

REVELATION CHAPTER SUMMARIES, 22 chapters in 22 pages

Chapter 1: “the Revelation of Jesus Christ”

“I fell at His feet like a dead man!” (Rev 1.17)

Of course he did. Jesus, “the ruler of the kings of the earth,” had invited Himself over to John’s pad. He announced His unexpected arrival with “a loud voice like a trumpet (Rev 1.10),” thundering like Niagra Falls (Rev 1.15); that alone would knock the wind out of anyone. But that’s not all. He wore (Rev 1.13) “a robe reaching His feet” (like the High Priest) and “girt around the chest with a golden sash” (the garb of kings). “His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like molten-hot bronze glowing in a furnace (Rev 1.14-15).” “His face shone like the strong sun (Rev 1.16),” just as it did when John saw Him at the Transfiguration (Mt 17.2). “Out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword” and He held 7 stars in His right hand (Rev 1.16). With such a Champion, Revelation promises victory and instills hope without once in the book using the word “hope.”

This “Son of Man” (Rev 1.12; Eze 8.2-3) sounds much like God the Father (Eze 1.4, 27), the Ancient of Days (Dan 7.9). Indeed, Jesus already identifies Himself with YHWH in Rev 1.17: “I am the first and the last,” He says, a title that YHWH has reserved for Himself alone, at least for the past 800 years (Is 41.4; 48.12; and 44.6 “This is what YHWH says...‘I am the first and I am the last. There is no God besides Me.’” Compare Is 42.8: “I am the LORD; that is my name. My glory I will not give to another;” it was no small matter 70 years before when John and the other apostles started calling Jesus “the Lord.”

And that “sword” in Rev 1.16; “the word of God is...a two-edged sword,” (Heb 4.12; Eph 6.17). But “sword” in this verse (and in Rev 2.12, 16; 6.8; 19.15, 21) is a Thracian *romphaia*, a 31-inch blade extending from a 20-inch hilt.

And who can hold stars in His hand? - except the Man who rebuked the winds and sea (Mt 8.26-27).

Jesus says these words “must soon take place...the time is near,” (Rev 1.1, 3). Before saying “Gotcha!” to those who read Revelation from a futurist bent, understand that “soon” also means “suddenly.” Jesus always comes suddenly, like a thief in the night (Mt 24.43-44; Lk 12.39-40; 1 Th 5.2, 4; Rev 3.3; 16.15). Most people die sooner they had expected.

What’s with “Seven?” Seven lampstands that are seven churches having seven angels represented by seven stars, seven spirits (Rev 1.4, 11-12, 16, 20)? Seven is a numerical symbol for “completion.” So, the complete Church, the fulness of the Spirit. *Aggelos*/angel can simply mean an ordinary human “messenger” (as it does in Jas 2.25; Hag 1.13; Mal 2.7); perhaps these are the local pastors/bishops. And, it’s not that there were only 7 churches in Asia; by this date, Asia province had some 18 or 19 other congregations in addition to the 7 of this text.

John also acquaints us with the word *pantocrator* in Rev 1.8, lamely translated into English as “Almighty.” The word literally means “ruler of all.” This word is not about super-human strength, but about authority. When Greek Christians use the word today, they associate it with Col 1.17: “in Him all things hold together.” Paul used the word in 2 Cor 6.18; and after Rev 1.8 we see *pantocrator* again in Rev 4.8; 11.17; 15.3; 16.14; 19.6, 15; and 21.22.

In Rev 1.9 we see that John and the Church were already participating “in the Tribulation.” They were already participating in the kingdom, and (Rev 1.6) were already “a kingdom of priests to God;” just as Peter said (1 Pe 2.5, 9-10), and as God desired at the Exodus (Ex 19.6).

Chapters 2-3: the Letters to the Seven Churches

The letters follow a pattern:

a) **Thus says He who...**

A statement that identifies Jesus is given. Most are references that Christians would already recognize as referring to Christ, eg, “Son of God” (Rev 2.18), or “the *Arche*/beginner/author of Creation” (Rev 3.14; cf: Jn 1.1; Col 1.18). And most titles come from chapter 1; like “Who holds the seven stars in His right hand” (Rev 1.16, 20; 2.1).

b) **I know your works...**

Some praise of the particular church follows - except in Laodicea, where nothing is praised.

c) **But I have this against you...**

A reproof. Not found in the letters to Smyrna nor Philadelphia, which are not criticized. And not stated in Laodicea, where “I know your works...” is followed by disapprovals.

d) **Repent...**

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

and,

f) **To him who conquers I will give...**

The text may reverse the order of the last two statements. The verb *nikao*/wins/is victorious/overcomes/conquers is used 17 times in this book. We are called to endure. Overcomers are not a special subset, but refer to all believers. Compare 1 Jn 5.4, “Everyone who is born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world: our faith.”

Each letter usually contains **specific statements that would resonate** with that specific audience church. An incomplete list follows:

Ephesus: “you have put to the test those who call themselves apostles.” Many early Christian celebrities reportedly passed through Ephesus: Paul; Timothy, their pastor martyred during Domitian’s current persecution; Onesimus; John Mark; Trophimus (Ac 20.4; 21.29; 2 Ti 4.20); the apostle John and his students Ignatius, Papias, and Polycarp; Aristion; one of the apostle Philip’s three daughters; two of Philip the deacon’s four daughters; Aristobolus brother of Barnabas; Mary Magdalene; Andrew; Prochorus (Ac 6.5). This church will later host Justin Martyr for a few years, and Clement (from Sicily) before he becomes Clement of Alexandria.

Smyrna: “who became dead and came to life again.” Smyrna was founded ca. 1000 BC, destroyed by Lydia in 627 BC, and rebuilt by Greeks in 200BC.

Pergamum: “throne of Satan” takes a swipe at the most prominent temple, the “throne of Zeus;” “to eat meats sacrificed by idols and to commit adultery” takes a swipe at the local Dionysius cult; their bishop “Antipas” had been martyred at the behest of both the local Serapis cult and the priests of Asclepius; “manna” challenges Demeter. So, it’s not health, groceries, or wine; it’s not Pergamum’s gods Asclepius, Demeter, Dionysius, nor Caesar who gets you what you need in life; it’s no one other than God. “White stone”s were found in Asclepius worship; in the homes of Thracians & Scythians, sizeable ethnic minorities in the city; in charms worn in Pergamon; in the courts; among champion athletes and retired gladiators.

Thyatira: was originally named Pelopia, then Semiramus. Pelopia was a daughter of Niobe, killed by Artemis; Semiramus/Shammuramat was the regent queen-mother of Assyria (811-806 BC). “Jezebel” may refer to a woman in the church, perhaps part of the cult of Sambathe, the sibyl whose shrine was outside the city walls. One legend says that Alexander the Great sought Sambathe en route to Persia. She has been variously linked to Egypt, to Persia, to Palestinian Jews; to Apollo whose sibyls were often sacred prostitutes; to Baal, whom some equated with Apollo; and to Berossus/Bēl-rē’û-šunu, a high priest of Marduk in Babylon. It was next to impossible to have a job in Thyatira without being part of a guild; more guilds/*syntechnia*/syndicates are known in Thyatira than any other contemporary city in the Asia province. And, “meat offered to idols” were part and parcel of guild suppers, which began and ended with formal sacrifices to gods, were often held in a temple, and where drunkenness was common.

Sardis: “You have a name that you are alive.” the Sardis church was a megachurch, and kept growing till at least 180 AD. “Be constantly alert;” the ‘impregnable’ Sardis acropolis was conquered twice (549 & 216 BC) because the same secret entrance was carelessly left unguarded.

Philadelphia: “he will not go out from it any more;” Philadelphians often “went out” of the city to camp in the fields, terrorized by the recurring earthquakes of 17-37 AD. A “new name;” Philadelphia had been renamed Neocaesarea by Tiberius in 17AD after he gave earthquake relief funds; then renamed Flavia by Vespasian.

Laodicea: the words “vomit...wealthy...naked...[and] sup” were common in the local culture of the public baths. Might some of those in the Laodicean church, like their pagan peers, have dined in conjunction with vomitoria, and bathed naked in the baths? “You say, ‘I am rich...Buy gold from Me;’” Laodicea had a renown gold exchange, was a banking center, and twice in John’s lifetime had rebuilt after earthquakes, refusing outside funds. “Hot...cold...tepid/ lukewarm;” potable, palatable water was a big issue in Laodicea. Nearby Hierapolis had 17 hot springs, temperatures up to 212F; hot baths in homes, hot public baths, private baths (clubs), “healing” baths for skin, joint, and belly problems; they marketed their water as an emetic for vomitoria. Colossae, also nearby, had fresh, cold water with a reputation for being invigorating and for slaking thirst. “*Collyrium* to anoint your eyes that you may see;” Laodicea compounded collyrium, a.k.a *tephra Phrygia*/“Phrygian powder” as an eye salve. “White garments;” Laodiceans sported a *trimita*, a local tunic made from Angora-like soft, glossy, violet-black goat wool.

Note also “crown of life (2.8),” which had become part of the Christian vocabulary in the 50 years since penned in Jas 1.12; “Nicolaitans (2.6, 15),” whom Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Clement of Alexandria & Eusebius say were swingers, immoral wife-swappers who perverted a teaching of Nicolas (Ac 6.5); and “second death (2.11; 20.6, 14; 21.8),” a term denied by Sadducees, but used by other rabbis to mean when “the wicked die in the next world.”

Many think the Seven Churches represent 7 epochs in Church history. Currently, this is given as: Ephesus - Duty without Love - 33-100 AD; Smyrna - Persecuted and Poor, but Rich - 100-312 AD; Pergamos - Compromise with the World - 312-590 AD; Thyatira - The Worldly, Tolerant, or Fake Church - 590-1517 AD; Sardis - Orthodox but Dead - 1517-1750 AD; Philadelphia - Revived, Evangelistic - 1750-1925 AD; Laodicea - The Lukewarm and/or Apostate church - Today. Careful: this whole idea is tricky. Chronologically, “Persecuted and Poor” describes the earliest Church better than does “Duty without Love “ And there is “century creep;” the dates vary with the commentator. Eg, Puritans in the 1590s wrote that theirs was the Laodicean age.

Chapter 4, the throne of God

“The first voice...like a trumpet,” Jesus, summons John to Heaven. The only way to enter Heaven is through Jesus. There, John sees “the Lord God *pantocrator*...who lives for ever” seated on His throne. (Recall *pantocrator* from chapter 1 summary)

The image is almost identical to those in Is 6.1-6; Eze 1; 8.2-4; 9.3-10.22; and 11.22-23; and also calls to mind 1 Sam 4.4; 2 Sam 6.2; 22.11; 2 Kgs 19.15; 1 Chr 13.6; Psa 18.10; 80.1; 99.1; and Is 37.6.

From a distance, one only perceives a dark cumulonimbus storm cloud wrapped around a glowing metal “man” (“a great cloud with fire flashing intermittently, bright light around it, and in its midst something like gleaming electra in the midst of fire,” Eze 1.4).

Up close, one sees a sapphire blue throne (Eze 10.1; 1.26).

God looks red, like carnelian/sardis or like many of the jaspers (Rev 4.3I). Both carnelian and jasper are chalcedonies, (as are chrysoprase, sardonyx, onyx and agate). [Chalcedony may be thought of as a quartz that is colored by impurities and opacified by moganite (silicon dioxide).] In the Ezekiel passages, God is described as having the appearance of “fire, amber, gleaming bronze, or electra [the gold-silver alloy that looks silver,” (Eze 1.27; 8.2).

God radiated a “rainbow” (Eze 1.27-28) or an emerald-green halo (Rev 4.3).

Before, or facing the throne, are a crystal sea; and also 7 “lamps afire” symbolizing “the seven spirits of God,” (Rev 4.6) the complete/perfect Holy Spirit.

We can go on and on about this other-worldly scene: the cherubs, the fire, the cloud/smoke, the coals aflame... Yet, **all can see the message: God is on His throne. He’s in control. His work is ongoing. Everything’s going to be alright. Worship God.**

Other items in the chapter deserve mention: “**You created all things, and because of Your will they were, and were created,**” (Rev 4.11). The doctrine of God’s special creation is not just a Gen 1-2 consideration; it’s taught all over the Bible, taught by Jesus, and even appearing here (see also Rev 4.11; 10.6; Gen 5.1-2; 6.6-7; Ex 4.11; Dt 4.32; Neh 9.6; Job 38.1-42.2; Ps 8; 19.1-6; 33; 89.5-17, 47; 104; 146.5-6; 148; Ecc 12.1; Is 40.12-31; 42.5, 8; 45.5-9, 12, 18-24; Eze 28.13-15; Am 4.13; Mk 13.19; Jn 1.1-3, 10; Ac 17.24; Ro 1.18-2.16; Ep 3.9; Col 1.5-16, 23; 1 Pe 4.19; 2 Pe 3.3-5; etc etc)

“**White garments**” worn by the 24 elders, 12 for the “12 tribes” of Israel & 12 for the “12 apostles.” Why white? Perhaps these ideas apply:

a) soiled clothes were not even allowed into pagan temples; (cf Ja 1.27), “Pure religion...is this: visit orphans and widows...and keep oneself unstained from the world;” b) baptismal garments were often white; c) the garment of God is light, which is white; d) the dress code for festivities was white robes; eg, when Rome celebrated a triumphal entry, the whole city was required to wear white; and, e) even today, several Catholic denominations, Eastern and western, wear white on pilgrimage.

“Cast their **crowns** before the throne,” (Rev 4.4, 10). The word “crown” can be *stephanos* or *diadem*. A diadem is a metal ring, perhaps bejeweled, worn by kings. We won’t even see a diadem till Satan wears one in Rev 12.3. This crown, and every one heretofore, has been a *stephanos*, a soft head piece. A turban can be a *stephanos*, but usually the word refers to a wreath worn by athletic champions. These crowns are woven, gold-colored; not forged metal.

“Who was, who is and who is to come,” (Rev 4.8; also 1.8; 11.17; 16.5). A Jew sees an attempt to translate YHWH into Greek words. A Greek knows the phrase applied to Tiresias in Homer’s *Odyssey*, thinking instead of “the totality of all experience.”

Chapter 5, The Lamb

We're told of "a book written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals." A Roman or Greek would instantly think of a Last Will and Testament, sealed with 7 seals, bearing the Acts of Probate on the front, and the Acquittal on the back. The acts of probate identify the administrator of the will; the acquittal identifies the creditors, if any, to whom the estate is in debt.

Seals both forbid knowledge and guarantee it. Seals bar to all except one, but to that one they guarantee that the delivered text is authentic, genuine. The seal also identifies the ownership of the item.

After grief that none could open the book, we learn that the Lion of Judah (Gen 49.9-12), who is also the Root of David (Is 11.1,10) has that right (Rev 5.6). Expecting to see a lion, we instead are shown a slaughtered lamb (Rev 5.6; Is 53.7; Jn 1.29, 36; 1 Pe 1.18-19). He has 7 horns (complete power), 7 eyes (complete knowledge), 7 spirits (the full complement of the Holy Spirit; Rev 5.6), and is hailed with a 7-fold (complete) praise (Rev 5.12).

We're told that the Spirit of God, who "convicts the world regarding sin, righteousness, and judgment (Jn 18.8f)" is "sent into all the earth," (Rev 5.6).

The praise comes from "ten thousands of ten thousands," ie, hundreds of millions (5.11).

It is fitting that "every creature" delivers a 4-fold praise (Rev 5.13); four is the numeric symbol for Creation

What about the phrases "is worthy to," or "none was found worthy to," which we've seen before (Rev 4.11; 5.2, 4, 9, 12)? In modern English, we can read those as "deserves to..." or "none was found who deserves to..."

We're introduced to a new symbol: incense: "bowls full of incense...are the prayers of the saints" (5.8). (Compare David in Ps 141.2 "May my prayer be counted as incense before You.")

The soundtrack of Heaven has even changed. Reading chapter 4 alongside its parallel passages (Is 6.1-6; Eze 1; 9.3-10.22), we hear the cherubs' "wings sound like many waters...like the a sound of a crowd, like the sound of an army camp...like the voice of *El Shaddai*/God Almighty" (Eze 1.24; 10.5); when they say their "Holy, Holy, Holies," then "door sockets rattle," (Is 1.3-4). Now, we have "a new song," (Rev 5.9) - and harps! In the 1st century, harp music was not what we hear today. Think of the sound of a jaw harp. Harps were their bluegrass banjo. Heaven is now sitting in a Buddy Greene concert!

And what are some of the lyrics of the new song? "You purchased people for God with Your blood from every tribe, language, people, and nation. You have made them a kingdom and priests to our God."

This sealed book won't even be open until the 7th seal is broken, which happens in Rev 8.1.

What is that sealed book? What is that last will and testament?

Might it be "the mystery which had been hidden for past ages and generations, but now is revealed...that is, Christ in you, the hope of glory," (Col 1.26-27)?

Might it be "the new covenant in My blood," (Lk 22.20; 1 Cor 11.25)?

Aren't these two the same thing?

And we even have a book containing the new covenant, new testament. And the Church has called it the "New Testament," since at least 160 AD (Apollinaris of Hierapolis).

Chapter 6, Breaking the first Six Seals

In this chapter, we see 4 horsemen, 4 active powers: Conquerors/Kings, Wars, Famines, Plagues. These are all the events that you hated to memorize, with their dates, in high school history classes. For all appearances, the 4 horsemen seem to be making history; actually, **they are not. History is really being made** (the 5th and 6th seals) **by the prayers and testimony of the martyrs**. In this section, the only undisputable “good guys” are the martyrs, the Church turned to the Lord; they seem powerless, capable only of going to catastrophe. Yet, **the real catastrophes are not wielded by horsemen, but by the judgments from God in response to their prayers** (6.12-7.3). **Real history is made by God, who responds to the prayers of His people.**

The image is that the 4 horsemen are called forth by the four living creatures (Rev 6.1, 3, 5, 7), the cherubs.

The horsemen: Who rides a white horse? A general in his triumphal entry in Rome would ride a white horse. The red horseman, War, carries a sword - not the infantryman's *romphaia* that we saw in Rev 1.16, but the cavalry's preferred, shorter, 24-inch *machaira*. The third horseman, Famine/Scarcity/Economic Depression/Supply Chain shortage, is often a result of conquest and war. And the fourth horseman, described as “ashen,” ie, sickly pale green, “kills by...death,” an idiomatic expression referring to disease, or plague.

“A *choenix* of wheat for a denarius...and do not damage the oil and the wine.” A *choenix* is slightly less than a quart. A denarius is a day's wage. What would this mean to John's audience? They personally had experienced Domitian's grain shortage, 92-93 AD. Before that, 90-91, he ordered that half of all vineyards and olive groves be cut down, his “vine edit.” The resulting near rebellion in the provinces of Asia and Judea forced Domitian to rescind his order. In response, he made it illegal to allow your vineyard or olive grove to go out of production.

The **fifth seal** introduces the white-robed martyrs under God's altar “who had been killed because of the word of God, and because they testified.” The altar is not mentioned in Rev 4, but the parallel passages (Is 6.6; Eze 1.9, 13, 22, 25-26; 10.1-2, 6-7; 11.22;) indicate that the cherubs stand at the midpoints of the sides of a square and their wings touch at the corners of the square. They surround the burning altar, ie, in the center of the square. Above the cherubs and the altar is a “firmament,” an “expanse,” a portion of sky that separates them from God's throne that “hovered over them.” The martyrs pray, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, do You not judge and avenge our blood on those who live on earth?” (Rev 5.10). Might they be thinking of Ps 79.10: “Let there be known among the nations in our sight vengeance for the blood which has been shed of Thy servants”?, or Dt 32.43: “Rejoice...for He will avenge the blood of His servants. He will return vengeance on His adversaries”? The question is only answered, till the time “is complete,” (Rev 5.11). Note Rev 9.15, where an event is “prepared for the hour and day and month and year.” God's timing, not ours.

The **sixth seal** is certainly a Judgment, if not The Judgment. Earthquakes, eclipses, and blood moons (lunar eclipses) were not strange to John's audience; many are recorded by the Roman empire; Herod the Great died during a blood moon. Rev 6.13-14 sound like Is 34.4 “All the host of heaven will rot. The sky will be rolled up like a scroll. All its host will also wither away as a leaf withers from the vine, or as it withers from the fig tree.”. And Rev 6.15-16 sounds like Is 2.19-21, “They will go into caves of the rocks and into holes in the dust away from the terror of the Lord and the splendor of His majesty...into the clefts of the rocks and the crannies of the cliffs.” And who does this? “Every slave and free person” - everyone.

Chapter 7, 144,000 and the Great Multitude

“Four corners of the earth.” Is this the flat earth society? No, this is speaking phenomenologically, like we still do today. Before 500 BC, Pythagoras and Parmenides of Elea had taught that the earth was a sphere. In 276 BC, Eratosthenes said the earth’s circumference was 25,000 miles; today, we say just shy of 24,855 miles. Greeks navigating the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean depended on the sphericity of the earth. Coins minted by Nero in 68 AD show the earth as a globe/orb/sphere/ball - as do other Roman coins from 117, 161, 222, 283, 324, 351, 379, 383, 392, 395, 412, 423. Long before 1492, no European taught a flat earth

Who is in the 144,000 and the Great Multitude?

First off, who’s out? The tribe of Dan is not enumerated in Rev 7.5-8. Dt 29.18 seems specially to apply here to Dan: “There will not be among you a man or woman, or family or tribe, whose heart turns from the Lord our God, to go serve the gods of those nations.” That’s exactly what Dan did in Jdg 17-18, and again in 1 Kg 12.29-30.

Some say the 144,000 and the Great Multitude are two different groups. The 144,000 are messianic Jews, enumerated by tribe. The Great Multitude come “from all nations,” (Rev 7.9), ie, are Gentiles. Some futurists even think that in their Great Tribulation, literally 144,000 Jews will convert to Christ. A problem with this idea is that Rev 14.4 depicts all these 144,000 as celibate men. Will no Jewish women convert? Or, isn’t 144,000 just another number used as a symbol?

Others, who say these two are actually ONE group, point to 1) Eph 2.11-22 (esp vs 14), that already “Christ himself...made both groups into one;” 2) Jn 10.16, Jesus says that He himself will “bring in” Gentiles “who are not of this [Jewish] fold...and they will become **one flock** with one shepherd;” 3) both “washed their robes...in the blood of the Lamb;” 4) the reward for the Great Multitude (Rev 7.6-17) seems to be the reward for all the saved: “They will no longer hunger nor thirst, nor will the sun fall on them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the waters of life. And God will wipe every tear from their eyes;” and 5) Spiritual Israel is the Church: “the kingdom of God will be taken away...given to a nation producing its fruit; Mt 21.43”, and also Mt 16.18-19, 28; 18.3; 21.43; Mk 9.1; Lk 22.29-30; Jn 3.5; 18.36; Ac 13.32-35; 15.12-18, cf: Am 9.11-12/Jer 12.15/Is 45.12; Ro 2.28-29; 4.16; 9.26 cf Hos 1.10; 1 Co 3.16-17; 6.19; 2 Co 6.16; Ga 3.7-9, 16, 26-29; 6.15-16; 4.26 cf Is 54; Col 1.2,13; 1 Tim 3.15; He 11.10, 16; 12.22-23, 28; 1 Pe 2.4-5, 9-10; Rev 1.5-6; and also Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Origen, Tertullian... .

“The Lamb in the center of the throne will be their Shepherd.”

1) Catch the paradox, a lamb will be a shepherd. Of course you know Ps 23. Also, check out Eze 34.22-23: “I will save My flock. They will no longer be plunder...I will appoint over them one shepherd, My servant David. He will feed them. He will feed them Himself and be their shepherd.” And 2), the Lamb is in the center of the Throne. This identifies Jesus with God, for in Rev 4.11 it is God, the Father, on the throne.

“God will wipe every tear from their eyes” (Rev 7.17; 21.3-4). Harkens back to Is 25.6-9, “The Lord of armies...will swallow up death for all time. The Lord YHWH will wipe tears away from all faces. He will remove the disgrace of His people from all the earth. For the Lord has spoken. It will be said on that day, ‘See! This is our God for whom we have waited and He saved us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited. Let’s rejoice and be glad in His salvation;” and also to 1 Co 15.52-54, “At the last trumpet. The trumpet will sound. The dead will be raised incorruptible. We will be changed....When corruptible puts on incorruption, and this mortal puts on immortality, then comes the scripture, ‘Death has been swallowed up.’

Chapters 8-9, 7 Trumpets/horns/bugles/clarions

Yes, they did have metal “trumpets” in those days. Trumpet calls announce kings, muster troops, launch the action, direct and focus the troops, and proclaim victory. In the trumpet section (Rev 8-13) we have all these: a launching of violent action, a concentrating/focusing of powers, a decisive combat (the woman and the dragon, chapter 12), the mustering of troops (both God’s and the dragon’s), and the display of the glory of the Lamb.

Notice, (Rev 8. 5), that it’s the prayers of the holy that unleash the trumpet judgments.

“The angel has taken the censer, filled it with the fire from the altar, and hurled it to earth.” Think gasoline thrown onto a lit charcoal grill. Recall Jesus’ words, Lk 12.49, “I have come to cast fire on the earth.”

These horrific judgments are not taken lightly. Angels must “prepare themselves” (Rev 8.6) to unleash them.

Notice also that the plagues repeat some of those with which God hit Egypt - hail and fire (Rev 8.7; Ex 9.23-25), water to blood (Rev 8.8; Ex 7.17-24), poisoned waters (Rev 8.11; Ex 7.18), darkness (Rev 8.12; Ex 10.21), locusts (Rev 9.3; Ex 10.12, 15).

God’s punishments, here, are measured; He has put boundaries on them. Eg, in Rev 8: **A third of the earth burned.**

A third of the trees burned

A third of the living creatures in the sea died.

A third of the ships were destroyed

A third of the waters became wormwood

A third of the sun, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars were struck

A third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it

It was not given to them to kill, but to torment for five months.

In their tails is **their power** to hurt people **for five months.**

The passage reminds me of a point that Joni Eareckson once made when being interviewed by Dennis Benson:

“When things are going well for us, God sometimes needs to make an appointment just to get our attention. Not so when we are hurting, whether physically or emotionally. God has our attention when we suffer.”

(Benson did ~15,000 interviews for [United/Northern] Presbyterian Media Ministries from 1980-2021 on WDVE-FM, Pittsburgh, “Sunday Morning with Dennis Benson.”)

And yet, “The rest of **mankind...did not repent** of the works of their hands...They did not repent of their murders, their witchcraft, their sexual immorality, nor their thefts,” (Rev 9.20-21). We saw no repentance, nor even remorse, when the 6th seal was open, either.

Now, some specifics on the judgments: **1st horn:** the sky rains blood. Indeed, red sands from the Sahara had rained, in Roman times, onto Italy and SE Europe, looking like bloody rain. **2d horn:** “A great mountain burning with fire was hurled into the sea.” This could be a meteor, but Romans would also been reminded of the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD. **3d horn:** “a great star fell” onto the fresh water sources; “the star is named Wormwood...Many people died.” “Chernobyl” means “wormwood.” But, what’s wormwood? Also called absinth, it’s the bitter herb that gives vermouth its green color. **4th horn:** darkness swallows light.

5th horn: the Abyss is opened. The king of the abyss is an angel named *Abaddon*, Hebrew for “destruction,” or *Apollyon*, Greek for “destroyer” or “dissolver/universal solvent.” Interestingly, an alternate reading of 1 Jn 4.2b-3a, is “Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ

has come in the flesh is from God. Every spirit that does not confess Jesus *salvit Iesus* (**dissolves/unmakes/annuls/severs** Jesus). This is how Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Jerome quote the verse.

An abyss is a bottomless pit. Many in the ancient Near East thought of the seas as chaotic bottomless pits. The abyss, or sea, was how some visualized Ge 1.2: “The earth was *tohu wa bohu*/without form and void, (a formless, desolate emptiness), and darkness was over the face of the deep/abyss, and the Spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters.”

From this abyss, “smoke ascended...like the smoke of a great furnace;” the words previously used in Gen 19.28, to describe what Abraham saw the morning after Sodom. Smoke from the sea? sounds like a volcano rising from the sea.

“Out of the smoke came **locusts**,” with scorpion tails, looking like war horses with human faces, with long manes, and with lion teeth. During the reign of Athaliah, 843-837 BC, **Joel** says that a nation will invade (1.6) from the north (2.20), entering Zion/Jerusalem (2.1, 15, 23, 32; 3.1, 16, 20) and Judah (3.1, 6, 18, 20), and destroying the Temple/House of the Lord (1.9, 13-14, 16; 3.18). This predicts what Babylonia would do in 586 BC. In vivid imagery and poetry, Joel repeatedly calls the Babylonian army “locusts,” (1.4; 2.25); when you read Joel 2.5-11, you can’t tell when Joel means an army men or of locusts; 2.4 they look like “war horses.” Joel finishes, that Jerusalem will then be restored (2.19-24). “After this...” the Spirit [of God] is given to all manner of peoples, (2.28-31) [Pentecost]. Then, the elect, [the Church], those called by God (Joel 2.32c) who are saved (Joel 2.32a) will “never again” be shamed (2.26-27), before a final judgment (ch 3). John does not expect you to think of the invasion part of Joel without thinking of the rest of that small book.

Could these be literal locusts? Livy and Polybius documented one locust infestation in Capua (in Campania, in SW Italy) in 203 BC that killed 200,000 - they were bereft of food, the dead locusts attracted rats who had their own fleas and diseases. People died faster than they could be buried, and the area became a putrified mess. Sure, this could happen again.

Why 5 months? Maybe this recalls Titus’ 5-month siege of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

6th “horn, Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates...they would kill a third of mankind....the armies of the horsemen was two hundred million...The horses ...had breastplates [the colors] of fire, of hyacinth, and of brimstone. The heads of the horses are like the heads of lions. Out of their mouths comes fire, smoke, and brimstone.”

Some see here the current Chinese 200 million-man army and an actual future body count. But the numbers need be nothing more than poetic imagery, like the horses heads and their breath. Parthians had mustered at the Euphrates in 53 BC to repulse Crassus, and crossed into the Empire in 40 BC, replacing Herod the Great with Antigonus; that only lasted three years. And when Titus took Jerusalem, he had 4 legions from across the Euphrates. He was aided by kings Malichus II of Nabatea, Agrippa II, Sohemus of Emesa [Homs], and Antiochus IV of Commagene - the latter two had sizable cavalries.

Rev 9.20, “The rest of mankind...worship demons.” Here’s a biblical teaching that many in the Church seem not to know today. Dt 32.17 “They sacrifice to demons, not God;” Ps 96.5, in Septuagint, “all the gods of the gentiles are demons;” 1 Co 10.20, “things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become partners with demons.” And when Trypho the Jew debated Justin Martyr in 134 AD, “The gods of nations are idols of demons, not gods,” (sexn 55); Justin agreed. Accordingly, ghosts and anything that is not fake which manifest themselves at seances are also demons.

Chapters 10-11, the Little Scroll, the Two Witnesses & the 7th horn

Rev 10 is short, 11 verses. The prime actor is a “strong angel...wrapped with a cloud...face like the sun...feet like pillars of fire...a loud voice, like a lion,” (Rev 10.1-5). He sounds like Jesus (compare Rev 1.13-16; 2.18; 5.5; Ac 1.9). He stands one foot on the land and the other on the sea, (Rev 10.2, 8); Jesus not only rules land and sea, he walked on land and water.

The angel with the 7th horn is mentioned, but not identified with the strong angel. Rather, we’re told that “in the days of...the seventh angel, when he is about to sound [his horn], then the mystery of God, as He announced to His servants the prophets, is finished.” Rev 10.7 doesn’t seem to be predicting some future event because, in very similar wording, Paul (Eph 1.9-10; 3.3-5, 8-10) said that the “mystery” has **already** been made known; it’s Christ, God incarnate, or Christ in you, the hope of glory (Col 1.26-27; 2.2; 4.3-4).

The strong angel holds an open “little scroll” in his hand (Rev 10.2, 8, 10); John eats the scroll, as commanded, which is sweet in his mouth but bitter in his stomach. What is that scroll? Many say the Gospel. Ezekiel ate a sweet scroll (Eze 3), which had the message of repentance; and repentance is part of the Gospel. Some say the Little Scroll is the open Bible, and hence the passage predicts of the Reformation.

Simply by the way the text is arranged, the contents of the scroll seem to be Rev 11.

The two witnesses:

James the brother of Jesus and Peter, or James bar Zebedee and Stephen, or John the Baptist and Jesus, or Moses (the Law) and Elijah (the Prophets), or Enoch and Elijah have all been proposed. Futurists like Enoch and Elijah, because they haven’t yet kept their Heb 9.27 appointment with death. One futurist version has Enoch and Elijah evangelizing Jews during a 7-year Great Tribulation, and being martyred at its midpoint.

Instead, pay attention to Rev 11.4, “These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord.” This refers to Zec 4, where we’re told the 2 olive trees “are the two *messiahs*/anointed ones.” At the time Zechariah was told this, there were only two “anointed ones” in Judah: the high priest Joshua and governor Zerubbabel, grandson of king Jeconiah and ancestor of Jesus (Mt 1.12-13). Jesus is now our high priest (He 3.1), and He is king, a son of David. “Jesus” is just a Greek transliteration of “Joshua.” In Zec 3, God tells Zechariah to tell high priest Joshua that “My Servant the Branch/Sprout...will remove the guilt of the earth in one day.” When Zechariah asks the angel what the two lampstands are, Zech gets no real answer, being told “‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the Lord.”

Jesus fulfills the Law and the Prophets. He is all Man and all God. He is Son of Man and Son of God. He is head of Israel through David, and head of Spiritual Israel - the Church. The events involving the two witnesses seem to represent Christ’s crucifixion (which is “the second woe,” the death of God in Jesus Christ). In these witnesses, and in the crucifixion, there is only an apparent victory of men over the witness of God. The Two Witnesses are killed in Jerusalem; Jesus was killed in Jerusalem. Their bodies are exposed to Gentile gawkers; Jesus was exposed to Gentiles naked on the cross. Mockers rejoice over the Two; Jesus was mocked at death. God raises the Two after three days; Jesus resurrected after three day. The Two ascend to Heaven on a cloud; Jesus ascended to Heaven on a cloud. Those who “want to harm” the Two (Rev 11.5) are consumed by fire; those who make themselves enemies of Jesus are eventually consumed by fire in Hell. And, “two witnesses” (Dt 17.6; 19.15; Mt 18.16; and others) was the Bible reference for trustworthy testimony; which Jesus certainly gave. Jesus alone fills the bill for the Two.

Even the premillennialist Lactantius, writing in the first decade of the 300s AD, thought the “two witnesses” were a symbol referring to only one man - Jesus.

I love the 7th horn, esp Rev 11.15, 18-19

“Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. And He shall reign forever and ever.,,

“The nations raged. Your wrath came. The time came for the dead to be judged came. The time came to give the reward to Your bond-servants, the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great. And the time came to destroy those who destroy the earth. And, the temple of God, which is in Heaven, opened.”

Handel borrowed v15 for the Hallelujah chorus in his Messiah. He said that he wanted the work to challenge deism, which denied Christ’s deity. Being German, he enlisted Charles Jennens to help him with the English lyrics, which seem to be entirely Bible quotes.

Already Jesus is king: Mt 28.18; Lk 1.31-33; Jn 18.36; Ac 2.29-31; 17.7; Eph 1.19-22; Col 1.12-13; 2.8-10; 1 Tim 6.14-15; Heb 1.8; 12.2; Rev 1.5-6. We sing this doctrine so many times: **All Hail King Jesus**; King of my life I crown thee now...**Lead Me to Calvary**; **O Worship the King**; Charles Wesley’s **Rejoice, the Lord is King** and **Hark the Herald Angels** Sing, glory to the newborn king; and **Christ the Lord is Risen today**...Lives again our glorious King; Handel’s **Hallelujah Chorus**; **All glory, laud and honor**, by Theodulf of Orleans, 820 AD; **Praise Ye the Lord, the Almighty**; **Crown Him with Many Crowns**; **Let All Mortal Flesh** keep silence ...Christ our God to earth descendeth...King of Kings, yet born of Mary; **Come, Thou Almighty King**; **Lead on, O King Eternal**; **Truehearted, Wholehearted, Faithful and Loyal**, King of our lives...; **Mary did you know** that your baby boy is Lord of all creation; “**My God is Mighty to Save**...We are singing for the risen King;” “**What Child is this?**...This is Christ the King...The King of kings salvation brings;” “**We three kings**...Gold I bring to crown Him again, King forever, ceasing never;” “**Rejoice the Lord is King**...Jesus the Savior Reigns,” “The king of kings calls me His own...Jesus Christ, my **Living Hope**; Now He reigns with the Most High...**Our God Reigns**; “to a virgin came the Word...Praise forever to the **King of Kings**; **Angels from the Realms of Glory**...come and worship, worship Christ the newborn king; and **What Child is This?**...This is Christ the king; etc

And don’t verses 18-19 sound like the Final Judgment? Even many Premillennialists and other kinds of Futurists agree, (but not most Dispensationalists).

“The time came to give the reward to Your servants;” literally “the reward,” not rewards.

“To destroy those who destroy the earth” - sounds like strip miners better beware.

“The temple of God, which is in Heaven:” At the time John wrote this, the Temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed for 25 years. Moreover, not one word in Revelation says the Temple in Jerusalem, Judah, will be rebuilt. In fact, this chapter calls that Jerusalem “Sodom and Egypt,” (Rev 11.8), dens of iniquity and bondage. There is no temple building in New Jerusalem, for “the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple” (Rev 21.22). Lord Kelvin, the physicist, taught that if you cannot quantify something then you don’t really know it. The point of “measure” (Rev 11.1-2) seems to be that we are being told to *know* the temple down to the details. And the temple we should know is “the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb.” Heb 9.10 says that everything that occurred in the Temple and on its altar was fulfilled by, and assumed by, and now resides in Jesus.

Chapter 12, the Victory of the Woman and the Child over the Dragon

Whereas Rev 11 retold the Crucifixion, Rev 12.1-6 retells the Nativity. Ie, “Read Christmas in the light of Good Friday.”

As pointed out in Christian Standard, Sep/Oct 2024, the New Testament compares the Christian life to a race (2 Tim 4.7), a parade (2 Co 2.14), fishing (Mk 1.17), and war (Ep 6.10-12). Revelation makes it abundantly clear that Christians are at war. Who is behind the war, who are the heroes, what are the war wounds and casualties, and what strategies win the war?

Who are the Woman and Child, whom Satan wants to devour? Mary and Jesus, the wilderness being their Flight to Egypt? Eve and Christ, fulfilling Gen 3.15? The original Hebrew Church, that fled into the Perea during the Jewish War (66-74 AD), obeying Jesus’ command at Olivet (Mt 24.15-22; Lk 21.20-23)? Is the woman Israel, whose 12 stars are her 12 tribes, who was borne on eagle’s wings (Ex 19.4; Rev 12.6, 14) into Sinai? The Child who rules with an iron rod (Ps 2) would then be the Messiah; Isa 11; 9.6-7; and 27.1 would be alluded to and would then be fulfilled; the Church, those “who keep God’s commands and hold to the testimony of Jesus,” is the “offspring” of Israel (12.17). Is the Woman the Church, the bride of Christ, who also appears at the end of the Suffering Servant prophecy (Is 54.2? Hippolytus (222-245 AD) said so. Caesarius of Arles (499-542 AD) endorsed his idea, saying, “Every day throughout all time, the Church is giving birth, whether in time of prosperity or in time of adversity...In her misfortunes, the Church is always bringing forth members of Christ.”

The answer is All the Above. Here are multiple layers of symbolism. Consider an example from our culture that may help you relate. In Paul Simon’s song “America,” in the first verse America is a set of geographical destinations; in the 2d, America is a dream; in the bridge, the dream has been betrayed by the realpolitik of spy craft; in the 4th, America is a pilgrimage for a disillusioned, “lost...empty...aching” soul. All these are the same America. Likewise, Christian hearts viscerally emotive and connect to all the above explanations of the Woman and Child.

Verse 3 is the first time in Revelation that the crowns are diadems, not a *stephanos*; (see chapter 4 summary). Of course, vain Satan is wearing them.

Verse 5 presents the curious statement that the Child will “**shepherd...with an iron rod.**” The verse ends with Christ’s ascension.

Michael: Jude 9 says he is “the archangel.” Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Oecolampadius, Isaac Watts, many old Reformed pastors (Dutch Reformed, German Reformed, Huguenot, Presbyterian, Puritan), Scotch Baptists, Anglicans, and Regular Baptists like John Gill and Charles Spurgeon have said Michael is Jesus.

Rev 12.10a: “**Now the salvation...and the authority of His Christ have come.**” **Salvation has already come:** “Now is the day of salvation” (2 Co 6.2). Consider also Lk 2.30; 19.9; Ac 2.40; 4.12; 13.47; 28.28; Ro 1.16; 10.9-10; 11.11; Ep 6.17; Pp 1.28; 2 Th 2.13; Ti 2.11; Ju 3.

Rev 12.10b: “**The Accuser...has been thrown down.**” Again, **already happened**, Jn 12.31-33. Perhaps it is better to say already happening; we are dealing with Now and Not Yet.

A plausible astrology/astronomy of the Magi, beyond the scope of this chapter summary. Colin R Nicholl, The Great Christ Comet, (Crossway: Wheaton, Ill, 2013), thinks Rev 12.1-4 reveals the astrological information that magi from the Esagil, the temple of Marduk in Babylon, would have followed to find the Christ-child in Bethlehem. Nicholl is a New Testament researcher with Cambridge credentials and a long history as an amateur astronomer. Eric Metaxas, John C Lennox, and Edwin Yamauchi also recommend his book.

Chapter 13, the Beasts

See the **separate article on the Mark of the Beast**.

Never read Romans 13 without reading Revelation 13.

The beasts are conventionally called the AntiChrist and the False Prophet. “False Prophet” is used in Rev 16.13 & 19.20. “AntiChrist” is only found in 1 & 2 John.

AntiChrist is a counterfeit Christ in that he claims deity (13.1, 4-6, 8, 12, 15); he appears to have been slain and resurrected (13.3, 14 cf: 5.6); he exercises authority over “every tribe, people, language, and nation” (cf: 5.9); and in 17.8, 11 we’re told that he “was, and is not, and is about to,” a poor mimic of God “who is, and who was, and who is to come.” He is blasphemous (Rev 13.1, 5-6). The second beast even looks like a lamb/Lamb (13.11), and seems to perform miracles - even making it appear that the first beast performs miracles (13.13-15).

Verse 3, “one of his heads as if it had been slaughtered dead, and his fatal wound was healed. This may refer to Domitian, whom some contemporaries labeled “Nero reincarnate.” Nero, then, would be the one with the fatal wound

Verse 4, “they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against him?” Whether your power Beast is emperor Domitian, Hitler, the State, the Culture, a school board, the Main Stream Media, or the ultimate Man of Lawlessness (1 Th 2.1-12); “they” are telling us that fighting is futile; emperor worship is just “part of life;” it’s just throwing a pinch of frankincense on the fire and saying “Caesar is Lord.”

Verse 5, “authority was given to him to act for forty-two months.” 42 months is half of 7 years. Since 7 is complete, half of that is far complete, very temporary, no matter how intimidated we are by its immediacy. This length of time is cited when the temple (the Church) is trampled/troubled (Rev 11.2); ie, the time that the Church is on earth. It’s the actual length of Elijah’s drought (Jas 5.17).

Verse 6 defines God’s “tabernacle” as “those who dwell in Heaven.”

Verse 8, “Lamb’s book of life.” This will reappear in 17.8; 20.12, 15; 21.27. This is not new vocabulary for the Church; Paul mentions it in Pp 4.2-3. Moses apparently refers to this in Ex 32.32-33, and David in Ps 69.28.

Verse 10, “Anyone who kills with the sword/*machaira*, must be killed with the sword.” Very similar to Jesus in Mt 26.52: “All those who take up the sword/*machaira* will perish by the sword.” Is this advocating Christian pacifism?

The Number of the Beast, Rev 13.8, is 666, and some early manuscripts say 616. Before 200 AD, the following interpretations were given: 1) *arnomai* = Greek for “I deny.” This is what ex-“Christians” said to the Roman authorities in the eastern parts of the empire when they denied Christ in order to save their necks from execution. The opposite of “deny” is “confess.” Compare 1 Jn 2.22-23; 4.2-3, 15; 2 Jn 7; 2) *Neron* (666) or *Nero* (616), who is called the “matricide king” in Ascension of Isaiah, a Christian text ca. 200 AD; 3) *Lateinos*, ie, the Roman empire, per Irenaeus and Tertullian; 4) *Teitan*, one of the surnames of Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian; Flavius is the usual surname that historians use for their family today.

Who is the AntiChrist? I have a list of 82 candidates who were proposed by their detractors. The usual suspects are the papacy and popes, certain Reformation leaders, past and future heads of state and emperors (eg, of Rome, the Holy Roman Empire, the Caliphate, Zoroastrian Persia); and people who started cults. Caliph Mansur (754-775 AD) branded the foreheads, necks, chests, and hands of his Christians and Jews. Even Catholic bishops, archbishops, and cardinals have fingered the papacy in general or particular popes.

Chapter 14, Seven often-Overlooked “Angels”

Again we have 144,000 whose foreheads boldly bear the mark of God. Again we have thunder and the sound of many waters. Again we have harps and “a new song.” Again we’re told that the temple “is in Heaven” (Rev 14.17).

Some curiosities. “**The Lamb was standing on Mt Zion.**” Many Futurists say that when Jesus returns, He will descend from Heaven onto Mt Zion. And yet during His earthly ministry, Jesus actually stood on Mt Zion. When John wrote this, there was still a Christian congregation on Mt Zion. Are they in any way referred to here, literally or symbolically?

verse 4 “**who follow the Lamb wherever he goes.**” In 177 AD, 48 Christians in Lyons, Gaul, were martyred, and a report, Martyrs of Lyons, was sent from that church by the hand of Irenaeus to Rome. At the time, Irenaeus was an elder at Lyons. One martyr, Vettius Epagathus, is described as “a genuine disciple of Christ who follows the Lamb wherever he goes.”

verse 5, “**No lie was found in their mouths. They are blameless.**” In stark contrast with the Dragon and the Beasts.

Then, from Rev 14.6-18, we meet **7 angels**; perhaps one (14.14) is Jesus. They may or may not be the 7 angels of Rev 15-16, we’re not clearly told. **The 1st** (14.6-7), whom some would say is Luther, proclaims the Gospel, which we’re told is “Fear God. Glorify Him, because the hour of His judgment has come. Worship Him who made the heaven and the earth, and sea and springs of waters.” The word “glorify”/*doxazō* means “make known; so, Make God known. And again the doctrine of the Creator is part of the Gospel. Creation implies purpose. **The 2d** previews the Fall of Babylon (Rev 17-18); some Dispensationalists say this is no flash-forward, but the lone sentence that tells us that the AntiChrist will betray the False Prophet. **The 3d** previews Rev 20.15, a foretaste of Hell: “‘If anyone worships the beast...and receives his mark...he will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is unmixed in the cup of His anger. He will be tormented with fire and brimstone in front of the holy angels and in front of the Lamb.’” This introduces a new symbol. In Rev 5 & 8, the prayers of the saints are incense rising to God then poured onto the earth; now, God’s wrath is undiluted wine that is poured out (Rev 14.10; 15.7; 16.19). Wine as a symbol for God’s anger appears in Ps 75.7-8 and in Is 51.17, 22. ; and, wine does leave a horrible stain, similar blood (Is 1.18). Verse 13, “‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!’” How can this be prediction? **This already applies; it’s not something yet to come.**

The 4th, “one like the Son of Man, with a golden *stephanos*/wreath on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand” seems to be Jesus. This figure sits on a white cloud; Jesus will return on a cloud (Ac 1.9-11). He reaps the grain harvest (as in Mt 13.24-30, 36-43). He does not reap the Judgment until **the 5th** angel from God comes out of the temple in Heaven (Rev 14.15, 17) tells him that it’s time to do so, consistent w/ Mk 13.32. **The 6th and 7th** participate in the grape harvest, that closes the chapter, Rev 14.18-20: “Send forth your sharp sickle. Gather the clusters of the vine of the earth...He threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. The wine press was trampled outside the city. Blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses’ bridles, from a distance of 1,600 stadia/184 miles.” This may preview Rev 19.15. Recall Joel 3.13-14: “Put in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread the grapes; for the wine press is full. The vats overflow, for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.” And look up the other parallel passages: Gen 49.9-11; Is 63.1-7; Lam 1.15; and even the 1st and 4th verses of the “Battle Hymn of the Republic.”

Chapters 15-16, the 7 Bowls/Flasks/Vials/Phials/*phialas*

Chapter 10 was short, at 11 verses. Chapter 15 is the shortest, with 8.

In this section of the 7 bowls, judgment is not just after history, but is also constantly present in history. For this reason, images of the judgment and 2d coming (14.10-11; 16.17-21; 18.1-19.3), images of the estrangement of Man from God (14.8-11; 16.2-4, 14-21), images of the Gospel (14.6-7, 13), and images of the (persecuted) Church (14.9-12; 15.2-4) mingle and are not compartmentalized, not segregated.

Also, these bowls seem to hit the earth at a faster pace than did the seals and trumpets.

A bowl passes from hand to hand at a banquet, symbolizing the union of the guests; and, Judas dipped his hand in a bowl at the Last Supper. Pagans used bowls for libation offerings, including the ones that said "Caesar is Lord." The bowl reflects the two faces of the sacred: the terrible and the adorable. They contain wine, too, which often serves the same function in Jewish imagery. The bowls can be bowls of participation in God or in demons, bowls of the wrath of God - wrath all the more radical since it could have been the fulfillment of the grace of God.

To call these bowls "plagues," (Rev 15.1) is to link them to Exodus.

1 st bowl - painful sore	cf Ex 9.10, plague of boils
2d & 3d bowls - water becomes blood	cf: Ex 7.17-24, all waters of Egypt become blood
5 th bowl - "the Beast...his kingdom became dark"	cf: Ex 10.21 Plague of Darkness
7 th bowl - lightning and hail;	cf Ex 9.23-25 Plague of Hail

We seem to have a reprise of the 7 Trumpets.

15.2, "something like a sea of glass mixed with fire. Those who were victorious over the beast, his image, and the number of his name, stood on the sea." Beginning with the oldest full commentary on Revelation that remains, written by Victorinus of Petau on the Danube after emperor Valerian's persecution ended in 260 AD, several authors have thought this referred to baptism: sea (baptismal waters) and fire (Holy Spirit).

15.6, The angels wear "clean, bright linen, their chests wrapped with golden sashes." Jesus was wearing the golden chest sash in Rev 1.13; it's the clothing of kings.

The **1st bowl**, painful sores on those who worshiped AntiChrist. (Incidentally, the facts that the skin of Amenhotep II's mummy "all over the body is covered with small tubercles" unlike any other pharaoh, and that his 11-15 year-old prince Webensenu died before Amenhotep and was buried in the same tomb, are cited by Early-Date Exodus proponents as supporting evidence for Ex 9.8-11, 15 and 12.29.)

The **2d and 3d bowls** are accompanied by the words "Righteous are You...because You judged these things. For they poured out the blood of saints and prophets...They deserve it." The words parallel Ps 79.1-3 "The nations...poured out the blood [of Your servants] around Jerusalem like water," and remind us that it is wicked, the opposite of righteous, to withhold judgment.

After the **4th bowl**, the sun "scorches" people who then "blasphemed the name of God... they did not repent."

The **5th bowl** darkens the realm of AntiChrist. The Ex 10.21 darkness was palpable, but the darkness of Rev 16.10 is painful. Once again, "They blasphemed God...they did not repent."

The **6th bowl** dries the Euphrates, allowing three “kings from the east...unclean spirits like frogs...spirits of demons...to gather them for war...at Armageddon.” So, dry the Euphrates? The Medo-Persian troops of Cyrus conquered Belshazzar’s Babylon by drying the Euphrates and marching into town on the river bed, under the walls. Frogs? In Zoroastrianism, a Persian religion, frogs are agents of Ahriman, “the power of darkness.”

Har Megiddo, hill/mount Megiddo? Megiddo city overlooked, the Jezreel Plain from the south and controlled commerce through the plain along the Via Maris, the highway that ran from Egypt to Mesopotamia. Jezreel is a vast, fertile valley. Thirty-four battles have been fought in the Jezreel Valley, a.k.a Megiddo Valley, more than in any other place in the world. The 1457 BC battle, when Tutmosé III defeated the Mitanni, the Canaanites, and Kadesh, is sometimes called “the first world war.” Nazareth is on a hill to the north, across the valley, opposite Megiddo. Ray Vanderlaan has said that, in the sense that Jesus got up every morning in Nazareth and looked across the valley at Megiddo, in that sense he grew up at Megiddo. Ray further says, “The Battle of Armageddon goes on every day, in every town...Armageddon is not where history will end, but represents the ongoing battle between the people of God and the Devil. That battle determines who and what controls the hearts and souls of men.”

The only Biblical appearance of the word “Armageddon,” and its battle, is in Rev 16.16.

The **7th bowl** seems bring the Armageddon judgment without a weapon even being drawn: “He poured his bowl...and a loud voice came..from the throne, saying, “It’s done.” This, too, is a judgment, if not the Judgment: “There were lightning flashes...thunder...a great earthquake, such as there had not been since mankind came to be upon the earth...The great city split into three parts. The cities of the nations fell. God remembered Babylon the Great...to give her the cup of the wine of wrath of His anger. Every island fled, and no mountains were found. Huge hailstones, weighing about a talent [100 lbs] each, descend from heaven upon people; and people blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail.”

Chapters 17-18, the Fall of BABYLON THE GREAT

Who is this Great Prostitute/Whore/Harlot?

First, we're told that she's "in the wilderness" (17.3). Rev 12.6 had a Woman in the wilderness, the People of God. Just as the AntiChrist and the False Prophet were counterfeit Lambs, this prostitute is a counterfeit of the Woman in Rev 12. Perhaps She is an apostate Christianity.

Secondly, as the polar opposite of the Woman in Rev 12, this woman may be the OPPOSITE of the People of God: ie the sum of all humanity who turn away from God, all The Lost - all who have abandoned God, all who are Satan's accomplices. If the Prostitute is All the Lost, then the Fall of Babylon may be just another version of the Final Judgment.

Thirdly, She rides the first beast (17.3), the AntiChrist. The AntiChrist supports her, to some extent. Is She just another representation of the False Prophet?

Fourthly, She is a great city (17.18; 18.10, 16, 18-19, 21). She is a strong city (18.10). She is Babylon (17.5). But, what/who is that Babylon?

4a) Are we speaking about ancient Babylon? The first time we see Babylon is the tower of Babel (Gen 11). She is the epitome of human arrogance. God wants community for humanity, but Babylon is the parody of that; Babylon is how human community goes bad.

4b) Is Babylon ancient Rome? Most think Peter was writing from Rome when he sent 1 Peter (5.13), "She who is chosen in Babylon, and my son Mark, send you greetings."

4c) Is Babylon some future New Rome?

4d) Is Babylon code for Jerusalem in Judea?

Fifthly, She "is the great city, which has a kingdom over kings of the earth." An immoral imperial city on 7 hills (17.9) that is home to false or apostate religion. That description fit Babylon before Persia conquered it; and it fit Rome under the emperors, and for some of the papacy, and to some extent under Mussolini. Was Jerusalem ever a world power? What of Washington, DC, which sits on 7 hills like Rome and at least 97 other cities? Does the indictment fit any other city?

Sixthly, She seems to have the following sins: sexual immorality (17.2, 4; 18.3, 9), drunkenness (17.2, 6), witchcraft (18.23, which includes recreational drug abuse), and violence against the people of God (17.6, 14; 18.3, 24). Yet, the sin that this text really highlights is Materialistic Consumerism (17.4; 18.3, 7, 9-17, 19, 22-23); note 18.7, She "lived in luxury." Do we know anyplace like that? We remember the sexual immorality of Sodom, but we forget Eze 16.49: "**This was the guilt of your sister Sodom:** she and her daughters had arrogance, plenty of food, and carefree ease, but **she did not give a hand to the poor** and needy." Americans need to pay attention. Our government even publishes a monthly Consumer Confidence Index, which is no more than a tally of how much Americans spent at merchants in a given month; spending money, even if you don't need to, is deemed the sign of a "healthy" economy.

One may expect John to borrow Old Testament language against Babylon. And he does. Rev 18.2 - "Babylon...has become a haunt of demons...a haunt of every unclean and hateful bird," echoes Isa 13.19, 21; in Rev 18.7, Babylon says "I sit as queen. I am not a widow. I will never see mourning," a reference to Is 47.7-8; and Rev 18.6 "Pay her back even as she has paid" reframes Ps 137.1, 8: "By the waters of Babylon...Babylon..blessed be one who repays you with the recompense with which you have repaid us." And yet, Rev 17.2; 18.3, 9-10, 21-23 also allude to passages about Tyre.(Is 23-24; Eze 26).

-17.1 - “the great prostitute”

Any Roman who read this in 95 AD would have thought of Messalina, the 3d wife of emperor Claudius. Like the wife of Hoshea, Messalina continued to be a prostitute in Rome - even after she became the wife of the emperor.

-17.2 - “sexual immorality” (or your text may say “adultery” or “fornication.”)

The Old Testament repeatedly uses “adultery” not just to describe sexual immorality, but also to describe idolatry, faithlessness, or infidelity to the worship of God. (Je 3.6-14f; 5.7; Eze 6.9; 16.15-43; 20.27-31; 23; the entire book of Hosea). In Rev 14.4, the phrase “the ones who have not defiled themselves with women” may be a metaphor for “the ones who remained true to God.”

-17.3 - “a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names”

The blasphemous names of the Roman emperors were 1) the titles *Sebastos* and *Augustus*, both of which mean “to be revered,” or “reverend.” Ps 111.1, 9 says, “The LORD...reverend is His name” (KJV). And, 2) all imperial coins starting with Octavian (who called himself Augustus) designate the emperor as “divine.”

-17.4 - “The woman was clothed in purple, scarlet, gold, precious stone, and pearls, holding in her hand a gold cup.”

Cyprian of Carthage, 298 AD, called such apparel “the insignias of brothels,” which Christians (in their modesty) do not wear. The woman is wealthy; purple alone was expensive.

-17.12 - “The ten horns...have not yet received a kingdom, but receive authority...with the beast for one hour.”

“For one hour” is very temporary. The governors of the 10 free, republican provinces of the Roman empire really did not have kingdoms, but received authority only as delegated by the emperor.

-17.14 - “wage war against the Lamb.” John Piper has said, “We cannot know what prayer is for, until we know that life is war.”

-17.15 identifies water as a symbol for “many peoples”; is that retroactive to earlier parts of the book?

-17.16 - “The ten horns...and the Beast...will hate the prostitute...and burn her with fire.” This recalls Lev 21.9 “the daughter of any priest, if she profanes herself by prostitution...she shall be burned with fire.”

Pay attention to **18.4-5**: “Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive any of her plagues; for her sins have **joined together as high as heaven**. God remembers her offenses.” And, note the tower of Babel reference.

-18.10, 17, 19 - “In one hour such great wealth has been laid waste!” Before Hiroshima, we’d have been hard pressed to say what could lay waste a great city in one hour.

Everything on **the Rev 18.12-13 cargo list** could be bought in Rome in 94 AD, in Venice in the 1200s, and in many world today, even in the US. Rome was at peak wealth from 81-211 AD. Upon accession, Domitian increased the value of the currency dramatically, bringing the silver purity of the denarius up from 90% to 98%, its weight of silver increasing from 2.87 grams to 3.26 grams. “...**bodies, and human lives**...” Even people are just commodities. Here, John condemns slavery had Paul in 1 Tim 1.9-11, and as had Dt 23.15-16. “Bodies” would be more than just slaves. It would include all the heinous experiments of Josef Mengele, slaves kept alive in China so that their organs can be harvested and donated to someone else, and aborted fetuses sold for their stem cells.

Chapter 19, Two Contrasting Feasts

The passage about Babylon, which actually begins in Rev 16.19, doesn't end till 19.6. Rev 19.1-6 is a doxology that also ends the 7 Bowls section. In verse 6, did you catch the opening bars of Michael W Smith's 1990 song *Agnus Dei*?

Alleluia, alleluia
For our Lord God Almighty reigns
Alleluia, alleluia

19.7-9, The Wedding Feast of the Lamb

Before John writes this book, the Church is already known as the Bride of Christ, and the 2d Coming as their wedding and/or feast. (Mt 9.14-15/Lk 5.34-35; Mt 22.1-14/Lk 14.16-24; Mt 8.11-12; 25.1-13; 26.26-29; Lk 12.35-38; Ep 5.22-32; Jn 3.26-30; 1 Cor 6.20; 2 Cor 11.2)

Is 25 is full of end of time references. Note 25.6-10:

"Now the Lord of armies will prepare a feast of fat things for all peoples on this mountain, a banquet of aged wine, fat pieces with marrow, and aged wine. On this mountain He will destroy the face covering which is over all peoples, the veil which is woven over all nations. He will swallow up death for all time. The Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces. He will remove the disgrace of His people from all the earth. For the Lord has spoken. It will be said on that day, 'Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited; He saved us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited. Let's rejoice and be glad in His salvation.' For the hand of the Lord will rest on this mountain."

Aspringius of Beja, Spain, 550 AD, says "the courtship will then be consummated." Think about it, C S Lewis described everything from the Resurrection till Christ's return as the time between DDay and VE Day (Victory in Europe Day). Aspringius says the analogy is courtship between Christ and his Bride. Bede (died 735 AD) says this is "supper, not a mere lunch...a great feast, when the time of the present life is ended....He calls the Church 'bride' and 'wife'...because she is now betrothed to God, she will then go to the never-ending wedding feast." Aspringius, writing a thousand years before the Reformation ever wanted to argue about these things, says 19.7-8 present both works and grace. Works are displayed when "His bride has made herself ready...[her] fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints;" and grace is manifested by "**it was granted her** to be clothed in fine linen."

19.10, "I fell at his feet to worship him [*the angel from 17.1, 9*]. But he tells me, "See that you not [*do that*]. I am a fellow servant of yours and your brothers and sisters who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

1) The impropriety of angel worship (also, Gal 1.8). 2) Basically, all the prophecy of the OT prophets revolved around Jesus; (see He 1.1-2). "The whole point of prophecy [is]...the testimony of Jesus Christ." Primasius of Byzacena, N Africa, ca 543 AD

19.11-21, The Birds' Feast

Based on placement in the text, this seems to refer to the battle of Armageddon. Yet, the words come from Eze 39.17-20, about the cleanup of the Gog-Magog war, not even mentioned in Revelation till the end of the next 20. Armageddon may very well be the Gog-Magog war. If so, Revelation is not written in chronological sequence, which only bothers Westerners who want a clean time line as William Miller and, also, Dispensationalism have tried to impose.

Chapter 20, What's Going on during the Millennium

See the **separate article on the Millennium: 1000 Years**, which identifies viewpoints. This summary will focus on other ideas in chapter 20.

Satan Bound and Loosed, 20.2-3, 7-10

An angel binds Satan, presumably with the “great chain on his hand,” then throws him into the abyss, and locks down the manhole cover. When the time is complete, Satan is “loosed.”

This can make sense in a Premillennial literal time line, if God lets Satan run amok.

But it also makes sense from the other viewpoints. Jude 6 speaks of such chains as present tense, “Angels who did not keep their own domain but abandoned their proper dwelling place, these He [the Lord] has kept in eternal restraints under darkness for the judgment of the great day.”

Paul (Ro 6.6, 11, 14) says that Satan, and sin, have already lost their power over Believers, unless we hand Satan that power,

“Our old self was crucified in order that our body of sin might be done away, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin...Reckon yourselves dead to sin...Sin cannot be master over you, for you are not under Law but under grace.”

Satan is now bound, but he is “loosed” in that he is not entirely powerless. He tempts Christians.

Was Satan chained at the crucifixion? The resurrection? He certainly seems to have been impeded at the incarnation (Rev 12.4-5).

They will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with Him, 20.6

Christians **are already priests of God and Christ**: 1 Pe 2.5, 9; Re 1.6; 5.10. So here John has a verb **written in future** tense, but **expressing a present reality**. We also have that in Re 20.6d-8, “they will reign...Satan will be loosed...he will..deceive the nations”? **Reign?** “Not only in that future...but even now, the saints reign with Him in some authentic though vastly inferior fashion,” Augustine, City of God, chapter 20, 410 AD; (Mt 16.19; 18.18; Jno 20.23).

First resurrection & second death, 20.6

Futurists put the first resurrection at their rapture or after Armageddon. Others connect it to conversion, baptism, newness of life (Col 3.1; Rom 6).

The second death, mentioned in the Chapters 2-3 summary, is Hell.

Gog & Magog war, 20.8-9

Like Armageddon, over before it starts. Hear Augustine again, same reference:

“Holy Church, the worldwide city of Christ, is to suffer at the hands of the worldwide city of the Devil, in every place where the two cities extend. Gog and Magog are not to be thought of as some particular barbarians dwelling in a certain part of the earth, such as the Goths and Scythians..or any other foreign tribes...John clearly indicates that they are to be everywhere in the world, ‘nations that are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog’... Wherever His church will be, (and it will be among all nations over the breadth of the earth), there is the camp of the saints and the beloved City of God. She will be there, surrounded by all her enemies, intermingled with her as they are and will be in every people, girdled by the appalling magnitude of being beset, hemmed in, in straits, and encompassed by the pressures of that mighty affliction. But, she will never give up her fighting spirit, her ‘camp,’ as John says.

Chapter 21-22, New Heavens and New Earth, and John's final thoughts

“a **New Heaven and a New Earth**; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, 21.1-22.5

“The day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and works in it will be disclosed. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for **new heavens and a new earth**, in which righteousness dwells,” 2 Pe 3.10-13.

“Creation itself will be freed from its bondage to decay into the glorious liberty of the children of God,” Ro 8.21

“They will all wear out as a garment, and you will fold them as a vesture. They will be changed,” Ps 102.26, Septuagint

“**the sea was no more**,” 21.1

Rev 21.1-22.5 rehashes Eze 47.8-10, which says the river of the waters of life that flow from the throne of God will flow to the Dead Sea and to the Mediterranean. For both to be true, there must be some metaphor in at least one of these Bible passages.

“the holy city, **new Jerusalem**, descending from Heaven from God, prepared as **a bride**,” 21.2. 9

See the Bible references at Rev 19.7-9. Sounds like New Jerusalem = the Church.

and yet,

“The city is laid out as a square...twelve thousand stadia [**1380 miles**]; its length, width, and height are equal,” 21.16

This is much larger than the Jerusalem of Eze 40.30-35, which was roughly a half-mile squared. A cube that big centered on Jerusalem would swallow all the Levant, stretching from the Euphrates to Egypt.

Whether or not literal, we can't conceive the magnitude of what, or whom, we're dealing with. A cube represents stability, and unchanging dependability.

“**The tabernacle** of God is among the people. He will dwell among them,” 21.3,

and yet paradoxically,

“I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God *Pantocrator* and the Lamb are its temple,” 21.22

“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will **no longer be death**. There will no longer be mourning, nor crying, nor pain. The first things have passed away,” 21.4

Certainly this belongs to the future life, not to this life. We discussed this at 7.17.

The precious stones

“Crystal-clear jasper...pure gold, like transparent glass,” 21.11, 21. These are puzzling juxtapositions. Neither jasper nor gold are clear. The opacity suggests permanence, not fading. Transparency suggests purity, honesty.

“jasper...sapphire...chalcedony...emerald...sardonyx...sardius...chrysolite...beryl...topaz...chrysoprase...jacinth...amethyst

There is disagreement over the exact meanings of **the gemology**. And today, jasper, chrysoprase, sardonyx, and sardius/carnelian are all considered types of chalcedony, as are onyx and agate. Chalcedony may be thought of as a quartz that is colored by impurities and opacified by moganite (silicon dioxide). Most of these stones were found in **the breastplate of the High Priest**. Each stone, in some culture, has been associated with a therapeutic property or “power;” such discussions are no more than **entertainment**. Some people try to match a particular stone with a particular apostle, doctrine, gift of God’s grace, or mark of the Spirit; more entertainment. Others think that each stone in the walls, even each pavement stone, represents one Christian. In the oft-ignored end of the **Suffering Servant passage**, God gives to the Desolate Woman (Is 54.1), whom some call the Servant’s widow (Is 54.4-6), a bejeweled city (identified as such by its gate; Is 54.11-15).

“its **gates** shall **never** be **shut**,” 21.25.

Secure, at peace. Accessible, open ingress and egress. Inviting.

“**The river of the water of life**,” Rev 22.1-5; Eze 47.1-12

In the midst of the city are river and a tree. The river gushes from God’s throne. The living waters spread life everywhere they flow. Trees on the banks bear fruit every month; their leaves bring healing.

Whereas Ezekiel described trees, John tells us of only One tree. It grows in the middle of the city, in the public square; but also on the banks of the river. This is difficult to visualize, a clue that John understands the vision in a spiritual, not material sense.

The tree of Life had been in Eden. Now man has access to that tree, once again. The fruit is made for man. Yet, the Greek does not speak of the “Tree” of Life, but the “Wood” of Life,” (22.2, 14, 19), like the Cross.

The tree/wood is a living sign, a centerpiece of the city, of the healing and nourishment which people receive from Christ, in His death and resurrection. It’s leaves/pages bring healing, and it gives fruit indefinitely, every month.

This is a sign of infinite abundance and perpetuity. The gift of life, which is the result of grace, never ceases. The God who is all in all is still the redeeming God.

Life comes directly from God and his throne, and flows to His creation. There is no mediator here. Whether the river is the Holy Spirit, conversion, baptism, newness of life, the abundant life in Christ...The continual current is a very clear symbol of the immediate relation of “God with men.” All this evokes the image of the Garden of Eden.

Prohibitions and an invitation

“Cowards, unbelieving/not trustworthy, abomination, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers/witches/drug abusers, idolaters, and all liars...will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone...Outside are the dogs, the sorcerers, the sexually immoral, the murderers, idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.” (21.8; 22.15; cf: 21.27; 1 Cor 6.9-10)

“The Spirit and the bride say, “Come”...Let the thirsty come. Let the one who desires, take the water of life, no cost,” 22.17