerful jet engines, but not nearly as well as to a description of the wings of a helicopter. Finally, their tails might be some sort of air-ground weapon.

Is this a correct assessment, or will they really be locusts? Consider the two O.T. passages below dealing with locusts (the LXX uses the same Greek word, akris (ακρις))

And the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over Egypt so that locusts will swarm over the land and devour everything growing in the fields, everything left by the hail." So Moses stretched out his staff over Egypt, and the LORD made an east wind blow across the land all that day and all that night. By morning the wind had brought the locusts; they invaded all Egypt and settled down in every area of the country in great numbers. Never before had there been such a plague of locusts, nor will there ever be again.

Exodus 10:12-14

Note two things from this passage. The locusts in Egypt devoured all of the crops in the land. They did not hurt a single soul. But John writes 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 not given power to kill them, but only to torture them for five months. If they locust John saw were real, they did not act like real ones. Locusts are vegetarians. Note also the comment at the end of the above passage. Never before had there been such a plague of locusts, nor will there ever be again. The promise given is that this would never happen again. God promised never to destroy the world with a flood again, He has not, nor will He. He promised not to use locusts in this way again.

But now, not the passage below.

What the locust swarm has left the great locusts have eaten; what the great locusts have left the young locusts have eaten; what the young locusts have left other locusts have eaten. Wake up, you drunkards, and weep! Wail, all you drinkers of wine; wail because of the new wine, for it has been snatched from your lips. A nation has invaded my land, powerful and without number; it has the teeth of a lion, the fangs of a lioness. It has laid waste my vines and ruined my fig trees. It has stripped off their bark and thrown it away, leaving their branches white. Joel 01:04-07

Here is a prophecy regarding the destruction of locusts. But the prophecy goes on to tell us that the "locusts" are really the army of a powerful nation that has invaded the land. Note also that these "locusts" have the "teeth of a lion."

Finally, John tells us who their leader will be. First, the Greek name is Appolion. There are many references where this word is used, but not as a proper noun.

that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:15-16

Appolion, then, is one whose assignment is to see that people do perish. The Hebrew name Abbadon is found in O.T. passages such as those below:

For how can I bear to see disaster fall on my people? How can I bear to see the destruction of my family?" Esther 08:06

The Jews struck down all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying them, and they did what they pleased to those who hated them. Esther 09:05

Death is naked before God; Destruction lies uncovered. Job 26:06

Destruction and Death say, 'Only a rumor of it has reached our ears.' Job 28:22

It is a fire that burns to Destruction; it would have uprooted my harvest. Job 31:12

Is your love declared in the grave, your faithfulness in Destruction? Psalm 88:11

Death and Destruction lie open before the LORD--how much more the hearts of men! Proverbs 15:11

Death and Destruction are never satisfied, and neither are the eyes of man. Proverbs 27:20

Note that Destruction is capitalized in most of these passages. These "locusts" are under the direction of the "Destroyer."

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. During those days men will seek death, but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them. Why for five months? It is said that this is the life span of an adult locust; this may be the significance.

What was their power to harm man? If we were to assume that these "locusts" where, in fact, helicopters, we would conclude that they were very small (relatively speaking) ones, with a single pilot, and carrying small weapons with chemical warheads. What were we concerned about during the Gulf War? Was it not that these types of weapons would be used? The Destroyer will have no reservations against their use.

Trumpet #6 - The Four Angels

The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the horns of the golden altar that is before God. It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." 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 number of the mounted troops was two hundred million. I heard their number.

Revelation 09:13-16

As the sixth trumpet is sounded, the four angels again come into the scene. We assume these to be the same four we saw back in chapter Seven -

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. 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: Revelation 07:01-02

One-third of everything on earth has now been destroyed - except mankind. Now it is man's day.

Before we proceed, let us note something of interest:

Trumpet #1:	Vegetation	Genesis 1:11
Trumpet #2:	The Sea	Genesis 1:20
Trumpet #3:	The Inland waters	
Trumpet #4:	The Sky	Genesis 1:20
Trumpet #6:	Mankind	Genesis 1:26

One-third of things on, in, and above the earth were destroyed in the order that God has created them. Notice that we omitted Trumpet #5 above. Recall that there was not judgment associated with Seal #5 either!

The Horses and Riders

The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur. A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths. 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.

Revelation 09:17-19

John now sees 200,000,000 (Two Hundred Million) horses and riders. The KJV has "two hundred thousand thousand." You see, in John's day, the National Debt hadn't risen to such an amount that numbers had to be added to the system of enumeration. The Greek says, *dismyriades myridon* (δισμυριαδες μυριαδων) We saw the same words in chapter 7, verse 9, where the words were added "no one could count them." One has to wonder if the text really means 200,000,000 troops, or merely a very large number. Considering several passages in the KJV where the word is used, we find:

And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. Matthew 18:24

In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the

Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

Luke 12:01

For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

1 Corinthians 04:15

Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.

1 Corinthians 14:19

But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

Hebrews 12:22

In only the first passage is the word meant to describe a countable amount, and this is a parable and the amount is not important. The word only means 10,000 to the extent that this is the largest number people in John's day could comprehend. In other words, except for the "2" in front of this quantity, we could easily assume it meant an uncountable number of horsemen. The "2" seems to indicate a more literal interpretation.

The breastplates were RED, YELLOW and BLUE. What does this mean? It would likely denote their country. There are, at least, six national flags today which have these three colors and only these three colors: Andorra, Chad, Columbia, Ecuador, Romania, and Venezuela. Who knows what the future holds. Maybe (and this is just a faint maybe), the English Common Market will develop a common flag of these colors.

Of course, we have not established that these "horses and riders" are to be taken literally. Maybe they are angelic beings. There are those who don't believe this is literal. I don't believe that the horses are to be taken literally. There are those who say the last battles on earth will actually be fought on horseback. Anything is possible, I suppose.

What did we learn in the Gulf War. First, the air battle went in. Not many people were slain in the air battle, but very many were demoralized. Then the ground assault began. Sound kind of familiar? The locusts, did not kill anyone, but they sure made them miserable. Now it is time for the land war and the horses are probably tanks, troop carriers, or some similar vehicles.

The Yet Unrepentant

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. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.

Revelation 09:20-21

In spite of one-third of mankind being destroyed, those remaining refuse to repent. It is too late for repentance.

REVELATION CHAPTER TEN

The Intermission

Six of the trumpets have sounded, the devastation has been terrible. There is yet another trumpet to sound. Before this happens, there is an intermission. The seventh trumpet will not sound until the next chapter.

The Angel with the Little Scroll

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. 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, and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke. 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."

Revelation 10:01-04

Once before we saw a "mighty angel", in Revelation 5:2. We shall see the angel again in Revelation 18:21. Who this angel is we can not say. It appears as this angel is the "spokesperson" for all of the angels. The angel has characteristics previously ascribed to God. For example...

And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne. Revelation 04:03

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.

Revelation 01:14-15

"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. Revelation 02:18

This was truly a mighty angel if not one of the persons of the God head. It would not be the first time that God Himself appeared as an angel.

The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham

looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground. Genesis 18:01-02

If you follow the above passage, two of the "men" were angels, the third was the Lord Himself.

The angel plants one foot on the land, one on the seas. This is symbolic of the angel having control over the entire earth. He hold a little scroll. Nowhere is the term found in the Bible except here and future references to it in this book. We are not told what this little scroll contained. Some believe it to be the scroll with the seven seals which has now been opened. It is possible, but the question remains as to why it is called here a little scroll.

There are three Greek words which may be translated as scroll or book. The term book is not very literal since there was no such thing as a book in John's day. Today it might have been a book - then it was a scroll. These words are significant in the Greek. They are biblaridon (βιβλαριδιον) and biblion (βιβλιον) and biblos (βιβλος). The last word means, simply a scroll (or book?). It was found in chapter 3.

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. Revelation 03:05

Here, even the NIV translates the term "book.". The second word is a diminutive of the last. We might assume that the book of life might be a very large volume. This letter which John wrote, and the scroll with the seven seals, the title deed to the earth, would not be so massive and hence the second term was used for them.

"Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea." Revelation 01:11

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. Revelation 05:01

But in Chapter Ten, we have the first word which describes a very small book or scroll. From the language, then, we would assume it to be separate from the scroll with the seven seals. It may very well be a "Reader's Digest" condensation of the other scroll. It may simply be a list of the judgements yet to come.

When this angel appears, we have yet seven other objects which appear - seven thunders. Thunder is always a sign of God's judgement.

those who oppose the LORD will be shattered. He will thunder against them from heaven; the LORD will judge the ends of the earth. "He will give

strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed."

Isaiah 02:10

While Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to engage Israel in battle. But that day the LORD thundered with loud thunder against the Philistines and threw them into such a panic that they were routed before the Israelites.

1 Samuel 07:10 He unleashes his lightning beneath the whole heaven and sends it to the ends of the earth. After that comes the sound of his roar; he thunders with his majestic voice. When his voice resounds, he holds nothing back. Job 37:03-04

What the seven thunders revealed we can not know. John was told not to write this down. This is supposed to be a book of revelation and it is. John was supposed to write down what he say, and he did. But there are things that God does not want us to know. Why this is we do not know. It is safe to assume that it is for our own good that he does not let us know. What the seven thunders revealed we can not now know, but we can no one thing for sure, and that comes next.

No More Delay!

Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven. 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! 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."

Revelation 10:05-07

The angel swore by heaven itself that "There would be no more delay!" There are variations in the translation of this phrase.

... that there should be time no longer	KJV
... that there should be delay no longer	NAS
... that there should be no more delay	RSV

The KJV has a literal translation of the Greek, but a literal translation makes no sense. There will always be time. God has existed since eternity past and will exist through eternity future. There will always be time. What the phrase means, literally, is that there will be no more time wasted in procrastination. The time has come for things to proceed according to God's plan. It is time for the "last trumpet" to sound.

Before it sounds, however, there is some information which we must learn about. This

comes next. We begin with John's strange diet.

John Eats the Little Scroll

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." 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." 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. Then I was told, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings."

Revelation 10:08-11

John is instructed to eat this scroll. This is not the only time such a thing has happened.

When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O LORD God Almighty. Jeremiah 15:16

You must speak my words to them, whether they listen or fail to listen, for they are rebellious. But you, son of man, listen to what I say to you. Do not rebel like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you." Then I looked, and I saw a hand stretched out to me. In it was a scroll, which he unrolled before me. On both sides of it were written words of lament and mourning and woe. And he said to me, "Son of man, eat what is before you, eat this scroll; then go and speak to the house of Israel." So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. Then he said to me, "Son of man, eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it." So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth.

Ezekiel 02:07-03:03

There are several interesting passages in the O.T. that bear on this.

"Though evil is sweet in his mouth and he hides it under his tongue, though he cannot bear to let it go and keeps it in his mouth, yet his food will turn sour in his stomach; it will become the venom of serpents within him. Job 20:12-14

How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Psalm 119:103

How often things seem pleasant and good at first, but when they settle upon us, they are not. God's words of judgement, as recorded on the little scroll, were word John

(thought) he wanted to hear. At last, God was going to avenge His enemies. But as the word got to his stomach and began to digest, it occurred to John how awful this judgement would be.

REVELATION CHAPTER ELEVEN

Before the last judgment, there is work for John to do. There is information we need to know. This is what we shall see in this chapter.

The Temple and the Two Witnesses

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. 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. And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth." These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.

Revelation 11:01-04

Ezekiel was given a similar mission.

In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth of the month, in the fourteenth year after the fall of the city--on that very day the hand of the LORD was upon me and he took me there. In visions of God he took me to the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain, on whose south side were some buildings that looked like a city. He took me there, and I saw a man whose appearance was like bronze; he was standing in the gateway with a linen cord and a measuring rod in his hand. The man said to me, "Son of man, look with your eyes and hear with your ears and pay attention to everything I am going to show you, for that is why you have been brought here. Tell the house of Israel everything you see." I saw a wall completely surrounding the temple area. The length of the measuring rod in the man's hand was six long cubits, each of which was a cubit and a handbreadth. He measured the wall; it was one measuring rod thick and one rod high. . . . When he had finished measuring what was inside the temple area, he led me out by the east gate and measured the area all around: He measured the east side with the measuring rod; it was five hundred cubits. He measured the north side; it was five hundred cubits by the measuring rod. He measured the south side; it was five hundred cubits by the measuring rod. Then he turned to the west side and measured; it was five hundred cubits by the measuring rod.

Ezekiel 40:01-05,42:15-19

This time, the outer court was not to be measured. It was trampled under foot by the Gentiles and hence was not to be included. Surprising as it may seem, all of the judgement and destruction we have witnessed thus far will take place during the first half of the tribulation period. The time of the Great Tribulation, is yet to come. We noted this time earlier as we noted that Daniel referred to the time as...

"From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days. Daniel 12:11-12

We noted this passage earlier. Daniel has 1290 days, John 1260 days. We note that the manner of counting days can differ. Both Daniel and John refer to 42 months or 3.5 years.

We are here introduced to the Two Witnesses. We have previously commented on the Greek word for witness. The question which always arises here is, "who are these two witnesses?" Let me describe who they probably are not! Some say that they are Moses and Elijah. Why?

About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. Luke 09:28-31

It seems like these two men are just waiting around "kicking their heels" waiting for something happens. That is, at least, what some people think. There is no reason to suppose that, just because Moses and Elijah were seen with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration that they are these two witnesses.

Then there are those who say it will be Enoch and Elijah. This is based on the following three passages.

When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. And after he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Enoch lived 365 years. Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away. Genesis 05:21-24

As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. 2 Kings 02:11

Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, Hebrews 09:27

According to Hebrews everyone must die once. Enoch did not die (yet), God took him directly to heaven. Elijah did not die (yet), God sent a chariot to take him directly to heaven. Therefore, they must be the only ones left to die. Not so! If you and I are alive at the time of the rapture, we will not see physical death either.

These two witnesses may be two Jews living at the time that the Great Tribulation is about to begin and God ordains them to this task. You can rest assured if it was important to know who these men will be, we would have been told. They may not be human at all.

Then the angel who talked with me returned and wakened me, as a man is wakened from his sleep. He asked me, "What do you see?" I answered, "I see a solid gold lampstand with a bowl at the top and seven lights on it, with seven channels to the lights. Also there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left." I asked the angel who talked with me, "What are these, my lord?" He answered, "Do you not know what these are?" "No, my lord," I replied. So he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty. . . . Then I asked the angel, "What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?" Again I asked him, "What are these two olive branches beside the two gold pipes that pour out golden oil?" He replied, "Do you not know what these are?" "No, my lord," I said. So he said, "These are the two who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth."

Zechariah 04:01-06,11-14

Whoever the two witnesses are, they appear as the same ones that Zechariah saw.

The Two Witnesses to be Slain

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. 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. Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. 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.

These two witnesses will have amazing powers. They will be able to do the following:

- 1) shut up the sky so that it will not rain.
- 2) turn waters into blood
- 3) strike the earth with every kind of plague.

Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word."

1 Kings 17:01

Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.

James 05:17

But if they do not believe these two signs or listen to you, take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground. The water you take from the river will become blood. Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh and say to him, 'This is what the LORD says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me. If you refuse to let them go, I will plague your whole country with frogs.'"

Exodus 08:01-02

On the basis of these passages, one might argue that these two witnesses must be Moses and Elijah since they had similar powers. But God can give such power to anyone He wishes. Others were responsible for various plagues.

Before David got up the next morning, the word of the LORD had come to Gad the prophet, David's seer: "Go and tell David, 'This is what the LORD says: I am giving you three options. Choose one of them for me to carry out against you.'" So Gad went to David and said to him, "Shall there come upon you three years of famine in your land? Or three months of fleeing from your enemies while they pursue you? Or three days of plague in your land? Now then, think it over and decide how I should answer the one who sent me." David said to Gad, "I am in deep distress. Let us fall into the hands of the LORD, for his mercy is great; but do not let me fall into the hands of men." So the LORD sent a plague on Israel from that morning until the end of the time designated, and seventy thousand of the people from Dan to Beersheba died.

2 Samuel 24:11-15

Then the LORD said to me, "Do not pray for the well-being of this people. Although they fast, I will not listen to their cry; though they offer burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Instead, I will destroy them with the sword, famine and plague."

Jeremiah 14:11-12

I will send famine and wild beasts against you, and they will leave you childless. Plague and bloodshed will sweep through you, and I will bring the sword against you. I the LORD have spoken."

Ezekiel 05:17

These men will serve as awesome witnesses for God. Yet, in the end they will be slain by Satan. They will be slain in the city of Jerusalem which is referred to as the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.

Unless the LORD Almighty had left us some survivors, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah. Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; listen to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah!

Isaiah 01:09-10

In that day five cities in Egypt will speak the language of Canaan and swear allegiance to the LORD Almighty. One of them will be called the City of Destruction. In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the heart of Egypt, and a monument to the LORD at its border.

Isaiah 19:18-19

The first passage clearly refers to Jerusalem as Sodom. The second passage is not as clear, but would appear to refer to Jerusalem. For three and a half days these two witnesses will lie on the street, slain. The people will gloat over them. Still there is no repentance. But God has the last word. Note the celebration which will take place after the two witnesses are slain. The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts. Kind of sounds like they will celebrate an early Christmas. Here is a rather strong suggestion to show what we have suspected all along - the giving of gifts on Christmas, with all of its commercialism, is not God inspired by Satan inspired. It dilutes the real observance of Christmas. Here the observance will serve to alleviate the concerns they had while the witnesses were alive.

The Two Witnesses to be Resurrected

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. 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. 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. The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon.

Revelation 11:11-14

After three and one-half days they were resurrected. Why this specific period of time? One might say that they were two witnesses; $2 * 3.5 = 7$, the number of perfection. I rather suspect it has a more common significance.

And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years,"
Genesis 01:14

Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun. As for your children that you said would be taken as plunder, I will bring them in to enjoy the land you have rejected. But you--your bodies will fall in this desert. Your children will be shepherds here for forty years, suffering for your unfaithfulness, until the last of your bodies lies in the desert. For forty years--one year for each of the forty days you explored the land--you will suffer for your sins and know what it is like to have me against you.' I, the LORD, have spoken, and I will surely do these things to this whole wicked community, which has banded together against me. They will meet their end in this desert; here they will die."

Numbers 14:30-35

The forty years in the wilderness were the result of 40 days of unfaithfulness. By the same token, the three and one-half days are symbolic of the three and one-half years of ministry of these two witnesses.

Their resurrection will be not unlike that of Christ. It will be accompanied by a great earthquake. Many will be terrified. The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon.

The Seventh Trumpet - Christ takes Possession

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." And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, 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. 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."

Revelation 11:15-18

The saints asked "how long?" The first answer was "wait a little while longer." Then the statement was made "there will be no more delay.". Finally, when the two witnesses were slain and resurrected, the last of the martyrs had been resurrected and the time had (will have) come. It will be signaled by...

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.

Revelation 11:19

This opens the door to Revelation, Chapter 12, where the last three and one-half years of the Tribulation begins, the Great Tribulation.

REVELATION CHAPTER TWELVE

As we embark on this chapter, we shall be confronted with a number of signs which need interpretation. We shall be careful to interpret them as accurately as possible.

There will be several signs given in this book, starting with this chapter. The Greek word here is semeion (σημειον) which is translated various ways: signs, wonders, miracles, etc. Considering the N.T. passages where the term applies to signs we have the following:

The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven. He replied, "When evening comes, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' and in the morning, 'Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah." Jesus then left them and went away.

Matthew 16:01-04

Jesus promised no signs to the bunch that reject him.

For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect--if that were possible. Matthew 24:24

Jesus did promise that false Christs and false prophets would produce signs.

"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.' "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.

Matthew 24:29-30

There is yet a sign, that of Jesus' Second Coming. The signs we will be seeing now are not from God, but from Satan.

The Pregnant Woman

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. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth.

Revelation 12:01-02

Who does this woman represent? First, we must note that this is a sign.

Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,
1 Corinthians 01:22-23

Signs are for the Jews. They are not for the Church and, of course, the Church is no longer on the scene here. They are not for the Gentiles for they do not seek signs. This, then, is a Jewish sign.

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." When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, "What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?" His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.
Genesis 37:09-11

Many many years before Israel was likened to the sun, the moon, and 12 stars (including Joseph). The signs associated with this woman are very Jewish. But what is the significance of the child she is carrying? This is the subject of a later passage.

The Red Dragon

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

Revelation 12:03-04

A second sign appears. This one being a red dragon. It doesn't take a lot of imagination to guess who this might represent. How many "pictures" have you seen of Satan, all dressed in red and carrying a pitch fork? There can be no doubt that this is Satan in as much as he is pictured as an enemy of the woman.

We do have the matter of the seven heads and crowns and the ten horns.

"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. . . . I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell--the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully. As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom. "He gave me this explanation: '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. The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. 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. Daniel 07:07,20-25

Daniel saw a similar creature that is to appear at the time of Great Tribulation. This, too, had ten horns. If you examine the passage carefully, you see that three of them were broken off - leaving seven - the seven heads that John saw.

So we now have a great struggle to begin. The woman is to give birth. The dragon is going to gobble up the child as soon as it is born.

The Child

She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. 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.

Revelation 12:05-06

Who is this child? If the woman is Israel, and if the child was snatched up into heaven without Satan being able to lay a finger on him, there can be only one answer. The child in this vision is Christ. God protected the mother and the child until the child was delivered and taken to heaven. Then the woman fled. Then the church age take place and the Israeli clock is stopped. In the time of the Great Tribulation it is again running and for 3 and one-half years (1260 days) Israel is protected.

Notice that the child will be snatched up to God. The NIV and the KJV have caught up. Snatched is a more literal translation of the Greek word *harpazo* (ἡρπάζω) which is

found in a number of N.T. passages.

When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. Acts 08:39

In a rather miraculous way, Philip was snatched away out of the scene.

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know--God knows. And I know that this man--whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows-- was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell. 2 Corinthians 12:02-04

Many believe Paul was describing his own experience. In any case, a man was snatched away from the earth into the third heaven. But these are just isolated cases. The most important "snatch" was recorded for us by Paul.

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. 1 Thessalonians 04:17

So this child will be "raptured", He will be taken to heaven. Of course, this is history. It is history that must precede the events to follow.

War in Heaven

And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. 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.

Revelation 12:07-09

A fourth play now appears on the scene. This is the angel Michael. Who is he?

A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. He said, "Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you." And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling. Then he continued, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But the prince of the Persian

kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia. Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come." Daniel 10:10-14

Michael is here first introduced. As some other, unnamed, angel came to answer Daniel's prayer, he was detained. This angel and Michael fought against another angel, an evil angel, who was the angel of the land of Persia. That is, this angel was in charge of the affairs of Persia. What about Michael?

but first I will tell you what is written in the Book of Truth. (No one supports me against them except Michael, your prince. Daniel 10:21

Here Michael is identified to Daniel as "your prince." Are we to take this as personal, that he cared for Daniel, or nationally, the angel over Israel. When you consider that some other angel was sent to answer Daniel's requests, you must consider that Michael is the angel in charge of Israel. This is made even clearer in the next passage.

"At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people--everyone whose name is found written in the book--will be delivered. Daniel 12:01

Turning to the N.T., there is one reference in Jude.

But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord Michael was with me." Jude 9
Jude 9 says, "The Lord Michael was with me." So now, Michael makes war with this dragon. Who would you pick to win?

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. Ephesians 02:02

Today, Satan is the "prince and power of the air." When Michael gets done with him it will not be so. He will be cast down to earth.

Satan's Transfer

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. 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. 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."

Revelation 12:10-12

In the above passage we read the words the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.

One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them. The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it." Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil." "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. . . . On another day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them to present himself before him. And the LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it." Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason." "Skin for skin!" Satan replied. "A man will give all he has for his own life. But stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face." Job 01:06-09,02:01-05

If the book of Job teaches us nothing else, it is important in that it graphically shows us what Satan's role is. Satan, as you can see, was free to roam the heavens and even come into God's presence. But the day will come when Satan will be cast down to the earth. Do you suppose he will like that?

It is interesting to note that there are two responses to this action. Those in heaven are happy. Satan is gone from their midst. But to those on the earth, woe unto them. Now Satan is bound to the earth and hence will busy himself with those on the earth.

The Dragon's Prey

When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. 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. Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent. But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. 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.

Revelation 12:13-17

The woman fled to the desert, to the place prepared for her.

In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

John 14:02-03

Jesus has prepared a place for us.

However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"

1 Corinthians 02:09

God has prepared places for everyone who love Him, even entire cities.

Instead, they were longing for a better country--a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

Hebrews 11:16

God has already prepared a place for Israel. Where that might be we can not know. God will provide protection for Israel. God will provide provision for Israel. All of this is promised in these signs.

REVELATION CHAPTER THIRTEEN

In Chapter Twelve we are introduced to the dragon, a red dragon with seven heads and ten horns. It was identified as Satan himself. Being cast down from heaven to the earth, in his anger he went out to "make war". In order to do this, he introduces two of his assistants.

The Beast Out of the Sea

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. 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. 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. Men worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, "Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?" The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months.

Revelation 13:01-05

Before we begin the description of this new beast, we return to Chapter Twelve for a moment.

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

Revelation 12:03-04

In the last chapter we dealt with signs. A sign need not be literal. Obviously, the woman and the child were not real people - we discussed their significance. The dragon was also a sign. Satan is a spirit, as are all angels (and, in fact, every person that is not human). So the dragon is a sign. John, however, saw the dragon and so, even though it be a sign, a visual manifestation of Satan, it is still real in the sense that it may be seen.

John saw the dragon. I believe that the people who are alive during the time of the

Great Tribulation will also see it. In other words, it is real in the sense that it is a visible manifestation of a spirit. I believe the same is true of the other beasts we will see here.

There is an obvious relation between this beast and the dragon. Compare them.

The Dragon: with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. This Beast: had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns.

The only difference is in the number of crowns. There is a further description of this beast. The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion.

Daniel said: "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea. "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. "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!' "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. "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. "While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully. Daniel 07:02-08

Daniel saw four beasts come out of the sea. John saw one, but it combined the features of the four that Daniel saw. There is a great similarity between the two descriptions and they both speak of the same event. Why is there a difference in the number of creatures? Again, these are signs. They were manifest to John in a slightly different form than they were to Daniel.

Let us, first, determine the significance of the four beasts which Daniel saw. Then we shall be able to discern John's view. If you study the book of Daniel, you will find several passages (including the one above) which describe four world empires. The Lion represented the Babylonian Empire. Then the Bear represented the Medo-Persian Empire. Thirdly, the Leopard represented the Grecian Empire. Last, the fourth and most dreadful beast, represented the Roman Empire. At the time of Daniel's vision, except for the Babylonian Empire, all of these empires were yet in the future. As

such he viewed them as an historic progression.

In John's case, these Empires had all come and gone. They were then revived in this vision. Note that only parts of this beast resembled the first three kingdoms. Note also that they are listed in reverse order. This is natural. If you are standing in line and describing what you see ahead of you, your description is going to be the mirror image of a description given by someone at the other end of the line. In John's vision, they are all part of the same beast. Again, John is seeing the whole of the vision as accomplished and thus integrated.

This beast, then represents, we believe, the revived Roman Empire - the European Common Market, it is presumed. This revived empire came out of the sea. The sea always represents the Gentiles in the Scriptures (except when it is to be taken literally). Perhaps the reason for this interpretation is that the Gentiles were those people who lived on the other shores of The Sea, the Mediterranean Sea. Satan gives power to this beast and it blasphemes God.

Now, there are those who claim that this beast represents a man and not an empire. Is there any validity to this notion? We need to obtain some perspective on this and we will begin with a Biblical perspective.

You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; in your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold. "After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron--for iron breaks and smashes everything--and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others.

Daniel 02:37-40

In the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the head of gold represented the Babylonian Empire, the silver the Medio-Persian, the bronze the Grecian, and the iron the Roman Empire. On the other hand, Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar that he is the head of gold. So we have, on the one hand, the head representing the nation and, on the other hand, the king of that nation.

There is a connection between a nation and its leader. In the recent Gulf War, two of the principal factors were the United States and Iraq. The United States was at war with Iraq. What do we mean by that? Were you mad at the people of Iraq? Were they mad at you? The fact is that the majority of the people of both countries were not at enmity with each other. It was the leaders of the two nations that had the problem. Hussain was acting like a madman and trying to overtake the Middle East. President Bush felt that the aggression had to be put down. The result was that we went to war.

This is not to say that only two people were involved. It does not mean that the people of this country were not behind the president - the poles clearly showed that. The fact remains, it is not usually a people that go to war or do other things nationally, it is the rulers who initiate the acts. In other words, you have to speak of a nation and its leader as an entity. Does the beast represent the revived Roman Empire, or does it represent a man who leads it? The answer is both.

One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The significance of this statement will be dealt with later.

The Sea Beast's Ministry

He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. 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. 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.

Revelation 13:06-08

This beast will be given tremendous power - power over the entire world. The entire world will worship him - except the saints. Which brings us to a problem - what saints?

Unless the LORD Almighty had left us some survivors, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been like Gomorrah. Isaiah 01:09

But now the LORD says: "Within three years, as a servant bound by contract would count them, Moab's splendor and all her many people will be despised, and her survivors will be very few and feeble."

Isaiah 16:14

Those who escape the sword and return to the land of Judah from Egypt will be very few. Then the whole remnant of Judah who came to live in Egypt will know whose word will stand--mine or theirs.

Jeremiah 44:28

Throughout all of the judgements of God (except the one possible described in Genesis 1:2) there have been survivors. Noah and his family survived the flood. There were some Jews who returned after the Babylonian captivity. The Jews, though scattered hither and yon, are returning in large numbers to the land of Israel. God has always left a few of His saints (Old Testament saints, New Testament saints, or, here, Tribulation saints) on earth as a witness for Him.

The Warning to the Saints

He who has an ear, let him hear. 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.

Revelation 13:09-10

He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: . . . Then Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." . . . If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." Mark 04:02,09,23

When Jesus ministered on earth, He did a lot of teaching, mostly through parables, as above. He expected people to listen, to learn from it, and to obey. Note that the phrase "if anyone has ears to hear, let him hear" is used twice in the above passage. The first was addressed to the people who did not hear. The second was addressed to the disciples who did.

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. Revelation 02:07

The admonition was given to the seven churches in Chapters Two and Three. And here it is given to those Tribulation saints who will be on hand to hear. There is a Spanish adage that parallels this passage, "Que sera, sera." = "What will be, will be." During the period of tribulation, there will be tumultuous things happening. There is no changing them and those saints of the Tribulation will have to exercise great patience and endurance.

The Beast Out of the Land

Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. 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. And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men.

Revelation 13:11-13

Now it is time to start putting some of this together. Altogether there are three beasts (including the dragon) on the stage of world history.

With respect to the dragon and the first beast we have men worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast. With respect to the first and second beast we have 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. And he performed great and miraculous signs. There are a very common relationship between the three. We also recall the statement one of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. What does this all mean?

Recall the following passages.

All the people were amazed and said to each other, "What is this teaching? With authority and power he gives orders to evil spirits and they come out!"
Luke 04:36

The people recognized the Christ had authority that mortal man did not possess.

He shared His authority with His disciples . . .

When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases,
Luke 09:01

When questioned about his authority . . .

"Tell us by what authority you are doing these things," they said. "Who gave you this authority?"
Luke 20:02

. . . Jesus perceived that they were trying to trap Him and finally responded with . . .

Jesus said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."
Luke 02:08

The answer is answered in the Gospel of John. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.
John 05:26-27

God the Father gave authority to His Son to do the things He did. God gave authority to His son. The dragon gave authority to the first beast. Christ was crucified and resurrected. The first beasts "fatal wound" had been healed.

Satan, the dragon, has set himself up as God. He has established the first beast as the Christ. Now, the relation between the two beasts. What is the role of the Holy Spirit?

We see a preview of it in Ezekiel.

He said to me, "Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you." As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me. Ezekiel 02:01-02

The New Testament makes the role of the Holy Spirit very clear.

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you. John 16:13-15

The Spirit never draws attention to himself, the Holy Spirit always points men to Christ. The second beast made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast. Not only that but the second beast performed miracles.

The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, so that he became Israel's judge and went to war. The LORD gave Cushan-Rishathaim king of Aram into the hands of Othniel, who overpowered him. Judges 03:10

Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him. Judges 06:34

Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon him in power. He went down to Ashkelon, struck down thirty of their men, stripped them of their belongings and gave their clothes to those who had explained the riddle. Burning with anger, he went up to his father's house. Judges 14:19

When they arrived at Gibeah, a procession of prophets met him; the Spirit of God came upon him in power, and he joined in their prophesying. 1 Samuel 10:10

Men were able to perform miracles only when the Holy Spirit came upon them and empowered them to do so. So Satan sets up this second beast as the "Holy Spirit". Satan, the world's most infamous counterfeiter has made a phoney Trinity. He is God. The first beast is Christ. The second beast the Holy Spirit.

The Ministry of the Earth Beast

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 honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet

lived. 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 also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, 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.

Revelation 13:14-17

The second beast has a ministry during the time of Great Tribulation much like that of the Holy Spirit today. It is this beast that causes things to come together at that time. One of the focal points of his ministry was in the setting up of an image to be worshipped. We have seen notice of this before.

"When you see 'the abomination that causes desolation' standing where it does not belong--let the reader understand--then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Mark 13:14

This beast will also be given control of the world's commodities. He will set up a world-wide rationing system. To buy or to sell, one had to receive a mark in the forehead or the hand. Why these two locations? Because they are the only two parts of the body that normal (should) show.

A person will have to have one of three things: (1) the mark (i.e. logo or trademark), (2) the name, or (3) the number. We are told neither what the name nor the mark might be.

The Call for Wisdom

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.

Revelation 13:18

We don't know the mark or the name, but we are given the number. Most translations have the number as "six hundred and sixty-six. The Living Bible and the NIV have 666. What's the difference? The same difference exists among the Greek versions. Some versions have the Greek equivalent of "six hundred sixty-six" while a few have chi xi (stigma) (χ ξ ζ'), three "letters" of the Greek alphabet (the last is not a normal letter - it is only used as a numeral). The Greek language did not have digits, it used letters for digits. The nearest translation, then is "666."

It is hard to know which Greek version is correct. Even though the "better" manuscripts have it spelled out, I tend to believe it was written by John as three "digits", 666. What does this signify? Many are the explanations. Nearly all of these have fallen.

Some early theories were that, in latin, the letters would spell out "Nero". More modern people have figured out the if you add up the "values" of the letters in "Henry Kissinger" they add up to 666. I am afraid that both Nero and Henry have lost out in the "AntiChrist" raffle. The latest that I have seen is that the Universal Product Code (UPC) on all the food containers has the digit 6 at the beginning, middle, and end of the code and these three digits are not labeled below the bars on the box. This was probably propagated by some well-meaning but ignorant individual. There are no such digits in the UPC code scheme.

Six has throughout the Bible been the number of man. The number 666 is just six repeated three times, the number of Satan's blasphemous Trinity.

REVELATION CHAPTER FOURTEEN

This chapter presents a contrast to the previous one. In Chapter Thirteen we were introduced to Satan and his allies. The scene returns now to the Lamb, the 144,000, and the angels.

The Lamb, the 144,000, and the New Song

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. 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. 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. 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. No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.

Revelation 14:01-05

We begin this chapter by noting a similarity with the previous chapter. 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. Now it is the LAMB and He is standing on Mount Zion. Satan called forth the Beast of the Sea. The Lamb calls the 144,000 to him. In the last chapter, those who followed the beast had his mark on the hands or foreheads. Here the 144,000 have the Father's name written on theirs.

There are a number of things to be noted in this passage. First the audible impression on John. He heard something like the roar of rushing waters. The KJV has "a voice from heaven" rather than "a sound." The Greek word is phonen (φωνην) from which we get "telephone" (Far-sound) and "microphone" (small sound) and "megaphone" (large sound). It may mean voice, and often does, but basically it just refers to any kind of sound. Hence . . .

The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." John 03:08

Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the flute or

harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes? Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?

1 Corinthians 14:07-08

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.

Revelation 09:09

The sound is describes as that of thunder, of rushing waters, and of harps. The sound of rushing waters (or many waters) is the sound of the Lord Himself (see Revelation 1:15). The "Thunders" we saw in Revelation 10:3. Then we come to the sound of the harps. With but one exception, harps are not mentioned in the N.T. other than in this book. They are mentioned frequently in the O.T., beginning with . . .

His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all who play the harp and flute.

Genesis 04:21

One other interesting, and contrasting, passage is in Isaiah.

At that time Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years, the span of a king's life. But at the end of these seventy years, it will happen to Tyre as in the song of the prostitute: "Take up a harp, walk through the city, O prostitute forgotten; play the harp well, sing many a song, so that you will be remembered."

Isaiah 23:15-16

All of these sounds provided the background for a new song which the 144,000 sang. That these 144,000 are the same as the 144,000 martyrs is probable in that they are referred to as the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. The word song is ode (ὠδή) from which we get the English word "ode." Paul uses this term twice in his epistles.

Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,

Ephesians 05:19

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

Colossians 03:16

In both of these passages he mentions also psalms and hymns. Is there a difference between these three forms of music? If so, what is the significance of the term "song?" The psalm originates in the Greek word for strumming and then to that which is "strummed". From this it comes to mean that which is sung to the accompaniment of such an instrument - hence David the Psalmist. If there is a difference, it is that the psalm is a formal type of music, to be sung to an accompaniment, which is praise to

God.

The hymn is, specifically, a song of praise (it could be a "psalm of praise"). The verbal form of this Greek word is quite informative.

The meadows are covered with flocks and the valleys are mantled with grain; they shout for joy and sing. Psalm 65:13

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Acts 16:25

He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing praises to you." In other words, the underscored words are the translation of the Greek verb. In other words, the underscored sections could be replaced with the words hymned, hymning, and hymn to you. Since these verbs do not exist in the English language, we have the translations above. Since hymns are pretty well confined to the N.T., we might classify psalms as general praises to God while hymns are praises to Christ (and God).

Finally, we take the term song, the most general of the three, to be either of the other two, but with an element of spontaneity. It is not planned praise, but that which naturally springs forth from the heart as a result of a blessing or joy received from the Lord.

There are many many new songs in the Scriptures. Only one other is so noted, but consider the following passages.

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD: "I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea. Exodus 15:01

Until the crossing of the Red Sea, this song did not exist since its theme had not yet occurred. It was a new song.

"Now write down for yourselves this song and teach it to the Israelites and have them sing it, so that it may be a witness for me against them. . . . So Moses wrote down this song that day and taught it to the Israelites. Deuteronomy 32:19,22

Again, a new song. Of course, when Christ rose from the dead to bring us our promise of eternal life, a whole collection of new songs arose. There continue to be new songs (some good and some not so good). There will continue to be new songs. We already have seen one.

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. Revelation 05:09

This one was sung by the Elders. Now the 144,000 sing another new song. This song will somehow be different than the others. Only the 144,000 will be able to learn it. Why?

The word learn comes from the Greek *manthano* (μανθάνω) which means to learn or to be appraised. It is a rather common word and is the root of the word that we find in Matthew . . .

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20

We are supposed to be doing three things: (1) discipling people, (2) baptizing them, and (3) teaching them. Note that the concept of "teaching" is expressed twice in the above passage: "make disciples" and "teaching them". These are two distinct Greek words. We find the same pair in the following passage.

He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old." When Jesus had finished these parables, he moved on from there. Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked. Matthew 13:52-54

The first word above might have been translated "disciplined." What we are driving at is the second word is less comprehensive. As a professor at Cal Poly, I can "teach" two different things: (1) things that the students learn and can make use of, and (2) things that the students hear about and forget as soon as the exam is over.

No one else could really comprehend the song. Others could hear the words of the song. If they had a pencil and a piece of paper, they could have written them down and sung it. What they could not learn is the real significance of the song. We noted the new song that Israel sang when they had passed through the Red Sea.

"Sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea."

"I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea. The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name.

Pharaoh's chariots and his army he has hurled into the sea. The best of Pharaoh's officers are drowned in the Red Sea. The deep waters have covered them; they sank to the depths like a stone. "Your right hand, O LORD, was majestic in power. Your right hand, O LORD, shattered the enemy. In the greatness of your majesty you threw down those who opposed you. You unleashed your burning anger; it consumed them like stubble. By the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up. The surging waters stood firm like a wall; the deep waters congealed in the heart of the sea. "The enemy boasted, 'I will pursue, I will overtake them. I will divide the spoils; I will gorge myself on them. I will draw my sword and my hand will destroy them.' But you blew with your breath, and the sea covered them. They sank like lead in the mighty waters. "Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you--majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders? You stretched out your right hand and the earth swallowed them. "In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling. The nations will hear and tremble; anguish will grip the people of Philistia. The chiefs of Edom will be terrified, the leaders of Moab will be seized with trembling, the people of Canaan will melt away; terror and dread will fall upon them. By the power of your arm they will be as still as a stone--until your people pass by, O LORD, until the people you bought pass by. You will bring them in and plant them on the mountain of your inheritance--the place, O LORD, you made for your dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, your

Exodus 15:1-18 The LORD will wage war for ever and ever" learn the words, if you wished to. Moses wife learned the song for we read . . .

Miriam sang to them: "Sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea." Exodus 15:21

Moses composed the song. Perhaps Miriam set it to music (and, perhaps, even to dance form). Miriam really learned the song because she had passed through the Red Sea. She had experienced it. You and I can learn the words, but we can not learn the feelings of the song because we have not had the experience.

The 144,000 sang a song that none other could understand the significance of because only the 144,000 had had the experience they sang about.

These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. Now the ladies are not going to like this passage. The 144,000 we pure because they had kept themselves from women. Note that it does not say harlots or prostitutes or immoral women, simply women. We turn to a rather difficult passage in 1 Corinthians.

Now about virgins: I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. Because of the present crisis, I think that it is good for you to remain as you are. Are you

married? Do not seek a divorce. Are you unmarried? Do not look for a wife. But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this. What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none; those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away. I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs--how he can please the Lord. But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world--how he can please his wife-- and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world--how she can please her husband. I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord. If anyone thinks he is acting improperly toward the virgin he is engaged to, and if she is getting along in years and he feels he ought to marry, he should do as he wants. He is not sinning. They should get married. But the man who has settled the matter in his own mind, who is under no compulsion but has control over his own will, and who has made up his mind not to marry the virgin--this man also does the right thing. 1 Corinthians 07:25-37

We have duplicated this rather long passage above. It is long because Paul is dealing with a very sensitive issue. He might have said, "Hey men, don't get married!" But that would not only be crass, it would be wrong. He goes on at great length to point out that there is nothing at all wrong with being married. But, he also points out that, as far as service to the Lord is concerned, there are advantages to being single. Now, apparently, the Roman Catholic church took Paul's words to heart since the priests have, for centuries, been celibate (but not any more). You must read Paul's advice very carefully. He is not dealing with the general situation. God dealt with that.

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Genesis 02:18

What Paul was dealing with was the situation of being a Christian during very difficult times. The time of the Great Tribulation is going to be, obviously, a very stressful time. Therefore it will be imperative that the 144,000 not be burdened with the care for a wife during these 42 months.

We still must deal with the words These are those who did not defile themselves with women. Now, does a man "defile himself" by being married? Consider the following passages.

The LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'If a

man or woman wants to make a special vow, a vow of separation to the LORD as a Nazirite, Numbers 06:01-02

But he said to me, 'You will conceive and give birth to a son. Now then, drink no wine or other fermented drink and do not eat anything unclean, because the boy will be a Nazirite of God from birth until the day of his death.'" . . . The woman gave birth to a boy and named him Samson. He grew and the LORD blessed him, Judges 13:07,24

In a normal sense there is no "defilement" cause by being married. On the other hand, in special circumstances, there was in the O.T. If one took the vow of a Nazirite, he would be "defiled" by touching a woman. Samson was a Nazirite and we have seen what happened to him when he let a woman into his life. John the Baptist was a Nazirite. If it is not God's will for a man to marry, he defiles himself if he does.

The Gospel Angel

Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth--to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water."

Revelation 14:06-07

The Devil has manned his battle stations. The Lamb has manned His battle stations. It is now time to announce the great battle. So, a series of angels deliver the messages. This is fitting since an "angel" is a "messenger." The first delivers the eternal gospel. There is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This was given to us to spread in the Great Commission. This passage speaks of an eternal gospel.

Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man Ecclesiastes 12:13

Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king. 1 Peter 02:17

Give glory to the LORD your God before he brings the darkness, before your feet stumble on the darkening hills. You hope for light, but he will turn it to thick darkness and change it to deep gloom. Jeremiah 13:16

This is the eternal gospel. It was announced in the O.T. It was repeated in the N.T. It will be announced again during the Great Tribulation.

The Doomsayer Angel

A second angel followed and said, "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries."

Revelation 14:06

The second angel's message will be that Babylon has fallen. What is meant by the term Babylon? Until the very recent past, it was assumed that it was symbolic of something since there is no Babylon today. Today, however, the nation of Iraq is rebuilding that great city. So, now, it is one of the contenders for the actual city. There are 181 references to Babylon in the Bible. Obviously, we can not consider all of them, nor is it necessary. The vast majority of the occurrences are: (a) in the Book of Isaiah, where the Babylonian Captivity was prophesied, (b) the Book of Jeremiah, where it was accomplished, and (c) in the Book of Daniel which was written in that great city.

Instead, we shall look at several other scriptures.

Cush was the father of Nimrod, who grew to be a mighty warrior on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; that is why it is said, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the LORD." The first centers of his kingdom were Babylon, Erech, Akkad and Calneh, in Shinar. Genesis 10:08-10

An oracle concerning Babylon that Isaiah son of Amoz saw: Isaiah 13:01

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

Daniel 01:01

Writhe in agony, O Daughter of Zion, like a woman in labor, for now you must leave the city to camp in the open field. You will go to Babylon; there you will be rescued. There the LORD will redeem you out of the hand of your enemies. Micah 04:10

"Come, O Zion! Escape, you who live in the Daughter of Babylon!"

Zechariah 02:07

She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark.

1 Peter 05:13

The first passage gives us the foundation of the city, under Nimrod. Then the next two references confirm what we said earlier. The last three references seem less likely to refer to the actual city of Babylon, especially the reference in 1 Peter and in Zechariah. The passage in 1 Peter can not refer to the actual city since it did not exist in Peter's time. Many take this to be a code name for Rome (known only to Christians).

There are (at least) three conclusions possible:

- (a) It is the actual city, as may soon be possible, but not likely.
- (b) It is Rome, but that is conjecture.
- (c) It is to be taken in the sense found in Zechariah where it simply refers to the entire pagan world.

One can not be dogmatic. The last appears to be the most fitting with the context. It will not just be the city of Babylon, or of Rome, that will fall, but the world.

The Warning Angel

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, 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 sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. 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." This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus.

Revelation 14:09-12

As is characteristics of God, there is yet but one more chance. The third angel calls the call for repentance. Up until now, there has always been a chance to repent. This is the last chance. The day of God's patience has passed.

The Commanding Angel

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 labor, for their deeds will follow them." 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. 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." So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.

Revelation 14:13-16

What can one add to the voice of the fourth angel. The picture is very vivid. God is now going to swing the sickle over the earth. It is somewhat reminiscent of Jesus' words...

Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' "An enemy did this,' he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' "No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'" Matthew 13:24-30

It is now time when the wheat and the tares may be distinguished. It is this time to purge God's field of the weeds and purify it again.

The Obeying Angels

Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. 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 angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God's wrath. 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.

There are several O.T. Scriptures which speak similarly.

"Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad? Now I will tell you what I am going to do to my vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it will be destroyed; I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled. I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briars and thorns will grow there. I will command the clouds not to rain on it." The vineyard of the LORD Almighty is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are the garden of his delight. And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress.

Isaiah 05:03-07

I believe that this prophecy has already been fulfilled. There are others that have not.

"Take up your positions around Babylon, all you who draw the bow. Shoot at her! Spare no arrows, for she has sinned against the LORD. Shout against her on every side! She surrenders, her towers fall, her walls are torn down. Since this is the vengeance of the LORD, take vengeance on her; do to her as she has done to others. Cut off from Babylon the sower, and the reaper with his sickle at harvest. Because of the sword of the oppressor let everyone return to his own people, let everyone flee to his own land.

Jeremiah 50:14-16

Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare for war! Rouse the warriors! Let all the fighting men draw near and attack. Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears. Let the weakling say, 'I am strong!' Come quickly, all you nations from every side, and assemble there. Bring down your warriors, O LORD! 'Let the nations be roused; let them advance into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the nations on every side. Swing the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, trample the grapes, for the winepress is full and the vats overflow--so great is their wickedness!' Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine.

Joel 03:09-15

Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson? Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength? "It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save." Why are your garments red, like those of one treading the winepress? "I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me. I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing. For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redemption has come. I looked, but there was no one to help, I was appalled that no one gave

support; so my own arm worked salvation for me, and my own wrath sustained me. I trampled the nations in my anger; in my wrath I made them drunk and poured their blood on the ground." Isaiah 63:01-06

The only item that needs further explanation is the statement and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses' bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia. Are we to take this literally? One dimension is missing. The height of the blood is that of a horse's bridle, or about four feet. The length is 1600 stadia or about 200 miles. If you assume a modest width of 10 feet, then you have 2,703,360,000 pints of blood. This would be all of the blood of more than 200 million people! Remember, we assumed a very modest width, so the actual description would probably require many more people.

Josephus, the Jewish Historian, wrote of Ceaser's attack on Jerusalem. In the description of the results of this attack, he wrote the following.

. . . and when they were come to the houses to plunder them, they found in them entire families of dead men, and the upper rooms full of dead corpses, that is, of such as died of the famine; they stood in horror of this sight, and went out without touching a thing. But although they had commiseration for such as were destroyed in this manner, yet they had not the same for such as were still alive, but they ran through everyone whom they met with, and obstructed the very lanes with their bodies, and made the whole city run with blood, to such a degree indeed that the fire of many houses was quenched with these mens blood.

Josephus, "Wars", Book vi, Chapter viii, part 5

It is hard to imagine that there could be so much blood in either description. Perhaps it is an exaggeration. On the other hand, after viewing the aftermath of the Persian Gulf War, with tanks and cars and bodies strewn across the desert sands as far as you could see, it may not be much of an exaggeration.

REVELATION CHAPTER FIFTEEN

In Chapter Fourteen we saw a number of angels who will participate in the Great Tribulation. In this chapter there are yet seven more angels. In the next chapter we will witness their ministry. Here they will be introduced.

The Seven Angels with the Plagues

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

Revelation 15:01

We have seen many great signs in this book. Here, however, there is an added adjective. This sign is marvelous. The same Greek term is found in the following places.

Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"

Matthew 21:42

the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"

Mark 12:11

The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes.

John 09:30

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

1 Peter 02:09

A marvel is something you see and yet don't quite believe it. It is too tremendous to be true. You "marvel" at it. What was so marvelous about this sign? It was marvelous because, among other things, it signaled God's final plagues against the world.

Why will these be the last plagues on the earth? The answer is given us. They will be last, because with them God's wrath is completed. The Green word translated completed or filled up (KJV).

After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee.

Matthew 11:01

When Jesus had finished these parables, he moved on from there.

Matthew 13:53

When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went into the region of Judea to the other side of the Jordan.

Matthew 19:01 Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. Luke 18:31

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 2 Timothy 04:07

The word means to fulfill, to satisfy all the requirements. Hence, as the NIV has, these last judgements will complete what God has in store for the world's judgement.

The Singers before the Throne

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 and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. 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."

Revelation 15:02-04

John sees still another group of saints assembled before the throne. These are those who, in spite of all that we have seen thus far, will remain true to God. At this point we must comment on those that are alive now, have heard the Gospel message, and say, "I'll wait a bit longer before I respond." First, the Bible indicates that if you have had a chance during this age and reject it, you will not be given another during the Tribulation Period. What must be said here is that, even though you may get a second chance, you would certainly end up wishing you had availed yourself of the first. These saints will have had to go through one of the most traumatic times in the age of the world.

As a result, God gives them harps or kitharas (κιθαρὰς) "guitars?". The reason is that they might sing. God gives them two songs to sing. The first is the "Song of Moses the Servant of the Lord," and the other is "The Song of the Lamb."

What are these songs? I believe the Song of Moses is the following:

"Now write down for yourselves this song and teach it to the Israelites and have them sing it, so that it may be a witness for me against them. When I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, the land I

promised on oath to their forefathers, and when they eat their fill and thrive, they will turn to other gods and worship them, rejecting me and breaking my covenant. And when many disasters and difficulties come upon them, this song will testify against them, because it will not be forgotten by their descendants. I know what they are disposed to do, even before I bring them into the land I promised them on oath." So Moses wrote down this song that day and taught it to the Israelites.

Deuteronomy 31:19-22

And Moses recited the words of this song from beginning to end in the hearing of the whole assembly of Moses and Israel. It was a song which reminded Israel of God's promised blessings and cursings. The Song of the Lamb is a new song. It is a song of Jesus, the Lamb. Together these two songs cover all that God has done for mankind throughout the ages.

In the Old Testament times, God made many promises to Israel of blessing. For the most part, Israel turned its back on God and rejected His promises. They have been paying for it ever since. They will continue to pay for it until God's judgement is complete.

In New Testament times, God has given us His Son through which we have the promise of eternal life. Many have turned their backs on this promise. Many have gone to a life of eternal destruction because of this. Many more will until they day of God's final judgement. These final judgements come together as these last seven angels appear on the scene. This is the last time these songs will need to be sung.

The Temple Sealed until the Last Judgement

After this I looked and in heaven the temple, that is, the tabernacle of the Testimony, was opened. 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. 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. 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.

Revelation 15:05-08

Again John sees God's Temple. What temple does he see? Let us consider several O.T. passages.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high

and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. Isaiah 06:01-04

It was the same temple that Isaiah saw. But John adds to the description that this was the tabernacle of the Testimony. Is there a difference between a tabernacle and a temple?

These are the amounts of the materials used for the tabernacle, the tabernacle of the Testimony, which were recorded at Moses' command by the Levites under the direction of Ithamar son of Aaron, the priest. Exodus 38:21

The tabernacle was the tent constructed under God's command in the wilderness. It was the focal point of Israel throughout its desert wanderings.

On the day the tabernacle, the Tent of the Testimony, was set up, the cloud covered it. From evening till morning the cloud above the tabernacle looked like fire. Numbers 09:15

On the twentieth day of the second month of the second year, the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle of the Testimony. Numbers 10:11

It was this tabernacle that Steven referred to.

"Our forefathers had the tabernacle of the Testimony with them in the desert. It had been made as God directed Moses, according to the pattern he had seen. Acts 07:44

There were other temples. God allowed them to be built and used in place of the tabernacle. God allowed it but did not command it. When David wanted to build the first temple, God's words to him were . . .

"Go and tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" ' 2 Samuel 07:05-07

Thus, when we come to the end of God's judgement, it is still the tabernacle that is in view - The Tabernacle. The one which was with the Israelites in the wilderness was not The Tabernacle.

"Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from each man whose heart prompts him to give. . . . "Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you. . . . See that you make them according to the pattern shown you on the mountain. Exodus 25:02,08-09,40

It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. Hebrews 09:23

We close this chapter with a question. John says that the tabernacle will be closed and no one may enter it at this time during the Tribulation. And no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed. Why?

This is similar to the events surrounding the giving of the Law to Israel.

Put limits for the people around the mountain and tell them, 'Be careful that you do not go up the mountain or touch the foot of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. He shall surely be stoned or shot with arrows; not a hand is to be laid on him. Whether man or animal, he shall not be permitted to live.' Only when the ram's horn sounds a long blast may they go up to the mountain." After Moses had gone down the mountain to the people, he consecrated them, and they washed their clothes. Then he said to the people, "Prepare yourselves for the third day. Abstain from sexual relations." On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him. Exodus 19:12-19

When God is preparing to do mighty acts, He chooses to be alone. Just as no one was allowed to ascend the mount when the lord prepared the commandments for Israel, no one will be allowed to enter the tabernacle when the Lord is preparing His final vengeance on the unsaved world. What we have seen thus far was just a foretaste of God's judgement. When the seven angels go out with the final judgements, we will see "the real thing."

REVELATION CHAPTER SIXTEEN

In the last chapter, we were introduced to the seven angels whose task was to bring the final plagues upon the earth. In this chapter, these judgments begin.

The Command to Begin

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."

Revelation 16:01

The KJV has these angels carrying vials which is derived from the Greek word used here, phiales (φιαλες), but the words do not mean the same thing. The Greek word is not used in the N.T. other than in this book (see Rev. 5:8). It is used commonly in the LXX as the translation for the Hebrew word mitzrahk (מִצְרָחַק). Below are some O.T. references that describe these vessels.

Make all its utensils of bronze--its pots to remove the ashes, and its shovels, sprinkling bowls, meat forks and firepans. Exodus 27:03

Then they are to place on it all the utensils used for ministering at the altar, including the firepans, meat forks, shovels and sprinkling bowls. Over it they are to spread a covering of hides of sea cows and put its poles in place. Numbers 04:14

...and the LORD Almighty will shield them. They will destroy and overcome with slingstones. They will drink and roar as with wine; they will be full like a bowl used for sprinkling the corners of the altar. Zechariah 09:15

On that day HOLY TO THE LORD will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, and the cooking pots in the LORD'S house will be like the sacred bowls in front of the altar. Zechariah 14:20

Thus, we see that these utensils were bowls and, most important, they were the bowls which were used for sprinkling the blood and for bringing sacrifices. At the end of the age they will be used for sprinkling again, for sprinkling God's judgment out upon the earth.

Bowl #1 - Sores

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 worshiped his image.

Revelation 16:02 The first plague was that of ugly and painful sores. The Greek word is helkos ('ελκος) which is only found in the N.T. in one place (other than this book). With regard to Lazarus, it is said that he was . . .

. . . longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. Luke 16:21

The Hebrew equivalent, shechiyn (שחין) refers to a boil or an ulcer. It is significant that it is found in the following passage.

. . . It will become fine dust over the whole land of Egypt, and festering boils will break out on men and animals throughout the land." So they took soot from a furnace and stood before Pharaoh. Moses tossed it into the air, and festering boils broke out on men and animals. The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils that were on them and on all the Egyptians. Exodus 09:09-11

This was the sixth plague in Egypt.

Bowl #2 - Blood in the Sea

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.

Revelation 16:03

This plague, like the first, is like one of the plagues in Egypt.

But if they do not believe these two signs or listen to you, take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground. The water you take from the river will become blood on the ground." Exodus 04:09

This is what the LORD says: By this you will know that I am the LORD: With the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water of the Nile, and it will be changed into blood. Exodus 07:17

The LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron, 'Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt--over the streams and canals, over the ponds and all the reservoirs'--and they will turn to blood. Blood will be everywhere in Egypt, even in the wooden buckets and stone jars." Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD had commanded. He raised his staff in the presence of Pharaoh and his officials and struck the water of the Nile, and all the water was changed into blood. The fish in the Nile died, and the river smelled so bad that the Egyptians could not drink its water. Blood was everywhere in Egypt. Exodus 07:19-21

Bowl #3 - Blood in the Rivers

The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood.

Revelation 16:04

The third judgement was similar to the second except that it affected the inland waters. At this point it would be well to compare the judgements in this book. We have seen the seven Seal Judgements, the Seven Trumpet Judgements, and now, the Seven Bowl Judgements.

Number	Seals	Trumpets	Bowls
1	White Horse	Vegetation	Boils
	Each of these affected man, misleading him, starving him, and giving him great misery.		
2	Red Horse	Sea	Sea
	Each of these has RED in common (i.e. blood), each speaks of destruction of humanity (i.e. the Sea).		
3	Black Horse	Inland waters	Inland Waters
	Black is the color of death. The poisoning of the inland seas is a judgement of death.		
4 heaven	Green Horse	Heavens	Fire from

Each of these is a summary judgement which is effected from the heavens. These first four judgements, in all cases, come in close order and are closely connected. We will see the first from heaven next. We will compare the remaining plagues as we come to them.

Verdict #1 - The Blood is Justified

Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: "You are just in these judgments, you who are and who were, the Holy One, because you have so judged; for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve." And I heard the altar respond: "Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments."

Revelation 16:05-07

There is a break in the judgements as a verdict is spoken. Is God just in what he is doing? Most certainly so! God is returning to the heathen what he has dished out to the saints in the past. Satan and his followers will get a taste of the own medicine.

Bowl #4 - Fire

The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was given power to scorch people with fire. 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.

Revelation 16:08-09

As noted above, the fourth judgement comes directly from heaven and is a summary of the other three. In this last of three series of plagues, mankind is still unwilling to repent or glorify God.

Bowl #5 - Darkness

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 and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done.

What does this judgement have in common with the fifth Seal and the Fifth Trumpet?

5 Martyrs Removed Satan Fallen Darkness

With the fifth bowl will come darkness. What is its source?

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 08:12

While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." John 09:05

Jesus was the light of the world. He will be again someday. But what about now?

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Matthew 05:14

For now, you and I are to be the light of the world. When the rapture comes, it will be the Tribulation saints who will be the lights. When God has removed the last saint from the world scene, there will be no more light. This is when Satan will have his unbridled way. Hence the parallel in the three series of judgements. The saints are gone. Satan is in control. Man is in utter darkness.

Note the parallel between bowl #4 and #5:

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.

Men gnawed their tongues in agony and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done.

In spite of the terrible agony there is still no repentance. There is a phrase missing in the last passage - "and glorify him." The time will have passed. Man will always be able to repent, but the time will come when that is all that man will be able to do. A man condemned on "Death Row" may repent, but he will still be left there to die.

Bowl #6 - The Dry Euphrates

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.

The sixth bowl judgement does not bring any immediate judgement. It prepares for the judgement to come. Let us continue our comparison.

6

Fear

Four Angels

Dry Euphrates

When the sixth seal was opened, the signs of the final judgment, as predicted by both Jesus and the Prophets began to unfold. This caused great fear in men who then knew what was about to follow. When the sixth trumpet sounded, the Four Destroying Angels, who had been protecting the earth in chapter 7, were released to do their final work and they also produced great fear and introduced the final plagues. Now, here, the river Euphrates is dried up.

The Euphrates is first mentioned in the beginning of Genesis.

The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Asshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. Genesis 02:14

It was declared to be the Eastern border of the territory belonging to Israel.

Every place where you set your foot will be yours: Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the Euphrates River to the western sea. Deuteronomy 11:24

There are many references to it in the O.T., mostly in Ezra and Nehemiah. But there is one remarkable reference in Isaiah.

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. In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the remnant that is left of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands of the sea. He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; he will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth. Ephraim's jealousy will vanish, and Judah's enemies will be cut off; Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah, nor Judah hostile toward Ephraim. They will swoop down on the slopes of Philistia to the west; together they will plunder the people to the east. They will lay hands on Edom and Moab, and the Ammonites will be subject to them. The LORD will dry up the gulf of the Egyptian sea; with a scorching wind he will sweep his hand over the Euphrates River. He will break it up into seven streams so that men can cross over in sandals. There will be a highway for the remnant of his people that is left from Assyria, as there was for Israel when they came up from Egypt.

Isaiah 11:10-16

Why is this prophecy here? What is its significance? The figure to the right is a map of

the Near East showing the location of the Euphrates River. It starts in the Armenian Mountains of Syria (nearly into Turkey) and flows through Syria and Iraq to the Persian Gulf.

What was one of the primary targets during the Persian Gulf War? It was the bridges that spanned the Euphrates River. By taking out these bridges, it was possible to effectively isolate the southwestern part of Iraq from Bagdad and the northeastern part.

Yes, we have planes and ships today, but a war must finally come to a land battle and to fight a land battles, you must have ways of crossing major rivers. When the final battle is fought, the only way that troops from the East (i.e. east of the Euphrates) may get into Israel is by crossing the Euphrates River. If the Persian Gulf War is any foretaste of the final battle, there will be no bridges across the Euphrates and the army from the East may have no significant air power. The only way the battle can come about is if the Euphrates is dried up so that the crossing may be done on dry ground.

Let us proceed to the final judgement.

The Final Preparation - for Armagedden

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. 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. "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." Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

Revelation 16:13-16

The text gets more specific. Demons from the Unholy Trinity go forth to the "kings of the Earth." There are several prophetic passages which deal with this.

Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One. "Let us break their chains," they say, "and throw off their fetters." The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them.

Psalms 2:1-4

So will it be on the earth and among the nations, as when an olive tree is beaten, or as when gleanings are left after the grape harvest. They raise their voices, they shout for joy; from the west they acclaim the LORD'S majesty. Therefore in the east give glory to the LORD; exalt the name of the LORD, the God of Israel, in the islands of the sea. From the ends of the earth we hear singing: "Glory to the Righteous One." But I said, "I waste away, I waste away! Woe to me! The treacherous betray! With treachery the treacherous betray!" Terror and pit and snare await you, O people of the earth. Whoever flees at the sound of terror will fall into a pit; whoever climbs out of the pit will be caught in a snare. The floodgates of the heavens are opened, the foundations of the earth shake. The earth is broken up, the earth is split asunder, the earth is thoroughly shaken. The earth reels like a drunkard, it sways like a hut in the wind; so heavy upon it is the guilt of its rebellion that it falls--never to rise again. In that day the LORD will punish the powers in the heavens above and the kings on the earth below. They will be herded together like prisoners bound in a dungeon; they will be shut up in prison and be punished after many days. The moon will be abashed, the sun ashamed; for the LORD Almighty will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before its elders, gloriously. Isaiah 24:13-23

And the Disciples prayed this prayer . . .

When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: "Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One." Acts 04:24-26

The preparations are being made for the "great day" of God.

"The great day of the LORD is near--near and coming quickly. Listen! The cry on the day of the LORD will be bitter, the shouting of the warrior there. That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness, a day of trumpet and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the corner towers. I will bring distress on the people and they will walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD. Their blood will be poured out like dust and their entrails like filth. Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the LORD'S wrath. In the fire of his jealousy the whole world will be consumed, for he will make a sudden end of all who live in the earth." Zephaniah 01:14-18

It is the same "great day" referred to by Jude.

Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home--these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.

Jude 01:05-06

Finally, it is the "great day" promised earlier in this book.

For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

Revelation 06:17

Even at this late time, there is another warning. "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." Paul gave this warning 2000 years ago.

Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day.

We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. 1 Thessalonians 05:01-05

Peter also gave warning.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. 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.

2 Peter 03:10

And the Lord Himself previously gave this warning.

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.

Revelation 03:03

Finally, the last part of this passage gives us a specific detail. Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

The name of the place is provided - Armageddon. As the text indicates, this is not a Greek word; it is a Hebrew term. However, the English translations give us the Grecian form of the term. What is the actual term in Hebrew?

The last part of the term or phrase is easiest to determine. In the Greek it is Magedo (Μαγεδω) which is the Greek form of Magedo (מגדו). The name is mentioned a number of times in the O.T., several of which are listed below.

"Kings came, they fought; the kings of Canaan fought at Taanach by the waters of Megiddo, but they carried off no silver, no plunder. Judges 05:19

When Ahaziah king of Judah saw what had happened, he fled up the road to Beth Haggan. Jehu chased him, shouting, "Kill him too!" They wounded him in his chariot on the way up to Gur near Ibleam, but he escaped to Megiddo and died there. 2 Kings 09:27

While Josiah was king, Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt went up to the Euphrates River to help the king of Assyria. King Josiah marched out to meet him in battle, but Neco faced him and killed him at Megiddo. 2 Kings 23:29

Josiah, however, would not turn away from him, but disguised himself to engage him in battle. He would not listen to what Neco had said at God's command but went to fight him on the plain of Megiddo. 2 Chronicles 35:22

On that day the weeping in Jerusalem will be great, like the weeping of Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. Zechariah 12:11

In two of the above passages, the place is referred to as the "plain of Megiddo." In Hebrew this is bikghah Megido (בִּקְעָה מִגְדוֹ) which refers to a plain or a valley with that name. One passage above has "waters of Megiddo." This is hal me Megido (מֵי מִגְדוֹ) "upon the waters of Megido."

The question, then, is what is the prefix to this term. The "har" could refer to (at least) the following three Hebrew words:

- 1) har (הַר) or "mountain"
- 2) haram (חָרָם) or "destruction"
- 3) ghar (עָר) or "city"

None of these three terms seem satisfactory. The "City of Megido" does not seem to fit since it is not likely the battle will be fought in the city. Mount Megido does not seem likely either since there never was such a mountain and since battles are not fought on mountains. Some think that this is a reference to Mount Carmel which is about 15 miles northwest of Megido. Others think that it is a reference to Mount Tabor.

To the right is a map of the region surrounding Megido. First, there is the City of Megido (no longer in existence, but with a replacement, Megiddo, nearby). Then the entire region, the Plain of Esdraelon, was referred to as the "Plain of Megido." Positioned in a triangle around the area are three significant Mountains. These are Carmel (actually a range of mountains), Tabor, and Gilboa.

Then Deborah said to Barak, "Go! This is the day the LORD has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the LORD gone ahead of you?" So Barak went down Mount Tabor, followed by ten thousand men. At Barak's

advance, the LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and army by the sword, and Sisera abandoned his chariot and fled on foot. Judges 04:14-15

Now the Philistines fought against Israel; the Israelites fled before them, and Samson killed them with the hair of his head. ~~an interpretation of the term Armageddon is the "Mountains of Megido," or, in other words, the territory flanked by these mountains. This would thus refer to the entire area, an area certainly large enough for a tremendous battle.~~

Bowl #7 - It Is Done!

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!"

Revelation 16:17

The seventh seal introduced the trumpet judgements, the seventh trumpet introduced the bowl judgements. The seventh bowl is the end, "It is done!"

The seventh bowl brings the final plague, the battle of Armageddon. The remainder of this chapter provides us with the general details. The next two chapters will deal with the specifics.

The General Details of the Judgement

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. 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. Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. 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.

Revelation 16:18-21

In the passage above, when the seventh bowl was poured out, the statement was

made, 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!" In John we have recorded Jesus' words . . .

When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. John 19:30

Jesus said "it is finished!"; the angel says, "It is done!". While the phrases are similar, the sense is altogether different. "It is finished!" comes from the Greek verb teleo (τελεω). It is found in passages such as those below.

All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. Matthew 10:22

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a witness, and then the end will come. Matthew 24:14
For by the grace of God we are here, to whom there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. Romans 10:4

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 Corinthians 15:24

The phrase "It is done!" comes from the Greek verb ginomai (γίνομαι) and is found in the following passages.

But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. Mark 04:17

...regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, Romans 01:03

To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. 1 Corinthians 09:22

But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way. 1 Corinthians 14:40

There is a difference in the two words. The first means "to come to a natural completion." Christ brought the Law to its natural conclusion, offering up the perfect sacrifice for sin. The second word simply means "to come to pass." The judgement spoken of in this passage is not the "natural completion" of God's plan for the world, it "comes about" because of the necessary judgement on those who fail to receive what God has provided for them.

REVELATION CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The conclusion of Chapter 16 gives us an general picture of the final judgement. In the next several chapters we will be given some details regarding this final judgement.

The Doom of Babylon

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. With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries." 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. 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. This title was written on her forehead: MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

Revelation 17:01-05

The description begins with a woman whose title is given . . . MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. We are introduced here to the "porno queen of all porno queens.". The Greek word is porne (πορνή) and refers specifically to a female prostitute. We find the word in the N.T. in the passages below.

"Which of the two did what his father wanted?" "The first," they answered. Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him. Matthew 21:31-32

But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him! Luke 15:30

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh."¹ Corinthians 06:15-16

Then these are several passages that deal with a specific prostitute.

By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient. Hebrews 11:31

In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? James 02:25

A female prostitute is especially despicable in God's eyes for several related reasons. We begin with the Epistle to the Ephesians.

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church-- for we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. Ephesians 05:22-33

"In the beginning" God created man and woman go "go forth and replenish the earth." God, however, had a much more noble purpose for the marriage relation than this. In the above passage one might accuse Paul of double talk. At one time he is talking about the physical marriage relationship between man and woman. In almost the same breath he is talking about Christ and His Bride - the Church. Paul concludes with the statement that this is a profound mystery. The relationship between man and woman is meant to be a picture of the relation between the church and Christ.

This, then, is why so many Bible passages speak of harlotry in a spiritual sense.

See how the faithful city has become a harlot! She once was full of justice; righteousness used to dwell in her--but now murderers! Isaiah 01:21

"Take up a harp, walk through the city, O prostitute forgotten; play the harp well, sing many a song, so that you will be remembered." Isaiah 23:16

"Long ago you broke off your yoke and tore off your bonds; you said, 'I will

not serve you!' Indeed, on every high hill and under every spreading tree
you lay down as a prostitute. Jeremiah 02:20

"If a man divorces his wife and she leaves him and marries another man,
should he return to her again? Would not the land be completely defiled?
But you have lived as a prostitute with many lovers--would you now return
to me?" declares the LORD.
Jeremiah 03:06
Of King Josiah, the LORD said to me, "Have you seen
what faithless Israel has done? She has gone up on every high hill and under every
spreading tree and has committed adultery there.

Jeremiah 03:06

"But you trusted in your beauty and used your fame to become a
prostitute. You lavished your favors on anyone who passed by and your
beauty became his. You took some of your garments to make gaudy high
places, where you carried on your prostitution. Such things should not
happen, nor should they ever occur. Ezekiel 16:15-16

Their mother has been unfaithful and has conceived them in disgrace.
She said, 'I will go after my lovers, who give me my food and my water,
my wool and my linen, my oil and my drink.' Hosea 02:05

Then I told her, "You are to live with me many days; you must not be a
prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will live with you." Hosea 03:03

"Therefore this is what the LORD says: "Your wife will become a
prostitute in the city, and your sons and daughters will fall by the sword.
Your land will be measured and divided up, and you yourself will die in a
pagan country. And Israel will certainly go into exile, away from their
native land." Amos 07:17

All her idols will be broken to pieces; all her temple gifts will be burned
with fire; I will destroy all her images. Since she gathered her gifts from
the wages of prostitutes, as the wages of prostitutes they will again be
used." Micah 01:07

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. Nahaman 03:04

Nearly all of the prophets speak of Israel is being a prostitute - going after other gods
and forsaking the Lord God. Returning to the New Testament, the church has no better
track record than did Israel. The prostitution of the church is culminated in this great
harlot spoken of here.

Just who does this prostitute named "Babylon" represent? Many over the years have
seen her as the Roman Catholic Church and have equated Rome with Babylon. This is

not impossible, but is it, in fact, what John is writing about? Could Babylon actually be Babylon?

There are many many references to Babylon in the O.T. We note two of them in which the destruction of Babylon is specially singled out and dealt with at length.

An oracle concerning Babylon that Isaiah son of Amoz saw: Raise a banner on a bare hilltop, shout to them; beckon to them to enter the gates of the nobles. I have commanded my holy ones; I have summoned my warriors to carry out my wrath--those who rejoice in my triumph. Listen, a noise on the mountains, like that of a great multitude! Listen, an uproar among the kingdoms, like nations massing together! The LORD Almighty is mustering an army for war. They come from faraway lands, from the ends of the heavens--the LORD and the weapons of his wrath--to destroy the whole country. Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty. Because of this, all hands will go limp, every man's heart will melt. Terror will seize them, pain and anguish will grip them; they will writhe like a woman in labor. They will look aghast at each other, their faces aflame. See, the day of the LORD is coming--a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger--to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light.

Isaiah 13:01-10

Therefore, hear what the LORD has planned against Babylon, what he has purposed against the land of the Babylonians: The young of the flock will be dragged away; he will completely destroy their pasture because of them. At the sound of Babylon's capture the earth will tremble; its cry will resound among the nations. This is what the LORD says: "See, I will stir up the spirit of a destroyer against Babylon and the people of Leb Kamai. I will send foreigners to Babylon to winnow her and to devastate her land; they will oppose her on every side in the day of her disaster. Let not the archer string his bow, nor let him put on his armor. Do not spare her young men; completely destroy her army. They will fall down slain in Babylon, fatally wounded in her streets. For Israel and Judah have not been forsaken by their God, the LORD Almighty, though their land is full of guilt before the Holy One of Israel. "Flee from Babylon! Run for your lives! Do not be destroyed because of her sins. It is time for the LORD'S vengeance; he will pay her what she deserves. 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. Babylon will suddenly fall and be broken. Wail over her! Get balm for her pain; perhaps she can be healed. "We would have healed Babylon, but she cannot be healed; let us leave her and each go to his own land, for her judgment reaches to the skies, it rises as high as the clouds.'

Jeremiah 50:45-51:09

These two passages signal the utter destruction of Babylon and the end of her existence. Babylon was not destroyed when the Medes and the Persians took over. It was not destroyed when the Grecians took over. Iraq is, reportedly, rebuilding the city today. It is altogether possible that the "apostate religion" represented by the harlot will be positioned in the actual city of Babylon and not in Rome. It is possible that it will not be the Roman Church (as such) but a conglomerate of all of the world religions, a real ecumenical movement which will be headquartered in Babylon. This is where it all began and it would be appropriate for it all to end there.

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. 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.

Revelation 17:06-07

John says that the woman will be drunk with the blood of the saints. This title could be applied to the apostate Roman church, but how more fitting it is applied to the Near Eastern religions which are rapidly rising to face both the Jew and the Christian alike. Look around you today! Could you find a Moslem "church" in your state or city 20 years ago? Can you today? What the T.V. reports and note these groups which have established themselves in this country and most other countries of the world. It would not be surprising, at all, if some great religious leader could bring these groups together with the Roman church and the liberal protestant churches into one world church.

How could this be possible? These religions all worship God. The Moslems worship the God of Ishmael, the Jews the God of Isaac, the protestant church worships the Father of Jesus Christ. All are the same God. If you downgrade Christ to a prophet, you have the beginnings of a one world religion which would certainly be against the fundamental Christian and would be willing to "drink the blood of the saints."

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. "This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits.

Revelation 17:08-09

In this passage we see the words, "this calls for a mind with wisdom." As we get further into this prophecy, a mind with wisdom is certainly required.

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!

Romans 11:33

. . . that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

Ephesians 01:08

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Colossians 01:09

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

James 01:05

There is no reason that we can not have the wisdom needed to understand this book. God has promised it to us.

We have spoken of the harlot as the One World Church. She is sitting on a beast which we saw in Chapter 13 and identified with a world confederation. Hence, putting the tow together we have a human federation, having control over the entire world. We have an apostate church having control over the federation. God will allow, in the end times, this powerful confederation to exist. It was of such great power that John states "I was greatly astonished!"

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. 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 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. They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast.

Revelation 17:10-13

Here John sees the details of the consummation of the world empire. He also sees the final purpose of it. He writes They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. Why, you may ask, would God let things get so out of hand as to allow all of this to come about? Look at the world situation today! We are not all that far from this sort of situation today and, today, we have the Holy Spirit which is keeping things under control. The Holy Spirit will be gone. The influence of the saints will be

gone. What will be left to stop the creation of such an empire!

To cite the words of some other men . . .

Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth." But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel—because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

Genesis 11:01-09

Man began this one world empire in Genesis 11. God put a stop to it - at Babylon. One day God will allow the work to proceed again and the result will be as we have been reading. Why will God allow this?

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."

Revelation 17:14

The reason is that God is allowing this to all come about so that the Lamb will have all the forces located in one place in order to complete the final battle. The battle will be won by the Lamb and that will end this abomination.

Then the angel said to me, "The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages. 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. 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. The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth."

Revelation 17:15-18

The significance of the various parts of the vision are now explained. The waters, as we have noted many times before, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages. Things really never change - the things inside of men. They will not change here. Man will hate the Apostate Church just as mankind has hated the real church throughout the centuries. They will use her while it is convenient and then dispose of her. This section closes with a statement which seems a bit contradictory. We noted that the harlot was the World Church but here she is called the "great city".

There is no contradiction. the "great city" is the world headquarters for the World Church. It may be Rome, but, as we have mentioned it could well be the actual city of Babylon. The destruction is continued into the next chapter to which we now turn.

REVELATION CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Chapter Seventeen begin to describe the fall of Babylon. The chapter continues with another of the angels taking up the description.

The Doom of Babylon - Continued

After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor. 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. 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."

Revelation 18:01-03

The commentary of the second angels does not add any really new features to the description - it simply emphasizes what we have already seen. We do note, however, the words the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries." When the church begins to amass riches and material things and takes this a sign of its well being, it is in trouble.

"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. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm--neither hot nor cold--I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

Revelation 03:14-17

Babylon's Self-evaluation

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; for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes. 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. 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.' 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.

Revelation 18:04-08

Take double the amount of silver with you, for you must return the silver that was put back into the mouths of your sacks. Perhaps it was a mistake. Genesis 43:12

"If the stolen animal is found alive in his possession--whether ox or donkey or sheep--he must pay back double. Exodus 22:04

"If a man gives his neighbor silver or goods for safekeeping and they are stolen from the neighbor's house, the thief, if he is caught, must pay back double. Exodus 22:07

In all cases of illegal possession of an ox, a donkey, a sheep, a garment, or any other lost property about which somebody says, 'This is mine,' both parties are to bring their cases before the judges. The one whom the judges declare guilty must pay back double to his neighbor. Exodus 22:09

I will repay them double for their wickedness and their sin, because they have defiled my land with the lifeless forms of their vile images and have filled my inheritance with their detestable idols." Jeremiah 16:18

Let my persecutors be put to shame, but keep me from shame; let them be terrified, but keep me from terror. Bring on them the day of disaster; destroy them with double destruction. Jeremiah 17:18

The double restitution is established in the O.T. as seen above. For a serious crime (where restitution is possible) it is to be double. Hence Babylon's punishment will be double that which she dealt out.

In this passage we have Babylon's self evaluation. She says, "I sit as queen; I am not a widow, and I will never mourn." Three times we have the pronoun "I".

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! You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the

clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."

Isaiah 14:12-14

It is not like Satan's four-fold 'I will' in the above passage. Pride goes before the fall; true in both cases.

Note that, once again, God has left of remnant of people who may escape this final judgement.

The Lament of the Fall of Babylon

"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. 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 merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes any more-- 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; 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. "They will say, 'The fruit you longed for is gone from you. All your riches and splendor have vanished, never to be recovered.' 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 and cry out: "'Woe! Woe, O great city, dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls! In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin!" "Every sea captain, and all who travel by ship, the sailors, and all who earn their living from the sea, will stand far off. When they see the smoke of her burning, they will exclaim, 'Was there ever a city like this great city?' 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!"

Revelation 18:09-19

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 06:19-21

Christ told us long ago about the dangers of treasuring up the things this world has to offer. These are listed above for us - cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; . . . cattle and sheep; horses and carriages. Consider the great disappointment that the world will experience when Babylon is destroyed with all of its treasures. Today, with modernism and humanism, man is placing all of his trust in himself and riches. As long as things do not go too badly men will be satisfied. But when the end comes, dreams will be shattered and men will see their humanism and materialism for what it really is - nothing.

The Rejoicing over the Fall of Babylon

Rejoice over her, O heaven! Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you." 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. 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. 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. In her was found the blood of prophets and of the saints, and of all who have been killed on the earth."

Revelation 18:20-24

Not all will lament over the fall of Babylon. God's people will rejoice as God finally seeks the vengeance that is due her. The world went into weeping and mourning over Babylon's demise. Christians have already had their share of this.

I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.

John 16:20-22

When Babylon is destroyed will be the time to turn the tables. It will be the world that weeps and mourns and we will rejoice.

"To what, then, can I compare the people of this generation? What are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out

to each other: "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not cry.' For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners." ' But wisdom is proved right by all her children."

Luke 07:31-35

REVELATION CHAPTER NINETEEN

The scene changes from the devastation of Babylon to the joy in heaven.

The Heavenly Hallelujahs

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, 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." And again they shouted: "Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever."

Revelation 19:01-03

At the completion of this final judgement a tremendous shout of Hallelujah comes out of heaven. It comes from a great multitude which we assume to be (a) Old Testament Saints, (b) New Testament Saints, (c) Tribulation Saints, and (d) angels.

We all have heard (and, perhaps, used) the term Hallelujah. What does it mean? The Hebrew language is an interesting one in that words may be written with only one word. We emphasize the term word because it is really a compound of words written as one. The term Hallelujah is a good example of this. It begins with the Hebrew verb hahlal (הלל) which means to boast or to praise. It first has its meaning to boast as shown below.

He boasts of the cravings of his heart; he blesses the greedy and reviles the LORD. Psalm 10:03

...those who trust in their wealth and boast of their great riches? Psalm 49:06

To the arrogant I say, 'Boast no more,' and to the wicked, 'Do not lift up your horns. Psalm 75:04

All who worship images are put to shame, those who boast in idols--worship him, all you gods! Psalm 97:07

"It's no good, it's no good!" says the buyer; then off he goes and boasts about his purchase. Proverbs 20:14

Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of gifts he does not give. Proverbs 25:14

Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring
Proverbs 27:01 One may boast about non-material things. One might direct his or her
boasts toward God. Hence . . .

My soul will boast in the LORD; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Psalm 34:02

This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or
the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches,
but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows
me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and
righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD. Jeremiah 09:23-24

Normally, however, when we boast about God, we are glorifying Him and so the word
changes to glory.

Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice. 1 Chronicles 16:10

Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice. Psalm 105:03

You will winnow them, the wind will pick them up, and a gale will blow
them away. But you will rejoice in the LORD and glory in the Holy One of
Israel. Isaiah 41:16

Let us summarize. The meaning of the word depends on (a) the object of the boasting,
and (b) the person to whom the boasting is done. If we boast about ourselves to
others, that is what it is - boasting. If we boast about God to others, it is glorification.
Finally, if we boast about God to God, it is praise.

Thus, most of the places where this verb appears it is translated as some form of the
word praise. If the word is used in the Piel stem its meaning is intensified. If, in
addition, it is in the imperative tense with the second person suffix, it is a command.
Hence we have the following command.

For thus saith the LORD; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among
the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O LORD, save thy
people, the remnant of Israel. Jeremiah 31:07 KJV

Finally, if you add the shortened name for Jehovah, Yah, to the end of the word, you
end up with Halle-lu-yah; you end up with the command to praise and glorify God. All
of the places in the Psalms where you find Hallelujah, these are commands to be
followed. These are commands to praise God.

The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried: "Amen, Hallelujah!"

Revelation 19:04 In the previous passage just about everyone in heaven praised the Lord - they shouted Hallelujah. Finally, we have the rest of those in heaven, the elders and the creatures also praising God. It is universal praise from all of those in heaven.

The Heavenly Cheerleader

Then a voice came from the throne, saying: "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!" 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.

Revelation 19:05-06

At the command from a voice from the throne, all of heaven again broke out in mighty hallelujahs. We have already noted this at length. Who, however, is this cheerleader who issues the command? We know who it wasn't - it wasn't the saints, the elders, the creatures, or the angels. They were the cheering section. There are only two left in heaven who have not been considered; the Lamb and the Father. The voice from the throne had to be the voice of God (verse 4). Would God issue a command to praise Himself? Well, in the Old Testament we have the Ten Commandments and the first five of these are, in essence, commands to do this.

Consider that the last part of Hallelujah is the shortened version of Jehovah. When we speak of Jehovah God are we speaking of the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit. The answer is "yes!". It can be applied to all three persons of the Trinity, depending on the context.

David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared: "'The Lord said to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.'" ' Mark 12:36

While the original statement above (Psalm 110:1) uses different Hebrew words, in the Greek passage above, we have the Lord speaking to my Lord. Thus the term appears to be applied to both the Father and the Son. The command, we believe is to praise the Lamb of God - the Son, our Saviour. Why? Let us read on.

The Heavenly Wedding

Why all the praise in the preceding section. It will be, in part, over the destruction of Babylon. But it will also be for that which follows it - the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

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

Revelation 19:07-10

John now sees the preparation for a wedding - the Wedding of the Lamb. Jesus gave us a picture of this in Matthew.

"The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. "Then he sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.' "But they paid no attention and went off--one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. "Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless. "Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' "For many

are invited, but few are chosen."

Matthew 22:02-14

The Brides intended guests, the Jews, will not be at the banquet (there will be Christian Jews there). Instead those who did not receive the original invitation will be there - you and I and all who have received Christ as savior. There is another group that will attempt to come, but will not be allowed - those who have rejected Christ.

In the above passage, it is obvious that, in John's day, as well as often today, a marriage is begun (or ended) with a feast. Before the wedding takes place, then, there is to be a feast. This we will see at the end of this chapter.

The Rider of the White Horse

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. 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. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Revelation 19:11-16

We have already seen a rider on a white horse.

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. ~~Revelation~~ Revelation 06:02

The two riders are not the same. In Chapter Six we noted that Satan is the world's greatest counterfeiter. He portrays himself to be the "king of kings and Lord of Lords". In this chapter we have the real thing. We shall look at the description given Him, item by item (or name by name).

. . . whose rider is called Faithful and True. We saw this expression in Chapter Three, verse fourteen.

He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. Christ is nowhere else in the Bible referred to by the name Word of God. The phrase appears many times. When we examine this name we are confronted with a problem. The term word or the phrase word of God appears many times in the Bible. In many cases it refers to the Scriptures. But there are also many cases where it could refer to Christ and may refer to both. There are only a few verses which clearly refer to Christ.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 01:01

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 01:14

...to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, Ephesians 05:26

The above verse is questionable.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. 1 John 01:01

One can not separate God's word in general from His Word, the Bible, and his Word, the Son. Each is a manifestation of God's will and personality.

On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. We have seen this description once before in this book (Revelation 17:4). Paul refers to Christ this way just once.

In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about in his own time--God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen. 1 Timothy 06:13-16

The expression Lord of Lords is found by itself twice in the Old Testament.

For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. Deuteronomy 10:17

Give thanks to the Lord of lords: His love endures forever. Psalm 136:03

The expression King of Kings is found several times, but only one of them refer to

Christ (or God)!

Artaxerxes, king of kings, To Ezra the priest, a teacher of the Law of the God of heaven: Greetings. Ezra 07:12

"For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: From the north I am going to bring against Tyre Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, king of kings, with horses and chariots, with horsemen and a great army. Ezekiel 26:07

You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; Daniel 02:37

The reason that the two-fold expression appears only prophetically, here and in 1 Timothy, is that Christ is not now King of Kings of the world. This accounts for the radical change of opinion of Israel during the week preceding the crucifixion. Israel was expecting Christ to be their king of kings and he turned out not to be. It will only be at his second coming that he receives this title.

We have examined the names of this passage, excepting the one no one knows but Christ. Let us look at the descriptions.

The eyes like blazing fire were described in Chapter One.

His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. Revelation 01:14

The description of the robe dipped in blood has an interesting Old Testament parallel.

Then they got Joseph's robe, slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. Genesis 37:31

The blood on Joseph's robe was an indication that he had been slain. The blood on the robe of Christ has similar significance.

He is seen coming with the armies of heaven. The Bible often speaks of the heavenly host but this is a different term. The only other mention of a heavenly army is in Daniel.

And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? Daniel 04:34-35 KJV

The heavenly hosts are always angels. This is an army of the saints. This is evident by

what they were wearing - dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Recall where we have seen this before.

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. Revelation 04:04

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. 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?" 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. Revelation 06:09-11

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. Revelation 07:09

Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes--who are they, and where did they come from?" 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. Revelation 07:13-14

When you put these verses together you have the members of the army of heaven, with their white linen robes are (1) the 24 Elders, (2) the Old Testament Saints, (3) the New Testament Saints, and (4) the Tribulation Saints. This is not conjecture, we just studied this in verses 7 to 10 above.

He is seen with a sharp sword coming out of His mouth. We saw this in Revelation 1. It is also referred to prophetically in Isaiah.

Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations: Before I was born the LORD called me; from my birth he has made mention of my name. 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. He said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendor." Isaiah 49:01-03

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. Revelation 01:16

There are other passages in which the connection is not as clear.

Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Ephesians 06:17

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Hebrews 04:12

The remaining parts of the description are the iron scepter and the winepress. We saw the iron scepter in Chapter Two.

'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery'--just as I have received authority from my Father. Revelation 02:27

And we saw the Antichrist setup with one.

She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. Revelation 12:05

We dealt with the winepress back in Chapter Fourteen. With this very full description of Christ, ready to do battle, aided by the saints, we turn to the battle to which He rides.

The Supper of God

And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, "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." 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. 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 worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. 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.

Revelation 19:17-21

The feast the precedes this marriage is on the carcasses of those left on the earth, those who reject Jesus Christ. This is the final purging of the earth. With the earth so purged, the Lamb may return to earth with His bride.

REVELATION CHAPTER TWENTY

The Millennium

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. 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.

Revelation 20:01-03

There are those who claim to be amillennialists - they claim there is no such thing because the Bible does not mention it. Six times in this chapter we have the term thousand years. In Latin the term is millennium. It is silly to deny the existence of this 1000 year period based on a difference in languages. Its mention here five times should be ample proof.

There is also no question as to what will be done with Satan during this period. Here he is given the most complete description in the Bible. He is (1) the Dragon, (2) the Serpent, (3) the devil, and (4) Satan. He appears under all four of these descriptions or names in the bible, but never under all four at once.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"
Genesis 03:01

One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them.
Job 01:06

Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads.
Revelation 12:03

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.
Matthew 04:01

Note that the terms dragon and devil are New Testament terms, they do not appear in the Old Testament. Let us consider Satan's homes. First, he was in heaven with God and the other angels. Then he was cast out and became the prince and the power of the air. Third, as we saw recently, he was cast down to earth during the tribulation.

Finally, he will be cast in the Abyss for 1000 years.

The First Resurrection

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 worshiped 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. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. 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.

Revelation 20:04-06

When Christ returns, He will have those who will reign with him. These are those who partake of the first resurrection. There is something a bit confusing here. It appears as though the first resurrection takes place at the start of the 1000 years. From Paul, we get the idea that the resurrection of the saints takes place at the Rapture. The solution to this is that the first resurrection takes place in parts. It is completed when those who were slain during the tribulation are resurrected. Then the first resurrection is complete.

Satan's Final Fling

When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison 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. 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. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Revelation 20:07-10

Satan's imprisonment for 1000 years will end. He will then be released for his final

activities. He will be released to continue the work of deception that he has practiced ever since the Garden of Eden. During this 1000 years people will be born. As it is today, some will receive Christ, some will not. Satan will try to get these new people in his camp.

In the end, Satan will get his just reward. He will receive eternal life - in the lake of fire. He will not be alone there. The beast and the false prophet will be there. Who else will be there?

The Great White Throne - The Second Resurrection

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. 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. 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. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:11-15

We have had the first resurrection - the resurrection of the saints. We have seen the judgement of the unholy trinity (the beast, the false prophet, and Satan). We come to the last part of this, the Second Resurrection. It begins with a throne.

We have been concerned with a throne, in heaven, all through this book. In fact there have been a number of thrones. There is the throne. We saw Christ having come down from the seven spirits before his throne in Revelation 1:4. He promised us the right to sit with him on it with him, 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. in Revelation 3:21. Then, when John was caught up into heaven in Chapter Four, there was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it in Revelation 4:2. Throughout this book, to this point, we have been dealing with the Throne of Christ. It is here that you and I will be judged and seated.

Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.¹ Corinthians 03:13-15

Here John writes Then I saw a great white throne. This is yet another throne. For lack of a better name, it is called the "Great White Throne." You and I will never stand before this throne. It is the throne where the dead are to be judged. Read the passage carefully - there is no mention of any rewards.

Here we have mention of the dead - all of the dead no matter where they may be. Recall, however, that the saints have been resurrected - they are not dead! The dead are not those who have died in the Lord, they are those who have rejected him.

The judgement is to be done with a number of books. We are not told what the lesser books are. They are probably chronicles of what has been done here on earth like I and II Chronicles described what was done by Israel. The primary book is the Book of Life.

We have seen mention of this book several times already in Revelation. There are several others we shall look at.

Charge them with crime upon crime; do not let them share in your salvation. May they be blotted out of the book of life and not be listed with the righteous. Psalm 69:27-28

This Psalm is a Messianic Psalm. It, in a prophetic way, describes Christ and His rejection at His first coming. Those who rejected Him He asks to have removed from the names in this book. The Book of Life contains only the names of the righteous. Paul and his friends are good examples.

Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. Philippians 04:03

Then, when we studied the promises to the seven churches, we had the promise . . .

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. Revelation 03:05

Nowhere in the Bible is there any mention of God writing any names in this book. Why?

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. 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. 2 Peter 03:09-10

It may be assumed that everyone's name has been written in this book. If your name is not in it, it has been erased. Consider the following passages.

So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth--men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air--for I am grieved that I have made them." Genesis 06:07

In this case, God did not wipe out their names alone, He wiped their persons off the face of the earth.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it, because I will completely blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven."

Exodus 17:14

Similarly, the blotted out the Amalekites.

But now, please forgive their sin--but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written." The LORD replied to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book." Exodus 32:32-33

Here it is referred to simply as a book. From the context, it must be the book of life. Here, again, names are erased from it.

You have rebuked the nations and destroyed the wicked; you have blotted out their name for ever and ever. Psalm 09:05

If you study the Scriptures carefully, God erases something for every person. As we have already seen, he erases the names of the unrighteous from the Book of Life. For the rest of us . . .

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, Acts 03:19

He either erases your name from the Book of Life or He erases your sins from His remembrance.

If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. This is quite clear. Note, however, nothing is said about those whose name is found in the Book of Life. Why not? Because there will be no one standing before the Great White Throne whose name is in the book. This last judgement is only for those who have rejected Christ. What is their punishment? It is the Lake of Fire. This is not a new concept.

Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather

his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Matthew 03:12

But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Matthew 05:22

. . . And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Matthew 13:42

Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire. Matthew 18:08-09

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: Matthew 25:41

And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Mark 09:43

Even as Sodom and Gomorrhah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Jude 01:07

REVELATION CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

For many chapters we have read about God's judgment on the world and the unrighteous. This is now behind us - they are all in the Lake of Fire. It is now time to go on with God's program. While the last two chapters of this book are much more positive than the others, they are not easily understood.

The New Heaven and the New Earth

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.

Revelation 21:01

One must be careful in reading this verse. Remember that the 1000 year period came between the two resurrections. The final resurrection which we just studied occurs at the end of the 1000 year reign of Christ. The Millennium is now past. We have before us a new heaven and a new earth. The Greek word for pass away is an interesting one. It is *parerchomai* (παρερχομαι). If you remove the prefix, you have the very common Greek verb *erchomai* (ερχομαι) which means "to come". Just a few typical verses where it is found.

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. Matthew 05:17

But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." Matthew 09:13

"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. Matthew 10:34

The prefix, *para* (παρα), which is also very common, may indicate motion to the side of or motion from the side of. When you put this together, you have something that has come "alongside" (i.e. into the sphere of) us and then has passed away from us. It tends to indicate the transitory nature of a thing.

For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night. Psalm 90:04

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 2 Peter 03:08

We tend to perceive the heavens and the earth as very permanent, long lasting objects; to the Lord they are transitory. They come, then they pass off the scene to be replaced by the next event on God's timetable. One has to wonder what this verse means. Are we to take it in an extremely literal sense; there will be a completely new universe? Or, are we to take it in the sense that we have in the following verse?

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone,
the new has come! 2 Corinthians 05:17

After you accepted Christ as your Savior, you had the same physical body you had before, but Paul says we are new creations. By-the-way, "has gone" is our word passed away. We are new in the sense that Christ has changed our nature and, while the physical substance may be the same, the nature is new. This could be applied to this verse. It could be the same old earth and heaven, but with a new nature, cleaned and purified by God.

On the other hand, we have Peter's viewpoint.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. 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. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

2 Peter 03:10-13

This sounds very much like there will be a completely new universe. Scientists have long felt that the universe was created with a "Big Bang" (i.e. all at once - in an instance), hence the name "Big Bang Theory". Peter's words would seem to convey the opposite, the universe would disappear with a "big bang."

It is not useful to debate which of these may be true. The ultimate conclusion is that the universe will be completely different. In what way? This is explained next.

The Holy City

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 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. 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."

Revelation 21:02-04

What John had witnessed in heaven now descended to be upon the earth - the Holy City. John writes that the old order of things has passed away. The Greek word for "passed away" may be of interest. It is *aperchomai* (απερχομαι). We studied the same verb in the last section except that the prefix was different. Here the prefix is *apo* (απο) which carries the idea of separation, liberation, or departure. In the last section we saw the old heaven and the old earth pass by. Now, with the Holy City descended on earth, the old order has not only passed by, but it has passed completely out of the picture. The earth has been liberated from the curse of this present age.

. . . the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. Romans 08:21-23

When Adam and Eve fell, they brought not only a curse upon themselves and all mankind, but on the totality of the creation. After the 1000 years, that will all be gone and the earth will be in the same perfect form before sin entered it. John writes that, in the new order, there will be no more death. There was no death in the Garden of Eden - not until Adam sinned.

In Genesis 3 we read . . .

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Genesis 03:08

The Garden of Eden was God's garden. He walked in it. He enjoyed it. He ruled over it. John writes that it will be that way again some day. God will not longer be some mysterious being in heaven that we can not see, He will be living with us and communing with us.

The New and the Bad

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." 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. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. 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 sulfur. This is the second death."

Revelation 21:05-08

This passage speaks to two type of people, those for whom everything is new, and the bad whose place is in the lake of fire. Those who would be given everything new have two characteristics ascribed to them. They are thirsty and they are overcomers. Let us take a look at these two characteristics and see what they indicate.

Being Thirsty: First, we need not be thirsty because Christ did that for us.

Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "John 19:28" 'I am thirsty' are told to thirst for righteousness . . .

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Matthew 05:06

Most important of all, we are told repeatedly that we are to thirst after Jesus Christ.

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." John 4:13-14

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." John 06:25

On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink." John 07:37

In other words, we are speaking about those who, during their lifetimes, have sought after our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. They are those who have (or will have) accepted Christ as their Savior.

Overcoming: First of all, Jesus has led the way by being an overcomer.

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." John 16:33

We are encouraged to be overcomers.

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Romans 12:21

I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one. 1 John 02:13-14

But, how do we become overcomers? What do we have to do?

You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. 1 John 04:04

. . . for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. 1 John 05:04-05

We overcome simply by accepting Jesus Christ as the Lord of our lives and all Christ to work in us to cause us to be overcomers. Finally, recall that this option is open throughout the church age. We saw this in Chapters Two and Three.

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. Revelation 02:07

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. Revelation 02:11

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. Revelation 02:17

To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations-- Revelation 02:26

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. Revelation 03:05

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. Revelation 03:12

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. Revelation 03:21

There are those who will not share in this new heaven and new earth, Their share will
be in the Lake of Fire. John lists who these people will be. They are:

FEARFUL : deilos (δειλος)

Christians will not be included in this group. Paul wrote . . .

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and
of self-discipline. 2 Timothy 01:07

If you are still timid and afraid of things, check to see if you really know Christ as your
Savior. Jesus said . . .

. . . to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" Mark 04:40

UNBELIEVING : apistos (απιστος)

This requires little explanation. Basically, the Greek word is the word for faith. It is the
word used in Mark 4:40 above. The alpha in front of it means "no faith" - hence
unbelieving. In three of the four Gospels we have the following.

"O unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I
stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here."

Luke 09:41

He said it to Thomas . . .

. . . Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand
and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." John 20:27

It is only the unsaved that this term applies to, hence,

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they
cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image
of God. 2 Corinthians 04:04

ABOMINABLE : bdelusso (βδελυσσω)

To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not

believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good. Titus 01:15-16

According to what Paul wrote to Titus, those who claim to know God, but do not, are detestable (or abominable).

MURDERERS : phoneus (φονεύς)

It is the unsaved who are the murderers. Now, on occasion, a Christian may commit a murder, but Christians are not characterized as murderers. There are those who are.

Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him-- Acts 07:52

Paul, as he was being sent to Rome to be put in prison, was mistaken for one.

When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, "This man must be a murderer; for though he escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live." Acts 28:4

Peter writes . . .

If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. 1 Peter 04:15

WHOREMONGERS : pornos (πορνός)

This term, as all of the previous terms, describes the unsaved.

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

1 Corinthians 06:09-11

The term is a general term which, in the above passage, is used to characterize adulterers, male prostitutes, and homosexuals. Paul knew that such people were not born again Christians and, as such would never enter the New Heaven and New Earth. Paul also wrote to advise us to stay away from such people.

I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral

people -- not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.

1 Corinthians 05:09-11

SORCERERS : pharmakeus (φαρμακον)

These people we discussed in Revelation 9:21

IDOLATERS : eidoloatres (ειδωλολατρος)

See WHOREMONGERS above (1 Corinthians 5:10-11 and 6:9)

LIARS : pseudes (ψευδες)

This type of person is mentioned in Acts 6.

They produced false witnesses, who testified, "This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. Acts 06:13

We are not talking about people who simply tell lies, we are talking about those who claim to be who they are not.

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. Revelation 02:02

Together, these terms sum up the characteristics of the unsaved. They are the ones who will be cast into the Lake of Fire. But, enough of them, we shall return to the New Jerusalem.

The New Jerusalem

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." 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. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. 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. There were

three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. 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. He measured its wall and it was 144 cubits thick, by man's measurement, which the angel was using. The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. 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 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. I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 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. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. 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.

Revelation 21:09-27

It is really hard to get a picture of what this city will be like. We shall begin with its dimensions. It has three dimensions, each of which is 12,000 stadia (if you know what that is!) Stadia is the Greek word. Quite obviously, it is the size of a stadium! Actually, it is about 200 yards (or about one furlong). 12,000 stadia would be about 1400 miles. This is no small city!

The language of this passage is not specific enough that we may determine its geometric shape. It is very specific that it is tetragonas (τετραγωνος), a quadrangle with equal sides - a square. It will also be 1400 miles high, but the Greek text does not give us any clue as to its vertical shape. Two possibilities are shown below.

It could be a perfect cube, 1400 miles on a side, or it could be a pyramid which is 1200 miles high. There are other possible, but unlikely, shapes. This city, regardless of shape, has an immense volume. Consider this!

In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. John 14:02
If each room were to be 20 feet by 20 feet by 10 feet (certainly an ample sized room for

someone who no longer has to eat, sleep, take baths, etc.), a cubic city would have space for 93,312,000,000,000,000 rooms (93 trillion). So, don't worry, there is still room for you!

Now, we are told that this city is prepared for the Bride of Christ. If we take it literally, only Christians, members of the Church, will be in resident. The O.T. saints, the Tribulation saints, and all the other will live outside. It is not clear that this is what is intended. The main reason it may not be is that, regardless of the era, the only way to God's grace is through Jesus Christ. This is true of O.T. Saints who looked for His coming, for N.T. Saints who have a record of his coming, and Tribulation Saints. Regardless, it would appear that there will be those living outside of this new city - perhaps new people, people born in the New Earth.

We find the number twelve twice in this passage. There will be twelve gates, one each for the tribes of Israel. There will be twelve foundations, one for each of the apostles. This is somewhat reminiscent of the beginning of this book where we had twenty-four elders (2 x 12). Let us start with the gates.

"These will be the exits of the city: Beginning on the north side, which is 4,500 cubits long, the gates of the city will be named after the tribes of Israel. The three gates on the north side will be the gate of Reuben, the gate of Judah and the gate of Levi. "On the east side, which is 4,500 cubits long, will be three gates: the gate of Joseph, the gate of Benjamin and the gate of Dan. "On the south side, which measures 4,500 cubits, will be three gates: the gate of Simeon, the gate of Issachar and the gate of Zebulun. "On the west side, which is 4,500 cubits long, will be three gates: the gate of Gad, the gate of Asher and the gate of Naphtali. Ezekiel 48:30-34

Ezekiel was also shown a large city, with gates around it. He is more specific as to how the names are assigned to the gates.

Turning to the foundations of the apostles.

By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ . . . 1 Corinthians 03:10-12

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit Ephesians 02:19-22

Paul spoke of these foundations several times. The author of Hebrews tells us that

even the O.T. saints looked for this.

For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. Hebrews 11:10

Each foundation was based on a stone. These are: (1) jasper, (2) sapphire, (3) chalcedony, (4) emerald, (5) sardonyx, (6) carnelian, (7) chrysolite, (8) beryl, (9) topaz, (10) chrysoprase, (11) jacinth, and (12) amethyst

It may be of interest to compare these with other references to such stones. In Exodus, we have a description of the Ephod the high priest wore.

Then mount four rows of precious stones on it. In the first row there shall be a ruby, a topaz and a beryl; in the second row a turquoise, a sapphire and an emerald; in the third row a jacinth, an agate and an amethyst; in the fourth row a chrysolite, an onyx and a jasper. Mount them in gold filigree settings. Exodus 28:17-20

If you make the (reasonable) assumption that (a) the ruby and the carnelian are the same stone, (b) the sardonyx and the onyx are the same, and the possible assumptions that (c) the chalcedony and the agate are the same and (d) the chrysoprase and the turquoise are the same, the differences due to differences in language, the breastplate would appear as below.

6	9	8
10	2	4
11	3	12
7	5	1

In the Garden of Eden, Satan was reminded,

You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: ruby, topaz and emerald, chrysolite, onyx and jasper, sapphire, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. Ezekiel 28:13

Here nine of the twelve stones are noted. Note that the order in the breast plate is not the same as mentioned in Revelation. The stones on Revelation are for the foundations of the Apostles. They are not related to the tribes of Israel.

We shall pass over some of the details, the pure gold, and so on for they are fairly

obvious. Let us look at what is missing!

- (1) a temple
- (2) the sun or the moon
- (3) gates that are ever shut
- (4) night
- (5) nothing impure

These are all tied together. There will be no temple. Why not?

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" But the temple he had spoken of was his body. John 02:19-21

Jesus declared that He would be the temple. The temple was a temporary place where man went to worship God while he was separated from God. There will be no such separation in the New Jerusalem. John says the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

Then there will be no sun or moon. They are not needed. What was their purpose?

And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. God made two great lights--the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. Genesis 01:14-18

Let us take these two separately. The purpose of the sun was to give light upon the earth - to rule the day. But Jesus replaces this.

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 08:12

While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." John 09:05

Jesus provides all the light we shall need. Now, the moon and the stars governed the darkness, the night. Morally speaking, the day is good, the night is evil. Hence there will be no moon because there will be no night (item 4 on the list).

The open gates are interesting. Why will they never be shut? When were the gates of a city ever shut. Other than if the city was under attack, the gates were only shut at

night. There will be no night, so the gates will not be shut because of darkness. Neither will they be shut because of an attack from the evil one.

When evening shadows fell on the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath, I ordered the doors to be shut and not opened until the Sabbath was over. I stationed some of my own men at the gates so that no load could be brought in on the Sabbath day. Nehemiah 13:19

And, finally, the gates need not be shut because there will be nothing impure which will attempt to enter the city.

in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 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. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. 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.

We shall save our concluding comments on this description since the description continues on into Chapter Twenty-Two.

REVELATION CHAPTER TWENTY TWO

The description of the New Jerusalem began in the last chapter. It continues on into this chapter.

The New Jerusalem (Continued)

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 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. 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. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 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.

Revelation 22:01-05

In this part of the description we have the tree of life and the river of life. Let us begin with the tree.

And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground--trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 02:09

It first shows up in the Garden of Eden. It appears with another tree, the tree of knowledge of God and Evil.

And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever."

Genesis 03:22

Between the above two verses, Adam and Eve partook of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. They did not partake of the Tree of Life.

After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the

way to the tree of life.

Genesis 03:24

God, at that time, then made it impossible for Adam, Eve, you, I or anyone else to partake of the Tree of Life. In the New Jerusalem, however, you and I will have that opportunity. The term is used figuratively by Solomon, for wisdom,

She is a tree of life to those who embrace her; those who lay hold of her will be blessed.

Proverbs 03:18

for righteousness,

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise.

Proverbs 11:30

for fulfilled hope,

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.

Proverbs 13:12

and for a healing tongue,

The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.

Proverbs 15:04

The promise of the coming of this tree was at the beginning of this book.

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.

Revelation 02:07

As far as the River of the Water of Life is concerned, we consider the water of life in the last chapter. The Psalmist mentions it twice.

How priceless is your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights. For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.

Psalms 36:07-09

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells.

Psalms 46:04

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and

whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

Psalm 01:01-03

One may ask, "how many Trees of Life are there?" You see, the passage reads On each side of the river stood the tree of life. This would indicate, at least, two trees, one on one side and one on the other. IN all of the previous references, there has been only one. In addition, in this passage, it read tree of life, not trees of life. We might turn to Ezekiel for a parallel description.

The man brought me back to the entrance of the temple, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was coming down from under the south side of the temple, south of the altar.

Ezekiel 47:01

Then the river(s) are described and Ezekiel writes . . .

When I arrived there, I saw a great number of trees on each side of the river. He said to me, "This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, where it enters the Sea. When it empties into the Sea, the water there becomes fresh. Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live. Fishermen will stand along the shore; from En Gedi to En Eglaim there will be places for spreading nets. The fish will be of many kinds--like the fish of the Great Sea. But the swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they will be left for salt. Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing." Ezekiel 47:07-12

There are several differences in this passage. First, it does not appear that the rivers Ezekiel saw were in the New Jerusalem, they flowed in geographical places that we know of. Second, the trees are not called the trees of life, they are fruit trees for food and healing. Finally, the Greek expression (on each side of the river) is different.

There are three possible explanations. These are (1) the tree was between the river and the street, (2) the tree was in the midst of the river (or the street) and third, "tree" is to be taken collectively. Whichever it is, man will again have access to the tree and, this time, God will allow us to partake of it.

The Revelation Concluded

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." "Behold, I am coming soon!

Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book. Revelation 22:06-07

The angel wraps it up. This is the end of the revelation. They have been given so that we might know what will surely take place at the end of this age. There is a blessing associated with this. If we are to gain the blessing, we need to know how to fulfill the obligation. The text says that we are to keep the words of the prophecy. How do you keep a prophecy? You can keep the commandments. You can keep on being faithful. How, though, do you keep a prophecy?

The answer lies in the Greek word used here. It is *tereo* (τερεω) which means a number of things, one of which is to be watchful.

Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God. Matthew 27:54 KJV

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. Revelation 03:03

"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." Revelation 16:15

We "keep" the words of the prophecy by remembering them and expecting them to happen. It is only as we anticipate the soon return of Jesus Christ and order our lives accordingly that we will receive this blessing.

John's Testimony

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. 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!" Then he told me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near.

Revelation 22:08-10

In this section, we have John's personal testimony regarding this book. He begins with I, John. Four other times his name has appeared in the book. 1:1, 1:4, 1:9, and 21:2. By this time we should know who did the writing. The Greek has an emphatic expression. The Greek term(s) for I do not appear very often in the New Testament since the I is included in the parsing of the verb. When it does appear, it is usually for

some sort of emphasis. Neither John nor Peter use the expression. Paul, on a number of occasions does.

By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you—I, Paul, who am "timid" when face to face with you, but "bold" when away!
2 Corinthians 10:01

Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.
Galatians 05:02

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles--
Ephesians 03:01

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.
Colossians 01:23

For we wanted to come to you--certainly I, Paul, did, again and again--but Satan stopped us.
1 Thessalonians 02:18

I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back--not to mention that you owe me your very self.
Philemon 01:19

It should be noted that these verses must be found using the Greek text. There are many places in the English translations where the word "I" is inserted by the translators. If you examine each of the above verses in context, you will find that Paul is using all the influence he has to persuade his readers.

In this passage, John is giving solemn testimony that what he wrote is true. It is as if he were standing in a courtroom swearing to "tel the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

He declares that the both heard and saw the things about which he wrote. In legal terms, then, what we have written in this book is not heresay. John himself saw and heard the things about which he wrote.

John was given two orders when he had completed this book. The first was "Worship God!" Of all the commandments, this is the most important. It is given in the context of John bowing down to the angel who revealed this to them. We are to bow the knee to God and to God alone. The second order was "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near." If you recall, at the end of the book of Daniel, he was told to seal up his words. John is instructed not to do so. The words are to remain open for you and I and all who desire to read.

The Final Warning

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." "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. "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. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

Revelation 22:11-15

This final warning of the book begins in a strange way. It says, if you are doing wrong or are vile, to continue in it! Why does it not say "Repent!". The answer is in the words that follow. "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. How does one wash his robe? Bold, Cheer, Ajax, and all the others won't do it. It is only the shed blood of Jesus Christ that can cleanse our robes. The point of this warning is the theme of the new testament.

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, Titus 03:03-05

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- Ephesians 02:08

e are not to continue in sin, but it is not what we do that will save us, it is where our faith lies.

Jesus' Testimony

"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." 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. 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. 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. He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.

Revelation 22:16-21

The book closes with the testimony of Jesus Christ Himself. Like John's testimony, it begins with the legal term, "I, Jesus..." He gives the final invitation. He places no restrictions. Whoever is thirsty may come to Him.

Then there is one last warning. 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. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life. Note the play on words in the warning. ADD to the book and I will ADD the plagues. TAKE AWAY from this book and I will TAKE AWAY his share.

This is a solemn warning. Technically, it applies to this book, not the other 65 books of the Bible. It is often interpreted to mean the whole Bible. While it applies specifically to this book, it is not wrong to draw the general conclusion that, in as much as this book concludes the Bible, the warning applies to the whole Bible.

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