

Revelation COMMENTARY

WWW.REVELATIONCOMMENTARY.ORG

The Revelation About Jesus Christ

A Dynamic Commentary

Premillennial/Prewrath in Perspective

A BENEFICIAL STUDY TOOL

Welcome to **revelationcommentary.org**! We hope this *dynamic* commentary is a beneficial study tool in your devotion to the Word of God. Before beginning to go through the content of Revelation, we recommend that you read through the [introduction](#), [overview](#), and [hermeneutical](#) sections to familiarize yourself with the framework concerning this incredible book of God.

CONTRIBUTORS

Robert Van Kampen - (1938-1999) Author of numerous eschatological books and Founder of Sola Scriptura and The Sign Ministries, was a graduate of Wheaton College, a leading Christian businessman, co-founder of churches and missions agencies, and was founder of The Scriptorium. The Van Kampen Collection is the largest private collection of manuscripts, artifacts, scrolls and early printed editions of the Bible in the world today. He held an honorary doctoral degree in humane letters from Indiana Wesleyan University.

Rev. Bill Lee-Warner - (1946-2001) Bill was a graduate of Oregon State University, received his M.Div. from Western Evangelical Seminary, and pastored churches for more than twenty years. He served Sola Scriptura and The Sign Ministries as a writer, lecturer, and editor.

Rev. Charles Cooper - Instructor, Biblical Research & Education, Sola Scriptura, graduated from Ouachita Baptist University then went on to Dallas Theological Seminary and received a Master of Theology degree. After graduate school, Charles taught Homiletics and Hermeneutics at Moody Bible Institute for six and a half years. "Coop" (as he likes to be called) is active in declaring, defining, and defending the premillennial prewrath return of Christ. For any questions regarding this project please contact Charles by [email](#) or phone at Sola Scriptura at 1-800-844-9930.

Gary Vaterlaus - Instructor, Biblical Research & Education, Sola Scriptura, a graduate of Oregon State University, Gary worked at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow before attending Western Conservative Baptist Seminary and starting a Christian publishing ministry in

Russia. As an Instructor, Gary responds to correspondence and teaches the prewrath position nationwide.

CONTENTS

[Introduction](#)

[Overview of the Book of Revelation](#)

[Structure of the Book of Revelation](#)

[A Simple, Face Value Understanding of Prophetic Scriptures](#)

"REVELATION BEGINS"

[Chapter 1 - Prologue](#)

[Chapter 2 - The Seven Churches, Part 1](#)

[Chapter 3 - The Seven Churches, Part 2](#)

[Chapter 4 - Heaven](#)

[Chapter 5 - The Large Scroll](#)

[Chapter 6 - The First Six Seals](#)

"PARENTHESIS I - RESCUED"

[Chapter 7 - Deliverance](#)

"THE DAY OF THE LORD"

[Chapter 8 - Seventh Seal Events \[Trumpet Judgments 1-4\]](#)

[Chapter 9 - Completion of 70th Week \[Trumpet Judgments 5-6\]](#)

"POST 70TH WEEK EVENTS"

[Chapter 10 - The Little Scroll](#)

[Chapter 11 - Daniel 9:24 Completed \[Trumpet Judgment 7\]](#)

"PARENTHESIS II - COSMIC CONFLICT HIGHLIGHTED"

[Chapter 12 - The Beginning](#)

[Chapter 13 - The Beginning of the End](#)

[Chapter 14 - The End of the Beginning](#)

- A. Deliverance of the elect
- B. Decree to the wicked
- C. Destruction of the wicked

"THE DESTRUCTION OF ANTICHRIST- THE FINAL WRATH OF GOD"

[Chapter 15 - Prelude to Bowl Judgments](#)

[Chapter 16 - Bowl Judgments 1-7](#)

"PARENTHESIS III - DESTRUCTION HIGHLIGHTED"

[Chapter 17 - The Great Harlot](#)

[Chapter 18 - The Great City](#)

[Chapter 19 - The Great Army](#)

"THE MILLENNIAL REIGN OF CHRIST"

[Chapter 20: 1-6 - The Beginning of the Millennium](#)

[Chapter 20:7-15 - The End of the Millennium](#)

"THE CONCLUSION"

[Chapter 21 - New Heavens, New Earth, New Jerusalem](#)

[Chapter 22 - Epilogue](#)

□

□

**Questions? Comments?
Send us an email!**

revelationcommentary.org

© Sola Scriptura

info@solagroup.org


SOLA SCRIPTURA

Produced and Developed by [Sola Scriptura](#)



□

INTRODUCTION

With the continued growth of the prewrath position comes the need for more resources. Resources that explain how the whole of Scripture supports the prewrath timing of the Lord's return. The request for commentaries on the *Revelation* that explain it from the prewrath perspective has gone largely unanswered. We, therefore, offer this *dynamic* commentary as a temporary stopgap until more exhaustive works can be done.

This commentary is *dynamic* in nature because we will be adding to it as time goes by. While we are fairly confident that we understand the big picture, we recognize the need for an on-going study of the many details contained in the *Revelation*. The more we study the pages of this New Testament book, the more we learn. As you work through this commentary, please send us your comments and corrective suggestions. We are committed to an accurate teaching of the Word of God, and as such, we recognize that we do not have all the answers. Therefore, if you have an insight that can be biblically verified, please pass it along to us.

We offer no defense of our belief that the recipient of the Revelation was John the Apostle; that the date of writing falls near AD 96; that the Revelation has epistolary, prophetic, and apocalyptic features, which must influence its interpretation; and that the book is progressive in nature with parenthetical details added for clarification. Where necessary we will comment on the structure of the book to understand the meaning of the text. For those who are interested in matters of background, please consult the first volume of David E. Aune's commentary on *Revelation* in the *Word Biblical Commentary* series. He does a very thorough job on these matters.

□

[Next Section: Overview of the Book of Revelation](#)

□



**Questions? Comments?
Send us an email!**

revelationcommentary.org
© Sola Scriptura
info@solagroup.org



□

[Previous Section: Introduction](#)

□

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The book of Revelation primarily concerns the Second Coming of Christ. His Second Coming will be as judge of the world, unlike the first time when He came to die for mankind's sin. Several hundred years before the Lord came to earth to die on the cross, He communicated through an angelic messenger to Daniel, the prophet, essential information about the end times. The Lord, Himself, as recorded in the Olivet Discourse in the New Testament, taught His disciples more truth about the sequence of events that would lead to the end times and His return. Fifty plus years after the teaching of the Olivet Discourse, Christ, through an angelic messenger, revealed yet more end-time truth to John, information vital for the understanding of the last days. Ultimately, the prophetic truths contained in the book of Daniel, the Olivet Discourse, and the Revelation can be traced to our Lord. It is the Revelation about Jesus Christ as ultimate Judge, which gives us a synthetic view of both Daniel and the Olivet Discourse.

In the first verse of Revelation, chapter one, we are told that the contents of the book are written for the bondservants of Christ, i.e. the living elect of God who, by definition, must be the true church. In addition, Christ tells John that it is imperative that believers read and heed the message of the book because what will occur in the future is critically important for every child of God going into the last days. John is also instructed to record warnings to seven local churches existing at the time the book of Revelation was written. The warnings have both immediate consequences as well as consequences at Christ's Second Coming. Thus, in the last days described in the book of Revelation, Christ weaves together three different programs for three different groups of people representing the entirety of mankind in the last days. Obedient and disobedient members of the church, unbelieving Israel, and the world in general compose these three groups.

Five of the warnings to the seven churches have direct, end-time consequences. It is possible that one of the questions on the mind of John, in light of these warnings, concerned what would happen in the last days to those who continued in disobedience or unbelief. Beginning in chapter four, John is taken up into heaven where we, the reader, as is John, are given a marvelous view of the throne of God and the activities that will occur in the last days of human history as we know it. Other than the incredible glory of heaven itself, the focal point is an unopened scroll in the hand of Him who sits on a throne, sealed with seven seals. The question then arises as to who is able to break the seals, and thus permit the conditions necessary to effect the contents of the scroll. Pointing to the Lamb of God, one of the twenty-four elders told John that only the "Lion that is from the tribe of Judah" is worthy to open the scroll. This fact is supported earlier in the New Testament (cf. Acts 17:31). Only Christ has the right to judge the world in the last days because of His death and resurrection as the perfect Lamb of God at His first coming.

Revelation then begins to chronicle the events that will occur, beginning with the breaking of the seven seals. The seals represent conditions that must first occur before God brings His final judgment upon the world. Christ had already taught His disciples and Daniel that

this final time of judgment would transpire within the context of the Seventieth Week. When all the prior conditions are met, He will then remove His faithful saints before He pours out His wrath on those who remain during the most prophesied event in all Scripture, the Day of the Lord. This judgment is described by Christ Himself as a judgment that will parallel the judgment of God during the days of Noah, but this last time, as Peter teaches, it will be a judgment by fire, not water!

The first six seals are opened by the Lion of Judah, setting the stage for the final judgment of Christ. The fourth seal is broken and the wrath of Satan, through Antichrist, tests mankind in a final attempt to control all that dwell on the earth. The sixth seal is opened and the sign of the Day of the Lord, foretold again and again in the Scriptures, is given. The sun, moon, and stars go dark, which is the sign warning the earth that the wrath of God is about to commence. The faithful within the church that have withstood the attack of Satan and his Antichrist are removed from earth to heaven. Special protection is given to a remnant of Israel that must go through Christ's wrath that is soon to follow. The seventh seal is opened initiating the Day of the Lord, the awesome and oft-predicted wrath of God. At the end of the sixth trumpet judgment, the final seven-year period of end-time events, prophesied by Christ in the book of Daniel, is brought to an end. Only seventy-five days remain before the actual rule of Christ begins on earth over the nation Israel, who, after the completion of the seven-year period, will soon come back into a proper relationship with their Messiah.

Revelation now depicts a strong angel coming down out of heaven with a small scroll. The small scroll outlines the critical events that will occur during the final seventy-five day period at the end of the seven-year period after the events of the large scroll have been completed. Exactly as prophesied in Daniel, after the completion of the final seven-year period, the entire nation of Israel is saved--all who survive the beginning wrath of God meted out during the first six trumpet judgments. Then, Revelation shows the authority to rule over the earth being taken back from Satan and returned to Almighty God who will then begin to rule, again, exactly as described in Daniel. Then, the seventh trumpet judgment releases the final seven bowl judgments of God, the final wrath of God. At the end of the first thirty days of the seventy-five days that follow the seven-year period, the final wrath of God will be completed and concluded with the battle of Armageddon. At this final battle, Antichrist and his armies will be quickly defeated by Christ and the angelic host of God. Antichrist and his false prophet are then thrown directly into the lake of fire.

In the last chapters of Revelation, Christ then shows John the events that occur on earth, following the Lord's return. Revelation 19 ends with the assigning of Antichrist and the false prophet to the lake of fire. The armies of Antichrist are killed by the Lord's word and eaten by birds. Following Armageddon, chapter 20 opens with the description of God's final program for Satan. He will be rendered immobile and isolated in a bottomless pit for a thousand years (Rev. 20:1-3). Then the raptured saints of the ages are seen seated on thrones. Then the beheaded saints who refused to worship Antichrist or take his mark will be resurrected to reign with Christ for a thousand years (Rev. 20:4-6). Satan is released after the thousand years is completed to deceive the nations one last time to fight against Christ, but is again defeated as before the thousand years began (Rev. 20:7-10). The wicked dead and all of those who died during the thousand-year reign of Christ are resurrected and judged (Rev. 20:11-15). Revelation 21 opens with the creation of a new heaven and a new earth with the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven (Rev. 21:1-8). The New Jerusalem, described in some detail, is seen coming down to earth from heaven (Rev. 21:9-27). The book finishes with a call for all to obey the message of the book and a warning to those who reject what is taught.

Three times, each at a critical break in the sequence of events described in the book of

Revelation, Christ gives more detail to John for clarification. The *first* interlude deals with the rescue of God's faithful who do not succumb to Antichrist (Rev. 7:1-17). The *second* deals with an explanation of the actual work of Satan and his Antichrist during the great hour of testing where he will demand a choice of allegiance from mankind on earth before the wrath of God begins (Rev. 12-14). The *third* and final interlude describes the destruction, in some detail, of the false religious system and the city that supports it (Rev. 17-18).

To arrive at this simple sequence of events outlined in the book of Revelation, one must be willing to take God's Word at face value. This is where the trouble begins with so many and why there is so much confusion concerning the last days. Many do not accept what the Scriptures clearly teach so they interpret prophetic Scripture according to some man-made system or preference and not as the scriptural authors intended. To help you, the reader, get a better understanding of what we call a "face-value" interpretation of Scripture, the next section that follows is a simple guideline that makes the word, "hermeneutic" (how one studies Scripture) easy to understand and use.

□

[Next Section: Structure of the Book of Revelation](#)

□



revelationcommentary.org
© Sola Scriptura
info@solagroup.org



Produced and Developed by [Sola Scriptura](#)

□



□

Previous Section: Overview of the Book of Revelation

□

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Perhaps no single issue plagues the correct interpretation of book of Revelation than its structure. A prewrath understanding of the book of Revelation warrants a fuller discussion than the simple outline given in the introduction. The outline is re-printed below:

"REVELATION BEGINS"

Chapter 1 – Prologue
 Chapters 2-3 – The Seven Churches
 Chapter 4 – Heaven
 Chapter 5 – The Large Scroll
 Chapter 6 – The First Six Seals

"PARENTHESIS I – THE RESCUE HIGHLIGHTED"

Chapter 7 – Deliverance

"THE DAY OF THE LORD"

Chapter 8 – Seventh Seal Events [Trumpet Judgments 1-4]
 Chapter 9 – Completion of 70th Week [Trumpet Judgments 5-6]

"POST 70TH WEEK EVENTS"

Chapter 10 – The Little Scroll
 Chapter 11 – Daniel 9:24 Completed [Trumpet Judgment 7]

"PARENTHESIS II – COSMIC CONFLICT HIGHLIGHTED"

Chapter 12 – The Beginning
 Chapter 13 – The Beginning of the End
 Chapter 14 – The End of the Beginning
 A. Deliverance of the elect
 B. Decree to the wicked
 C. Destruction of the wicked

"THE DESTRUCTION OF ANTICHRIST – FINAL WRATH OF GOD"

Chapter 15 – Prelude to Bowl Judgments
 Chapter 16 – Bowl Judgments 1-7

"PARENTHESIS III – DESTRUCTION HIGHLIGHTED"

Chapter 17 – The Great Harlot
 Chapter 18 – The Great City
 Chapter 19 – The Great Army

"THE MILLENNIAL REIGN OF CHRIST"

Chapter 20: 1-6 – The Beginning of the Millennium
 Chapter 20:7-15 – The End of the Millennium

"THE CONCLUSION"

Chapter 21 – New Heavens, New earth, New Jerusalem
 Chapter 22 – Epilogue

The key to the structure of the book of Revelation can be discerned from the seventh chapter of Daniel and Matthew 24. There are conceptual, thematic, linguistic and theological parallels, which defy any serious Bible student to conclude otherwise. We shall look at these two chapters, respectively, first.

□

The Structure of Daniel Seven

The seventh chapter of Daniel introduces the second major section of the book of Daniel. The first six chapters are primarily historical and chronological in nature. The remaining six chapters are prophetic in nature. Therefore, chapter seven is a pivotal chapter. It serves to introduce the prophetic content of chapters 8-12.

Chapter 7 begins with a vision concerning four beasts. Daniel 7:1 reports,

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel saw a dream and visions in his mind as he lay on his bed; then he wrote the dream down and related the following summary of it.

The NASB's translation includes the statement, "he wrote the dream down and related the following summary of it." Since Daniel gives us a summary, this leaves room for more details to be added later, which is done in both Matthew 24 and Revelation 4-21. Chapter 7:2-14 continues,

Daniel said, "I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another. The first was like a lion and had the wings of an eagle. I kept looking until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man; a human mind also was given to it. And behold, another beast, a second one, resembling a bear. And it was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth; and thus they said to it, 'Arise, devour much meat!' After this I kept looking, and behold, another one, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird; the beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it. After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed, and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. While I was contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth uttering great boasts. I kept looking until thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days took His seat; His vesture was like white snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was ablaze with flames, its wheels were a burning fire. A river of fire was flowing and coming out from before Him; thousands upon thousands were attending Him, and myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; the court sat, and the books were opened. Then I kept looking because of the sound of the boastful words which the horn was speaking; I kept looking until the beast was slain, and its body was destroyed and given to the burning fire. As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but an extension of life was granted to them for an appointed period of time. I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.

Contained in this rather long quote is an outline of the end time sequence that becomes the framework for both Matthew 24 and Revelation 4-21. By way of summary, Daniel indicates four beasts will arise out of the sea. The fourth beast will eventuate into ten horns. When the ten horns rule another horn will arise

and destroy three of the ten original horns. After sometime, thrones will be set up. The Ancient of Days will take his seat. The court will be seated. The books will be opened. The boastful beast will be destroyed and the authority of his helpers will be suspended. One like a Son of Man will then receive dominion, glory and a kingdom. The reader must not miss the important fact that Daniel first gives a general overview of the events of the end time.

This general overview is then followed by a specific look at the fourth beast and his unparalleled persecution of the saints, which will terminate with his destruction. Notice Daniel 7:15-28:

As for me, Daniel, my spirit was distressed within me, and the visions in my mind kept alarming me. I approached one of those who were standing by and began asking him the exact meaning of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things: 'These great beasts, which are four in number, are four kings who will arise from the earth. But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come.' Then I desired to know the exact meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its claws of bronze, and which devoured, crushed, and trampled down the remainder with its feet, and the meaning of the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up, and before which three of them fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth uttering great boasts, and which was larger in appearance than its associates. I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom. Thus he said: 'The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms, and it will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it. As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings. And he will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him. At this point the revelation ended. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts were greatly alarming me and my face grew pale, but I kept the matter to myself.

The rest of the Daniel 7 is concerned with an explanation of the fourth beast, his persecution of the saints and the eventual kingdom the saints will receive after the beast is destroyed. A discernable pattern can be argued from the seventh chapter of Daniel. First, a general overview of the end times is given. Then a detailed look at the unparalleled persecution of the saints follows. The destruction of the beast is promised. The chapter ends with the promise that the saints will receive a kingdom ruled by the Highest One.

□

The Structure of Matthew 24:4-31

This exact same pattern is developed in Matthew 24:4-31. First, a general overview is given. Then a specific look at the persecution of the saints is detailed. The persecution will be cut short (the beast's destruction). The promise of the Lord's return to gather the saints rounds out this section of Matthew's gospel.

The general overview is given first. Matthew 24:4-14 states,

And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name. And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But

the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come.

That Matthew 24:4-14 is a general overview of the end times is discernable from the following facts. First, the disciples' initial questions set the agenda. Matthew 24:3 states that the disciples asked "when will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age?" It is very important that the reader recognize that two questions are asked and the second question has two parts. The first question concerns the destruction of Jerusalem. The second two-part question concerns the Lord's return and the end of the age. Equally important is the recognition that the Lord answers the questions in reverse order. In other words, the Lord answers the question, "what will be the sign of the end of the age," first. The appearance of the term *end* in Matthew 24:6, 13 and 14 proves this point conclusively.

The Lord's use of the birth sequence underscores his emphasis in Matthew 24:4-14 on the end of the age. Matthew 24:4-8 emphasizes the *beginning birth pangs*. This supports our conclusion that the Lord is not giving an overview of the entire time from his departure to His Second Coming, but rather the final years that immediately precedes his return. "Beginning birth pangs" are associated with the birth of the baby and not the nine months of pregnancy. Matthew 24:9-14 focuses on the *hard labor* that follows the beginning birth pangs. The Greek term *thlipsis* (tribulation) is used to describe the suffering of a woman about to give birth (John 16:21). As with a baby, the "one who endures to the end (of the age), it is he who shall be saved (delivered)."

The final factor that supports the conclusion that Matthew 24:4-14 covers the entire end-time sequences concerns the phrase, "this gospel of the kingdom." The phrase has been incorrectly interpreted to refer to the gospel of Christ. That is, the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ outlined by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. However, the Lord did not begin proclaiming the good news of His death, burial and resurrection until two plus years of ministry (Matt 16:21-23) had passed. In contrast, Matthew reports that the Lord began preaching the "gospel of the kingdom of God" in the very early days of His earthly ministry (Matt 4:23). The *gospel of the kingdom* concerns God's physical reign on earth and His removal of the wicked, which was initiated by the Lord's ministry on earth (Mark 1:15, Luke 8:21, Luke 11:20). The worldwide proclamation of this message signals the end of the age (Rev 14:6-7).

The general overview of the end times (Matthew 24:4-14) is followed by a focus on the persecution of the saints in Matthew 24:15-24. It states,

Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; let him who is on the housetop not go down to get the things out that are in his house; and let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak. But woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days! But pray that your flight may not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath; for then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall. And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short. Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There He is,' do not believe him. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.

Matthew 24:15-24 covers the same period as Matthew 24:9-14, which is a very important point to remember. This same pattern occurs in the seventh chapter of Daniel. First the general overview and then comes the specific focus on the persecution. What is called *tribulation* in Matthew 24:9 is described as a *great tribulation* in Matthew 24:21. However, Matthew 24:15-24 focuses more on the unparalleled persecution the saints will face during this time. The third aspect of the end time sequence concerns the destruction of the beast. The Lord Jesus indicates that the days of tribulation will be cut short (Matt 24:22). He does not elaborate on this point, but a shortened tribulation means the end of the beast's opportunity to persecute.

The final portion of Matthew 24:4-31 i.e. verses 25-31, deal with the return of Christ, which answers the question, "what will be the sign of Your coming," asked by the disciples. Notice,

Behold, I have told you in advance. If therefore they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go forth, or, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe them. For just as the lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. But immediately after the

tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

As with Daniel 7, these final verses promise the saints deliverance. Specifically, the Lord will return and gather the saints together to eventually set up a kingdom on earth. The dependency of the Lord on Daniel's material is evident (Matt 24:15).

□

The Structure of the Revelation

The prophetic outline of the end times that flows through Daniel 7 and is utilized by the Lord in the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24:4-31 also occurs in the book of Revelation.

Scholars are generally agreed that Revelation 1:19 offers a temporal outline of the book of Revelation. John indicates that he received instructions from the Lord to "Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall take place after these things." This framework offers the following structural depiction of the book. The first chapter of Revelation is "the things you have seen." Revelation two and three cover "the things which are"; and Revelation four through twenty-one are "the things which shall take place after these things." The disproportionate attention given to the "things which shall take place after these things (Revelation 4-21)," suggests that the temporal outline of the book is not *the* key to its structure. This is particularly true given that the seven churches receive promises that are both first century and futuristic in nature. In other words, there is an overlap of "the things which are" and "things which shall take place after these things." This undermines any attempt to force a strict interpretation of Revelation 1:19 as the dogmatic outline of the book of Revelation.

Critical to our discussion are chapters 4-20 of the Revelation. It is our position that chapters 4-11 give the general overview of the end times. Revelation 12-13 gives the specific focus on the persecution of the saints. Chapters 14-21 detail the destruction of the beast, the coming of Christ and the kingdom that follows. As with Matthew 24:4-31, the book of Revelation fills in many details left out of Daniel's seventh chapter summary, but the basic structure is the same.

The General Overview

Revelation 4-11 gives an overview of the end times. Revelation 4 opens with a throne room scene. God the father is seated on a throne surrounded by his court of elders, living creatures and angels. Revelation 5 presents the coronation of the Lamb as executor of the Father's will. Revelation 6 outlines the "beginning birth pangs" and the "tribulation" of the saints. Revelation 7 highlights the deliverance of God's first fruits of unsaved national Israel and the righteous saints of the ages to heaven. Revelation 8-9 details the beginning of God's wrath. Revelation 10 underscores the end of Gentile dominance on earth and Revelation 11 reports God's reclamation of the earth (God's reign begins).

While we cannot be dogmatic about the actual beginning time frame for the events outlined in Revelation 4-11, when these events end can be asserted with greater certainty. Most students of Revelation recognize a difference between the first four seals and the last three seals. The common trait of the last three seals is the wrath of God. The fifth seal martyrs request that God pour out his wrath on the living earth-dwellers. The sixth seal announces the imminent outbreak of God's wrath. The seventh and final seal begins the actual outpouring of God's wrath as seven trumpets. The seven trumpets demonstrate a similar pattern to the seals. That is, the first four trumpets are different from the last three trumpets. The final three trumpets are characterized as three "woes." These represent the worst expression of God's wrath the wicked will ever experience on earth.

However, between trumpets six and seven is a break in the advancement of the story line. This break serves the purpose of allowing John opportunity to announce the completion of *the mystery of God*. He writes, "...in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished...(Rev 10:7)." The apostle Paul defined the mystery of God as God's special work in Christ to bring Gentiles to glory (Col 1:24-2:5). The completion of the mystery of God also ties into the completion of the "times of the Gentiles," (Dan 9:24, Luke 21:24, Rev 11:2). These events coincide with the

completion of the ministry of the two witnesses (Rev 11:4-13).

With the sounding of the seventh trumpet, God the father takes back his rightful physical rule over the earth. John states, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever (Rev 11:15b)." The first order of business for the new King will be the removal of all the wicked (both human and demonic) from the earth.

The Persecution of the Saints

As with both Daniel 7 and Matthew 24:4-31, after the general overview of the end times is given, a specific look at the persecution of the saints is given. Unique to the Revelation is the most detailed presentation of the primary cause of the persecution given in Scripture. A war in heaven results in Satan's restriction to earth for a short time (Rev 12:7-17). This is the basis of the unparalleled persecution. Death will reign on the earth during the persecution of God's saints. The three primary perpetrators of death will be the beast (Rev 13:7), the false prophet (Rev 13:12), and the image of the beast (Rev 13:15). The target of Death will be the woman (the Jews) and her offspring (the church) (Rev 12:17).

The Destruction of the Beast and His Kingdom

The third aspect of the end-time sequence that appears in both Daniel 7 and Matthew 24 concerns the destruction of the beast. Having highlighted the persecutors in Revelation 12-13, Revelation 14-19 focuses on the destruction of the beast and his kingdom. Chapter 14 begins this important section with the Lord and 144,000 Jews standing on Mount Zion. This is the first time the Lamb is pictured physically on the earth in the Revelation. Three angels announce doom upon the earth. The chapter ends with a summary description of God's wrath against the wicked on the earth. The fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of the Revelation detail the bowl judgments against the beast, his kingdom and those who take his mark. Revelation 17-18 highlights the destruction the beast's city. Revelation 19 highlights the destruction of the beast's armies.

The Kingdom Comes

The final aspect of the end time sequence concerns the kingdom of the Most High God. Revelation 20 indicates that after the destruction of the beast, the Lord Jesus will set a temporal kingdom on earth for one thousand years. All the wicked of the nations, Satan and his demons are removed from the earth. Christ and the beheaded reign on the earth after which the final revolt of Satan occurs and the eternal judgment ends human history as we know it.

The Conclusion

Daniel 7, Matthew 24 and the Revelation manifest a discernible structural pattern with respect to the sequence of events concerning the end times. First, a general overview is given. Then a specific look at the unparalleled persecution of the saints is outlined. The final element of the three accounts concerns the destruction of the perpetrator of the unparalleled persecution and the kingdom of God that follow. Daniel 7 and Matthew 24 informs our understanding of the Revelation. As the commentary develops, we hope to show the connections between these great works.

□

[Next Section: A Simple, Face Value Understanding of Prophetic Scriptures](#)

□

Revelation
COMMENTARY
WWW.REVELATIONCOMMENTARY.ORG

Questions? Comments?
Send us an email!



□

[Previous Section: Structure of the Book of Revelation](#)

□

A SIMPLE, FACE VALUE UNDERSTANDING OF PROPHETIC SCRIPTURES

The conclusions one reaches when studying the Word of God are based on the type of interpretive process employed. Because this study of Revelation uses a particular and consistent interpretive process, the following explanation of the method of Bible study is presented for the reader to consider.

To have validity, our method of interpretation (i.e., our hermeneutic) must be consistent and without contradiction, and it must never be governed by a preconceived theological school of thought. In other words, if our hermeneutic is controlled by our preconceived theology, then the Bible can be twisted to say whatever our theology would have it say - which, of course, is what often happens in the study of the end times.

One's method of interpretation will have a far-reaching effect on his theological conclusions. Thus, it is axiomatic that those who use differing methods of interpretation (i.e., a different hermeneutic) will end up with different theological conclusions. How important it is, then, that we be very clear about what our hermeneutic is and, even more importantly, that we are in fact using the right principles of interpretation in order to properly extract the truth of God's Word.

Before one attempts to apply the principles of biblical interpretation to the biblical text, he or she must decide his/her convictions about two important issues. First, one must form a conviction about scriptural contradictions. The very nature of Scripture precludes contradictions. The writers of Scripture declared it to be inspired of God (II Tim. 3:16, II Pet. 1:20), and to be true (Ps. 119:160). Therefore, contradictory conclusions must be pursued until a common denominator is found.

The second conviction the interpreter must have concerns the use of an English translation. In our discussion of biblical interpretation, we are limiting our discussion to the English translation of the Old and New Testament. In the New American Standard Translation, the translators worked very hard to give the reader a reliable translation of the original Greek and Hebrew manuscripts. We understand that each translation reflects the interpretive skills of the translators. The translators have already made all-important interpretive decisions. Therefore, we who are not able to work with the original languages must trust the translation. This also demands care when interpreting the Bible using an English text only. However, while having the skills necessary to work with the original Greek or Hebrew will give the interpreter depth in understanding the original meaning, much can be gained from using a good translation. We simply ask that you exercise caution and compare Scripture with Scripture to avoid careless error.

One last issue must be touched upon before we look at some of the actual principles of interpretation. A face value hermeneutic seeks the intended meaning of the text, not the simple sense. We must recognize that certain verses taken in a simple sense may convey a meaning foreign to the author's intended meaning. An excellent example of this is John 6:53 which states, "...Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves." It is clear that Jesus' audience

thought they must literally eat of His flesh. That's the simple sense. In reality, Jesus intended his audience to understand their need for faith (John 6:47).

To help the interpreter achieve success in the process of interpreting the Bible, we offer the following overview. The following principles of interpretation, none of them unique to us, but all of them held by careful students of Scripture throughout history, have been and will be followed as honestly and consistently as possible.

(1) The first principle is that the interpreter must seek to discover the original author's intended meaning. We understand that Paul, Peter, James and John as well as other writers of Scripture determined the meaning of the text at the time it was written. Therefore, our job as modern interpreters is to discover that original meaning. To discover the original meaning, all Scripture must be understood in its most normal, natural, and customary (i.e., literal or face value) sense.

Biblical words and phrases had a particular meaning during biblical times. Thus, we must discover what those words and phrases meant and how they combine to communicate specific meanings. This allows, of course, for obvious figures of speech (which are frequently explained further in the same passage or elsewhere in Scripture, i.e., Gen. 3:1, cf. Rev. 12:9). Chances are that if the plain sense makes sense, you have the right sense.

Martin Luther called this principle of literal interpretation, *sensus literalis*. Many of the greatest advances in biblical scholarship during the Reformation resulted from the application of this single principle. In its simplest meaning and application, this principle means that we read and interpret Scripture with the same normal understanding of words that we read any other serious book or carry on any serious conversation.

This principle has special relevance in the study of prophecy, and in fact, finds strong confirmation in the way Old Testament prophecy was fulfilled in the life of Christ. For example, the Old Testament contains several hundred prophecies concerning the first coming of Christ. Although many of those prophecies are virtual duplicates, at least fifty distinct facets of Christ's life and ministry were predicted, and without exception, were literally fulfilled, at face value. It is not only a matter of faith but of biblical principle to expect the many prophecies of Christ's Second Coming to be fulfilled with equal literalness and completeness.

Prophecy that is not fulfilled literally is not true prophecy at all, and it proves itself to be simply misguided human speculation. A biblical argument that speaks directly to how prophecy should be understood is found in Deuteronomy 18:20-22. Here the Israelites were told how to determine if what a prophet was telling them was truly prophecy from God or mere human speculation. The conclusion of this passage is that "when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken."

Earlier in verse 20, God told His people that when this man's prophecy does not come true, "that prophet shall die." Only a literal, face-value understanding of what is being prophesied could ever be put to that test, and the prophecies concerning Christ's first coming bear witness to this.

When we use this principle of taking Scripture at face value, the Bible suddenly comes alive in a new way. We have a renewed confidence in the reliability of God's Word - that it is literally true, that it is something anyone can understand. The events described in its pages really will happen according to God's sovereign time and plan. No longer do we approach the Bible looking for an

obscure spiritualized meaning, but rather for the literal understanding of events that have actually occurred or will happen sometime in the future.

(2) The second principle has to do with the context in which a word, phrase, or larger passage is being presented. Sometimes that involves careful understanding of the complete biblical book being studied, meticulously interpreting a given idea or principle in light of the overall thrust and nature of the book as well as in light of its immediate context. The context involves the persons being addressed in the passage, the historical setting, and the situation in which the passage is given. A simple dictum is: "A text taken out of context is no more than a pretext."

(3) The third principle, equally important as the first two, is that of comparing Scripture with Scripture. A word, phrase, or concept should first be studied in the context of the passage under consideration and then in light of its use in other passages of Scripture. When a given text is not explicit about a truth, no conclusion should be drawn about that truth until all relevant passages have been studied.

Of course, some passages are not as clear as others and some truths are more implicit than explicit. When this is the case, those truths that are more implicit always need to be understood in light of those that are more explicit, never the reverse. Likewise, the more important a truth is, the more carefully related truths should be compared and examined. Because Scripture is always its own best interpreter, careful comparison always adds depth and clarity to our understanding.

(4) The fourth principle concerns figures of speech. The importance of this principle cannot be overstated. Prophetic and apocalyptic literature utilizes figures of speech to a great degree. A student of Scripture must be thoroughly familiar with this special category of hermeneutics. Figures of speech employ language that is highly suggestive, but have a literal reference. The interpreter must determine the literal reference. A figure of speech is "any deviation either in thought or expression, from the ordinary and simple method of speaking...form of speech artfully varied from common usage." [fn. 1] A figure of speech will normally employ a comparison, a substitution, or amplification as a means of "artfully varying" from what we think of as common use, to better clarify the passage.

The Lord declared, "I am the good shepherd..." (John 10:11). This is obviously a figure of speech. The Lord never dealt with literal sheep. Left without clarification, the Lord would intend for the reader to understand that everything a shepherd is to sheep, He is to those who follow Him. However, in John 10:11, the Lord adds the following sentence, "the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." Now we understand the literal reference. Jesus is the good shepherd because He "la[id] down His life for" people. This is the meaning of the figure of speech. Each time a figure of speech is encountered, it must be dealt with in this fashion. First, determine what type of figure of speech is used. Second, determine the significance of such usage. Third, identify the intended meaning for the particular passage under study.

(5) A fifth and final principle, which relates to prophetic and apocalyptic literature specifically is to recognize that many prophetic predictions, in both Testaments, have a unique characteristic--both near and far implications and applications. In other words, prophecy can operate on multiple levels of fulfillment. On one level, there is a divinely revealed "near" prediction relating to a soon-coming event. However, there can be corresponding "far" aspects that will be fulfilled later, or in

the events of the end times.

This particular characteristic of the prophetic Scriptures has been called by several names. W. J. Beecher calls it *generic fulfillment*. He writes,

A generic prediction is one which regards an event as occurring in a series of parts, separated by intervals, and expresses itself in language that may apply indifferently to the nearest part, or to the remoter parts or to the whole—in other words, a prediction which, in applying to the whole of a complex event, also applies to some of its parts. [fn. 2]

D. L. Bock, in referring to this same matter, uses *typological prophetic fulfillment* to describe this phenomenon. He states that typological prophetic fulfillment

refers to a pattern and promise present in an Old Testament text so that a short-term event pictures and mirrors an ultimate and unique fulfillment in the New Testament. [fn. 3]

The failure to recognize and apply this principle has caused immeasurable confusion among even the most godly and scholarly students of Scripture. Obviously, misuse of this principle, as with any other, will also cause confusion and misunderstanding. For a near/far interpretation to be valid, it must clearly be allowed by the context and by the specific wording of the text itself, as well as be consistent with the rest of Scripture speaking to the same issue. Whenever such prophecies are dealt with in this commentary, their near/far aspects will be established as carefully and as fully as possible.

Several general comments on the basic issue of hermeneutics need to be made. In relation to a given prophetic event or issue, careful study of various texts in the Old and New Testaments will reveal that the different terminology and styles of the writers will describe the same event or issue with equal and consistent truthfulness, though often not in the same detail or from the same perspective as the other. Many examples will be seen in our study of end-time events as Scripture is compared with Scripture. One needs only to look at the first coming of Christ to see the principle in operation.

Psalms 22, written by David, gives the reader one perspective of the crucifixion of Christ; Isaiah 53 gives another perspective of exactly the same event; while Daniel 9:26 simply says, "Messiah will be cut off and have nothing."

Either the context or the similarity of the events described must be present for the student of prophecy to make the connection between the passages in question. But where a genuine connection exists, the different perspectives found in various passages bring a more complete understanding of the same event.

Our understanding of the end times will increase as history continues to unfold and verify biblical prophecy. Many of the prophetic passages of the Old Testament were unclear to those who first heard or read them. God's people were not certain whether a given prophetic message related to their own times or to the future. As with near/far prophecies, the biblical language clarified some of the uncertainties. In regard to many passages, the modern student of prophecy has the great advantage of looking back and learning from the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, as revealed in the New Testament or as recognized in subsequent history.

Daniel was told to "conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time . . . for these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time" (Dan.

12:4, 9). When the end times actually do come, the church will have had a long historical base from which to gain understanding of the many prophetic passages that hitherto were a mystery. History has been, and will continue to be, a source of prophetic insight for those who carefully study God's Word. Since Israel gained possession and control of her homeland in 1948, for instance, we have a perspective on prophecy that could only have been understood after that momentous event occurred.

In summary, when clear biblical truth is found, as A.W. Tozer would say, "never do we dare to stand in judgment of that truth; rather, that truth always stands in judgment of us!" There can be no exceptions, no spiritualizing, no allegorizing, and no rationalizing. God says what He means and means what He says! Our only response should be to bow in acceptance of His truth, however reassuring or unsettling we may find it to be.

□

fn. 1 - Instit. Orat. IX, I, 11, cited by Edward P.J. Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* (New York: Oxford Press, 1971), 640.

fn. 2 - W.J. Beecher, *The Prophets and the Promise* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), 130.

fn. 3 - D.L. Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern* (awaiting publisher information), 49-50.

□

[Next Section: Chapter One - Prologue](#)

□

**Revelation
COMMENTARY**
WWW.REVELATIONCOMMENTARY.ORG

**Questions? Comments?
Send us an email!**

revelationcommentary.org
© Sola Scriptura
info@solagroup.org


SOLA SCRIPTURA

Produced and Developed by [Sola Scriptura](#)

□



□

Previous Section: A Simple, Face Value Understanding of Prophetic Scriptures

□

CHAPTER ONE - PROLOGUE

Revelation 1:1

The (1) Revelation (2) of Jesus Christ, which (3) God gave (4) Him to show to His (5) bond-servants, the things which must (6) shortly take place; and He sent and communicated {it} (7) by His angel to His bond-servant (8) John,

1. The word revelation comes from the Greek word *apokalupsis*, which means "revelation" or "uncovering." Jesus Christ is being "uncovered." The sense in which the Lord is being uncovered is that of eschatological Judge. The judgship of Jesus Christ was stipulated in John 5:27, 30, Acts 10:42 and 17:31. The book of Revelation is the fullest statement on the Lord's judgship. The book answers why and how Jesus will judge Israel, the church, the wicked and Satan.

2. Of = indicates that this "uncovering" or "revelation" is from Jesus Christ.

3. God = the Father.

4. Him = The Father gives the revelation to the Son (Jesus Christ). The reason the Father gives the Son the revelation is so it can be shown to His bondservants.

5. Bondservants = Revelation is written to bondservants (7 churches of chapter 2 and 3).

The Greek term for bondservant is *doulos*. The term is used 14 times in the book of Revelation. Three times, it is used literally (6:15; 13:16 and 19:18). Eleven times, it is used metaphorically. Believers are not literally slaves. It is a title of honor. A *doulos* often functioned as the agent of his master, possessing a representative authority. Therefore, a bondservant of the most High God is one who subordinates himself to God and lives obediently before God in full dependency on God.

6. *Things which must shortly take place* = is a Greek clause, literally=what (it) is necessary to happen in short (soon).

This Greek clause is often used by pretribulationists to support their argument of imminency, but is this really the case? *En tachei* is the debated phrase. The phrase can have two possible meanings: (1) that the events depicted will happen in *rapid-fire* fashion. That is, once the events begin to happen, they will occur very quickly; or (2) that the events depicted can happen *soon*. That is, the time of fulfillment will not extend beyond the normal, natural, customary sense of *soon*.

The basic question is this: Is John describing how the events will happen or when the events will happen?

Those arguing that John intends *when the events will happen* must overcome a logical and theological problem. Given that 1900 years have passed since John penned these words, soon would lose any historical impact or meaning. There is only one biblical sense in which *soon* could be used to represent 1900 years, and that's viewing "time" from God's so-called vantage point. However, nothing in the text indicates that this is the case.

Logically then, this conclusion is weak at best.

Theologically, for John to state that the events depicted in the Revelation will happen *soon*, with reference to time, contradicts Matthew 24:36. Matthew 24:36 states, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone." Therefore, John could not say how soon the Lord might return or how soon the events connected with His return might transpire unless God gave him direct revelation.

The only logical and theologically correct conclusion is to understand *en tachei* as indicating how the events will occur. The events connected with the Lord's return will happen quickly. Matthew 24 indicates that they will happen in less than a three and a half-year period.

7. By His angel = Literally, the Greek says, "by the angel of Him." By the use of the definite article, John indicates that this is a very specific angel. This is the first angelic figure mentioned in the Revelation. We are not given his name. By designating, this angel as *the* angel in the Greek, John's audience must have known the identity of this angel. The particular Greek construction demands this conclusion. Revelation 22:6 restates the fact that the Lord's angel communicated the Revelation to John. It is important to understand that the chain of communication is not broken. The Father gave the revelation to His Son, who gave it to His angel, who gave it to John who wrote it down for the bondservants.

8. John = the disciple whom Jesus loved (John 13:23, 19:26), writer of the Gospel of John and three epistles.

Revelation 1:2

(1) who bore witness to (2a) the word of God and to (2b) the testimony of Jesus Christ, {even} (3) to all that he saw.

1. Who bore witness = John (the apostle whom Jesus loved), bore witness. The Greek verb "to witness" is only used here and in Rev. 22:16, 18, 20. However, it is one of the New Testament's favorite verbs for the *proclamation of the Gospel* (Acts 10:42, 18:5, 20:21, and Ephesians 4:17). John identifies himself by the two messages he proclaimed.

2a. To the word of God = occurs five times in the Revelation (1:2, 9; 6:9; 19:13; 20:4). The word of God is either the name of Jesus (Rev. 19:13) or the cause of persecution for the righteous (1:9; 6:9; 20:4). The word of God is the direct prophetic communication from God. Thus, John is stating that what follows in the book of Revelation came straight from God the Father.

2b. To the testimony of Jesus = occurs five times (1:2, 9; 12:17; 19:10; 20:4). The Greek language uses the word *and* with the meaning of "even." Here John indicates that he proclaimed the word of God, even "the testimony by Jesus." By this second phrase (the testimony of Jesus), John further defines "the word of God." In other words, what John proclaims is what God the Father gave Jesus Christ to show to His bondservants. John writes what God said and Jesus proclaimed through His angel.

3. To all that he saw = In the New American Standard Bible, the word "even" appears. It appears in Italics because it does not appear in the Greek manuscripts. The translators, placing it as a commentary insert in the translation, help the reader understand that the phrase "to all that he saw" further explains "the testimony of Jesus." John declares that he saw all that Jesus revealed, which He (Jesus) received from the Father. What John does in verse 2 is state for the record that what is recorded in the Revelation is exactly what God the Father wanted to the last word.

Revelation 1:3

(1) Blessed is he who reads and (2) those who hear the words of the (3) prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is (4) near.

1. Blessed...reads = This is the first of seven beatitudes in the Revelation (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). John first indicates that the person who reads the book aloud is blessed. The seven churches would have used this format when they first received the letter from John.

There would be one copy, which the synagogue leader would read. Scripture commands the public reading of the word of God (1 Tim 4:13).

2. Those...hear...heed = Not only is the public reader blessed, but so is the hearer and doer. The original Greek indicates that one must be both a hearer and a doer in order to be blessed. Because Jesus Christ comes as Judge of all the earth, those who hear and heed the message will be blessed. But those who do not hear and heed will suffer. The only exception is the one third part of Israel that suffers, but survives Daniel's 70th Week and is then saved and goes into the millennial kingdom on earth (Dan. 9:24; Romans 11:25-26).

3. Prophecy = While the Revelation is apocalyptic in nature, it is primarily prophetic. This is John's designation for the Revelation by Jesus Christ—prophecy. The reader at this point must make a hermeneutical decision concerning the interpretation of God's revelation of His Son. The apocalyptic nature of the book must not over shadow the fact that this is a prophecy. The highly figurative nature of the book does not mean that the literal referent cannot be known. Neither are we free to guess the literal referent. Daniel 7 provides the hermeneutical example for how the book is to be interpreted. We will look at this matter later.

4. Near = *eggus* (Greek adverb) It can describe *time* or *space*. The fact that *eggus* is used with *kairos* (time), a technical eschatological term that refers to that time when the kingdom will come, means John is using *eggus* in a spatial sense. John does not indicate that he has personal knowledge of the exact date of the arrival of the kingdom. Therefore, he could not state whether the kingdom was soon to come or not. Rather, the kingdom is the next event on the agenda of God for the faithful believer. How much time will elapse before the kingdom comes is not known? John uses the uncertainty to motivate his audience to hear and heed the prophecy.

Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost indicated that the coming of the Holy Spirit is a mark of the "last days." We are presently living in the "last days." Thus, the literal physical reign (kingdom) of God is the next event on the agenda of God. It is near.

Revelation 1:4

(1) John to the (2) seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from (3) Him who is and who was and who is to come; and from the (4) seven Spirits who are before His throne;

1. John = Like most NT letters, Revelation opens with a prescript with three components. Who the author is comes first, in this case John (the apostle whom Jesus loved).

2. Seven churches = the second component of the prescript is the recipient. Asia had more than seven churches, but these provide an overview of the condition of the church both during the time of John and in the end times.

The number seven is a favorite of the Revelation. There are 19 explicit groups of seven and several implied groupings:

Explicit Groups:

- a. Churches (1:4, 11, 20)
- b. Spirits (1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6)
- c. Candlesticks (1:12, 13, 20: 2:1)
- d. Stars (1:16, 20; 2:1; 3:1)
- e. Lamps (4:5)
- f. Seals (5:1; 5:5)
- g. Horns (5:6)
- h. Eyes (5:6)
- i. Angels who stand before God (8:2, 6)
- j. Trumpets (8:2, 6)
- k. Thunders (10:3, 4)
- l. Thousand (seven thousand people killed) (11:13)
- m. Heads (12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7, 9)
- n. Crowns (12:3)
- o. Angels (15:1, 6, 7, 8; 16:1; 17:1; 21:9)
- p. Plagues (15:1, 6, 8; 21:9)

- q. Vials (15:7; 17:1; 21:9)
- r. Mountains (17:9)
- s. Kings (17:10, 11)

Implied Groups:

- a. Beatitudes (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14)
- b. Antichrist's contract (11:3; 12:6, 14; 13:5)
- c. "I am's" of Christ (1:8, 11, 18; 21:6; 22:13, 16)
- d. Doxologies in heaven (4:9-11; 5:8-13; 7:9-12; 11:16-18; 14:2, 3; 15:2-4; 19:1-6)
- e. Every tribe, and tongue, and people and nation (5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:5)
- f. The Lord God Almighty (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 19:6; 21:22)
- g. The One who sits on the throne (5:1, 7, 13; 6:16; 7:15; 21:5)
- h. The Alpha and the Omega (1:8, 17; 21:6; 22:13)
- i. Prophecy (1:3; 11:6; 19:10; 22:7, 10, 18, 19)

The obvious question is this: what is the significance of the number seven in the book of Revelation. First, clearly, the number seven is a structural indicator in the Revelation. Seven seals, trumpets and vials set forth a sequential structure to the book. Second, "the frequent repetition of the numbers underscore the notion that nothing is random or coincidental." (Aune, *The Book of Revelation*, 63) Given the past, present, and a future reality, to which the number seven refers, God has sovereignly overseen the complete process. Third, seven is the number of completion "as we gather from countless passages of the Old Testament." (Swete, *Commentary on Revelation*, cxxxvi) Sevens mark the life of a Jewish person. The Sabbath, the feasts, the Sabbath year, days of the week, the days of creation and days to cleanse oneself and much more marked the Jewish way of life.

3. Him...seven Spirits = the third component of the prescript is the salutation. It contains a well-wish and the source of the well-wish. This well-wish is the most distinctive well-wish in all of Scripture.

Him who is and who was and who is to come = God the Father (Isaiah 41:4; Heb. 13:8; Rev. 1:8, 17; 4:8; 16:5).

4. Seven Spirits who are before His throne = There is significant debate concerning whether the Holy Spirit or angels is intended by John.

Those who support Holy Spirit as the seven spirits argue:

- (1) Isaiah 11:2-3 describes seven benefits of the Spirit in the Septuagint (LXX).
- (2) Revelation 1:4 seems to be focusing on a trinitarian representation of the Godhead.
- (3) Zechariah 4 indicates that seven lamps represent the "eyes of the Lord" throughout the earth. This is connected with the Spirit (Zech. 4:6).
- (4) "Seven spirits" expresses the Spirit's perfection. This idea is derived from the symbolic use of the number seven to denote completeness.
- (5) Angelic beings would not be included among the Divine greeters.
- (6) Christ holds the seven spirits, which follows the defined relationship of the Holy Spirit to God the Father and the Son in the New Testament (Rom. 8:9, John 15:26).

Those who support an angelic reference:

- (1) The term spirit is used in the New Testament to refer to angels.
- (2) The seven spirits are before the throne of God, which suggests a position of subordination, which would be inappropriate for the Holy Spirit.
- (3) Angels are given a very prominent place in the Revelation throughout.
- (4) Luke 9:26 and 1 Tim. 5:21 place angelic beings in positions of honor equal to that of the Father and the Son.
- (5) Jesus Christ is never mentioned in trinitarian type passages following the Holy Spirit. The order is always God the father, God the Son and God the Spirit.

There is not enough evidence to be dogmatic either way. However, we support angelic beings because there is not one example of the Holy Spirit greeting believers as a part of a salutation in all of the New Testament.

Revelation 1:5A

and from (1) Jesus Christ, (2) the faithful witness, (3) the first-born of the dead, and the (4) ruler of the kings of the earth.

1. Jesus Christ = the third well-wisher indicated by John and described with three important phrases.
2. The faithful witness = the one who has shown his testimony through death. Therefore, Jesus is faithful in His communication of the Revelation.
3. The first-born of the dead = Jesus is the first member of a new people who have triumphed over death, (1 Cor. 15:23).
4. Ruler of the kings of the earth = depicts the Lord's universal sovereignty. John presents Jesus as the One whose death, resurrection and exaltation is sure.

Revelation 1:5b-6

(1) To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood, and He has made (2) us {to be} (3) a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him {be} the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

1. To Him = Revelation 5b-6 is a doxology to Jesus Christ. A doxology is a short Christian poem that ascribes glory to God the Father. Here, Jesus is ascribed glory because of His salvific deeds for the elect of God.
2. Us = those who follow the Lord, His elect, both Jew and Gentile (John 10:1b and Gal. 3:29). Since John identified himself as a bond-servant, the "us" is a reference to all bond-servants.
3. A kingdom = Parallel Scripture confirms that we (the elect of God) are a kingdom. We are now a kingdom, not going to be a kingdom (Rev. 5:9-10; Acts 26:18; John 18:36; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9 (aliens); Col. 1:13).

This doxology expresses a great truth: because Jesus loved us, he freed us, which enabled Him to make us a kingdom.

Revelation 1:7

Behold, He is (1) coming with the (2) clouds, and (3) every eye will see Him, (4) even those who pierced Him; and (5) all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen.

1. The first explicit prophecy of the book = coming (verb=*erchomai*); coming from one point to another. No explicit reference is given concerning what the Lord's destination is.
2. Clouds = associated with the Lord's return in Acts 1:9-11, I Thessalonians 4:17, and Matthew 24:30. This is the first indirect reference to the book of Daniel in the Revelation. Daniel 7:13-14 provides the backdrop for the return of the Son of Man. The Revelation presents a detailed exposition of Daniel 7. We shall discuss this in detail later.
3. Every eye = universalistic (both Jews and Gentiles as indicated by the phrase "those who pierced Him.")
4. Those who pierced Him = Israel and Romans - Acts 7:51-52; John 19:31, 37; ca. Zechariah 12:10
5. All the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him = refers to mourning out of despair at the return of Christ by the wicked. This is the sense of Matthew 24:30.

While some would argue that Revelation 1:7 is a reference to the Lord's return at Armageddon, a closer examination supports the parousia of Christ. This is when He gathers His church to heaven and begins to punish the wicked on earth with His Day of the Lord's wrath. John uses the future tense to refer to the mourning of the wicked, i.e. they will mourn. John indicates that the wicked begin to mourn when the Lord is seen coming with the clouds and not before.

Question: wouldn't the wicked have already experienced God's wrath in the form of the trumpets and bowl judgments if this were an Armageddon return? It is inconceivable that the wicked have experienced the wrath of God before the Lord's return at Armageddon, but have not mourned. The only indication in the book of Revelation of the wicked mourning occurs in Revelation 6:15-17, which depicts the beginning of the Day of the Lord. (See later discussion on Revelation 6:12-17.) John indicates that the response of the wicked to the trumpet and bowl judgments is either a lack of repentance or men blasphemed God, but no mourning.

Revelation 1:8

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

1. The use of the phrase, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" has led to a debate. Is God the Father or God the Son referred to in verse 8? In the parallel passages of Rev. 1:17; 21:6; 22:1, Christ is equated with Almighty God. Yet, the Father is consistently identified with the same titles. Trying to decide which member of the Godhead is identified in verse 8 is impossible. It is as if both members are speaking at the same time. This may be closer to the truth John intends. This prophecy stands as the unanimous consent of God the Father and God the Son.

Revelation 1:9

I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the (1) tribulation and (2) kingdom and (3) perseverance {which are} in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos, because (4) of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

1. Tribulation (*thlipsis*) = same Greek word used in the phrase "great tribulation" - Matt. 24:21; (John 16:33; Matt. 24:29; Acts 14:22; Rev. 2:22, 7:14.) Interestingly, the definite article is used. In other words, *the* tribulation is John's focus. Not the *great tribulation*, but *the tribulation* that is consistently connected with Jesus Christ (Col. 1:24).

2. Kingdom = the millennial kingdom spoken of in Revelation 20. See Luke 12:32, 22:29; 1 Thessalonians 2:12, 2 Thessalonians 1:5; James 2:5.

3. Perseverance (*pierasmos*) - putting to a test, ca. Rev. 3:10; 13:10; 14:11-12 (2:2-3). Perseverance is the true mark of a believer in the face of tribulation (Matt. 13:21). As Jesus persevered, we too follow Him.

4. Because of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus = John explains the reason he came to be on the island of Patmos. See Revelation 1:2 above.

Revelation 1:10

I was (1) in the Spirit (2) on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a (3) loud voice (4) like {the sound} of a trumpet,

1. In the Spirit = This phrase occurs four times in the Revelation (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10). This phrase "is an idiom that refers to the fact that John's revelatory experience took place not "in the body" but rather "in the spirit," i.e., in a vision trance..." (Aune, *Revelation* 1-5, p. 83)

2. On the Lord's day = Sunday

3. A loud voice = This noun phrase is used twenty-two times in Revelation and is compared to the blast of a trumpet, the sound of thunder, and sound of roaring water. In each case, a divine being or angelic being is delivering a significant message. Compare 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

4. Like a trumpet = is a figure of speech (simile). It is used to compare two things in a specific way. The voice and the blast of a trumpet are alike. The emphasis is on the loudness of the voice. Compare 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

Revelation 1:11

saying, (1) "Write in a book what you see, and send {it} to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

1. The loud voice instructs John to write what he sees in a book.

Revelation 1:12 – 13a

And I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; and in the middle of the lampstands (1) one like a son of man,

1. One like a son of man = This phrase also appears in Daniel 7:13 and 10:16. The description that follows and that appears in Daniel 10:5-6 would suggest that the same person is represented—the Messiah.

The phrase "Son of Man" is Jesus' favorite self-designation. All agree that it is taken from Daniel 7:13-14. However, there is little agreement concerning its precise meaning and significance. *Like a son of man* is unique to the book of Daniel in the Old Testament. The phrase *Son of Man* appears 80 plus times in the New Testament. In the gospel of John, *Son of Man* occurs 10 times. In John's gospel, Morris indicates four plus issues of concern (Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 172-173):

- A. Jesus used the term because of its lack of political complications.
- B. Jesus used the term because of its divinity overtones.
- C. Jesus used the term because of its connections with a future kingdom.
- D. Jesus used the term because of its human undertones.

Morris adds, "Here [in John's Gospel] the term is always associated either with Christ's heavenly glory or with the salvation He came to bring (Morris, John, p. 173)." As the go-between heaven and earth, Jesus is the unique one invested with authority. That John uses it to describe what he sees is important. John's understanding of the term is informed by both Daniel 7:13-14 and the Lord's usage while on earth. Jesus states in John 5:27, "and He [God the Father] gave Him [Jesus] authority to execute judgment, because He is [a] Son of Man." Luke 5:24 states, "But, so that you [Scribes and Pharisees] may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." The Son of Man is one with authority: (1) to forgive sins, or (2) to judge sins.

As a son of man (human), the Lord is clearly able to judge humanity. Any argument that God's judgments are unfair because He cannot understand the impact of sin on man's ability to chose righteousness is silenced. Christ became a man, experienced "every" aspect of sin, but sinned not. He is an experientially qualified judge.

Having heard the voice behind him, John turns and immediately designates the person speaking as *one like a son of man*. All that Scriptures indicates about this person is to inform our understanding at this point.

Revelation 1:13b-16

...clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His breast with a golden girdle. And His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire; and His feet {were} like burnished bronze, when it has been caused to glow in a furnace, and His voice {was} like the sound of many waters. And in His right hand He held seven stars; and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.

Notice the similarities between Revelation 1:13b-16 and Daniel 10:5-6:

<p>Revelation 1:13b-16 Robe reached down to His feet Chest girded with a golden sash Head and hair white like wool, snow Eyes like flame of fire</p>	<p>Daniel 10:5-6 Dressed in linen Waist girded with pure gold of Uphaz Face like lightning Eyes like flaming torches</p>
---	---

Feet like burnished bronze Voice like many waters Mouth give words like sword Face like sun shining in its strength	Arms and feet like polished bronze Words sound like roaring Body like beryl
--	---

That same person who appeared to Daniel is the same person who appeared to John in the context of an angelic being, communicating prophetic truth about the end times, is confirmed. In both cases, He is called *One like a son of man*. This forms an important connection between the book of Daniel and the Revelation.

The heavenly being that appears in Daniel 10:2-9 and speaks words is not the same heavenly being that appears in Daniel 10:10-18. The pre-incarnate Christ is the first heavenly being described. However, the vision and words of the first speaker ends at Daniel 10:9.

The second heavenly being is most likely a "strong angel." The second heavenly being states in Daniel 10:13 that Michael is a chief prince of which there are others. Daniel 10:21 indicates that this heavenly being "stands firmly." This is the key to his identity. The Hebrew says literal, "shows himself strong." The word literally means "to be/become strong." This heavenly being and Michael are "strong angels." In the Revelation, strong angels are encountered again in their primary function, which is the proclamation of revelation (Rev 5:2; 10:1; 18:21).

Revelation 1:17

And when I saw Him, (1) I fell at His feet as a dead man. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last,

1. I fell at His feet as a dead man = John's response at encountering the Son of God is similar to that of Daniel (10:9).

Revelation 1:18

and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.

Revelation 1:19

"Write therefore (1) the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall take place after these things.

1. A possible key to understanding the composition of the book of Revelation.

The things...have seen => Christ the revelator in chapter one.
 The things...are => seven churches in chapter two and three.
 The things...shall take place...=> in chapters 4-22

However, this outline is overly simplistic and has very little exegetical support. This is particularly the case when one realizes that there is no time difference between the vision of Christ in chapter one of the Revelation and the events of chapters two and three.

2. One must be careful at this point not to push the significance of this outline too far. The significance of the relationship of the church to Revelation 4-22 cannot be determined simply by recognizing the absence of the term *church* from these critical chapters. The absence of the term *church* from the Old Testament certainly does not mean that there is no applicable value for the church in the Old Testament.

Revelation 1:20

As for the (1) mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

1. Mystery = Musterion occurs four times in the Revelation (1:20; 10:7; 17:5,7). Anything spoken of as a *mystery* in the Bible requires divine insight. The correct interpretation necessitated help from God.

2. Great care should be given to the text of Scripture at this point. Hermeneutically, the Bible offers insight into how meaning is discovered in the text. Clearly, the correct interpretation of the text is not far-fetched. As stars represent angels and lampstands represent churches allegorically, we see an unsophisticated method. That the text explains the meaning of the *stars* and *lampstands* suggests that when no explanation is given the solution will be simple and uncomplicated. We shall speak to this issue repeatedly throughout this commentary.

□

[Next Section: Chapter Two - The Seven Churches, Part 1](#)

□

Revelation
COMMENTARY
WWW.REVELATIONCOMMENTARY.ORG

Questions? Comments?
Send us an email!

revelationcommentary.org

© Sola Scriptura

info@solagroup.org


SOLA SCRIPTURA

Produced and Developed by [Sola Scriptura](#)

□



□

Previous Section: Chapter One - Prologue

□

CHAPTER TWO - THE SEVEN CHURCHES, PART 1

Introduction

With the conclusion of the introductory matters of chapter one, John begins his presentation. The seven churches identified in Revelation 1:11 are specifically addressed. Each receives a description of its present condition with a necessary warning and a call to the overcomers to persevere. Of the seven churches, four demonstrate a spirit of compromise—Ephesus, Pergamum, Thyatira, and Laodicea. The church at Sardis is dead and the churches at Smyrna and Philadelphia are presented as the faithful churches. Smyrna is the physically persecuted church and Philadelphia is the physically protected church.

With two thousand years separating the seven churches of Asia and the modern churches of the world, the question of relevance is critical. What is the relationship between the seven churches mentioned in Revelation and modern churches? Some commentators have tried to make the case that the seven churches of Revelation depict seven periods of church history. This view is woefully inadequate. First, there is no explicit scriptural support for this view. Second, the seven periods of church history must be subjectively determined, which undermines credibility and fosters date setting. Third, such an approach deprives the first century churches of any application for their time.

However, the messages, themselves, yield the necessary clues to answer the question of relevancy. For believers of all ages the issue is the same in connection with the Son of Man: forgiveness or judgment. The Lord instructs six of the seven churches that there are both immediate and long-term consequences to their deeds. The threat of immediate discipline for a lack of repentance is given to the churches of Ephesus, Pergamum, Thyatira, and Laodicea. Equally, each church is also warned about the possible rewards and punishments to be experienced at the Lord's coming (*parousia*). This indicates that the messages to the seven churches have both a "near" application and a "far" application--both a temporal and an eternal application. The fact that each message ends with the same trademark: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches," is compelling. That the term *church* is plural extends the message and application to the church universal. Believers in two thousand AD can claim the same promises and fear the same warnings.

Henry M. Morris, in his commentary, *The Revelation Record*, indicates that each church receives a message composed of seven parts: (1) salutation; (2) identification of Christ as sender; (3) assertion of knowledge; (4) comment and exhortation; (5) promise (or threatened) coming; (6) admonition to heed; and (7) promised blessing.

Revelation 2:1

(1) "To the angel of the (2) church in Ephesus write: The (3a) One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the (3b) One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this:

1. Salutation = angel (supernatural being)
2. Church in Ephesus = written to the church in the city of Ephesus, not the city of Ephesus itself. This is a compromised church.
3. Identification of Christ as sender = sovereignty and intimacy
 - a. One who holds the seven stars in His right hand – refers back to Revelation 1:16 and 20. The right hand represents the position of power, authority, and safety. Jesus has sovereign

oversight of His churches. He is able to command their obedience and to discipline them appropriately if they do not. Standing in the midst of the churches, the Lord can easily move them out of their place.

b. One who walks among the seven golden lampstands – refers back to Revelation 1:13 and 20. Jesus has an intimate relationship with His churches.

This is the Son of Man who has both the authority to forgive sins and judge sins. His word is final.

Revelation 2:2-4

(1) I know (2) your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot endure evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them {to be} false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. (3) But I have {this} against you, that you have left your first love.

1. Assertion of Knowledge = makes it clear that the Lord is intimately aware of the conduct of each church.

2. Comment = the Lord explains his perception of the church at Ephesus. Their hands have been busy with the work of the kingdom. Their heads are clear about doctrine. ("For my name's sake" is a specific reason for persecution per Jesus' instruction in the Olivet Discourse, Matthew 24:9)

3. Criticism = While the Ephesians had hands and heads committed to the Lord, their hearts were far from Him.

Revelation 2:5-6

(1) Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am (2) coming to you, and (3) will remove your lampstand out of its place-- unless you repent. Yet, this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the (4) Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

1. Exhortation = the Lord exhorts the Ephesians to repent of their heartless commitment. Notice that a true heart commitment is evidenced by the quality of the work, not the works themselves.

2. Coming = this verb does not refer to the Parousia of Christ, but an immediate visitation of judgment from Christ. This coming is conditional. If they repent, He will not come in judgment. This is not the case as it relates to the Parousia of Christ.

3. Remove your lampstand = two entities are identified in the Revelation as lampstands: all the churches in a particular city and the two witnesses of Revelation 11. It is only to the church at Ephesus that the Lord promises *to remove* their lampstand if they do not repent. To remove the lampstand indicates loss of position. As the first church listed because of its love, they stand to lose position among the churches, a judgment to be sure in keeping with their position of honor.

4. Nicolaitans = comes from the combined Greek words *nika* (he conquers) and *loan* (people). The nature and importance of this group will be highlighted in Revelation 2:14.

Revelation 2:7

(1) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. (2) To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the (3) tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

1. Admonition = all seven churches receive this concluding admonition, which Aune indicates can have two nuances: (1) what is said has a deeper, hidden meaning or (2) the hearer must obey what is given. Both nuances are intended. The inclusion of "the churches" demands a near/far application.

The Lord Jesus is reported to have used a similar statement by Matthew, Mark and Luke (Mark 4:9, 23; Matthew 11:15, 13:9, 43; Luke 8:8, 14:35). In each case, the saying is a queue to look deeper into the Lord's words. The "simple sense" is the basic story. The intended significance is the spiritual truth beneath the basic story.

2. Overcomes = this Greek verb *nikan* (from which we get our English word *nike* which means *to conquer*).

Nikan can refer in a metaphorical sense to either an athletic contest or military battle.

One can be an overcomer in two ways in the New Testament: (1) salvific and (2) sanctification. The difference is one of conditionality. John states in I John 5:4-5, "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" This is clearly salvific in nature. Our salvation is not conditional. 1 John 5:1 indicates that to be born of God, one must believe. Belief is not mere intellectual assent, but life transforming commitment to Jesus Christ. The result is eternal life.

However, the overcomer in Revelation is vastly different. The overcomer in Revelation is one who perseveres to the end. He remains faithful under difficult circumstances. "The overcomer is the individual Christian who enjoys special benefits in eternity for refusing to give up his faith in spite of persecution during life on earth." (J.C. Dillow, *The Reign of the Servant Kings*, 481) Revelation lists thirteen rewards for the overcomer:

- (1) Authority over nations (2:26)
- (2) Name not erased from book of life (3:5)
- (3) Inherits the earth (21:7)
- (4) New name on a white stone (2:17)
- (5) Eat of hidden manna (2:17)
- (6) Pillar in temple (3:12)
- (7) Sits on Christ's throne (3:21)
- (8) Tree of life (2:7)
- (9) Not hurt by second death (2:11)
- (10) Morning star (2:28)
- (11) White Garments (3:5)
- (12) Name of God, city, and Christ written on him (3:12)
- (13) Name confessed before the Father and His angels (3:5)

The rewards and the warnings make no sense unless some believers will not receive them because of their unfaithfulness. Why warn a person about something he cannot lose? We can debate what is lost, but there is no debate that something is lost with grave consequences to follow (See I Cor. 3:16 and I John 2:28).

Those individuals in the seven churches who are not overcomers are promised:

- (1) War with the sword from the Lord's mouth (2:16)
- (2) To be thrown into the great tribulation (2:22)
- (3) Children killed with the pestilence (2:23)
- (4) To receive according to their deeds (2:23)
- (5) Come like a thief (3:3)
- (6) Spit out of the Lord's mouth (3:16)
- (7) Reproof and discipline (3:19)

True believers do not have to persevere to win salvation, nor must they be faithful to keep it. Any conditionality automatically removes the issue from a consideration of salvation to the issue of sanctification and rewards. The overcomer in Revelation can lose his reward. It is not eternal. To compromise in the face of physical danger will have severe consequences during the persecution by Antichrist and when one stands before the Lord in judgment.

The apostle Paul states in 2 Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." Paul indicates a "pay back" for the "bad" done in the body. What the "pay back" is for bad deeds is not indicated, but there is a "pay back."

3. Tree of life = first stated promise to the overcomers. *The tree of life* is first mentioned in Genesis 3:22. This tree stood in the Garden of Eden. This tree was not forbidden to Adam and

Eve. Whether they ate from it before the fall is not certain. Only after their sin does God forbid their eating from it. If Adam and Eve had eaten from "the tree of life," they would have removed the curse of death—immortality. That the faithful, who already are immortal, will be able to eat from this tree indicates that immortality is not the benefit the righteous will derive from this tree.

Revelation 2:8

"And to the (1) angel of the church in (2) Smyrna write: (3) The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this:

1. Salutation = Angel (supernatural being)
2. Smyrna = the physically persecuted church
3. Identification of Christ as Sender = *The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life* is a fit description of the Lord. It refers to Revelation 1:18. This is a very appropriate description of the Lord for this church. As the Sovereign of time and One who has experienced death, the Lord's description is an encouragement to the Smyrnaeans. As the persecuted church, the Smyrnaeans may face death, but the Lord will raise them as He Himself was raised.

Revelation 2:9

(1) 'I know your (2) tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

1. Assertion of Knowledge = the Sovereign of time knows all things.
2. Comment = *tribulation* is used to describe John's situation in Revelation 1:9. It is used throughout the N.T. to describe the difficulties of believers at the hand of the wicked.

Revelation 2:10

(1) 'Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. (2) Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

1. Exhortation = *Do not fear* indicates specific events, which the Smyrnaeans were not to be afraid of. The imprisonment is intended to test them. The Smyrnaeans also have to look forward to ten days of tribulation.
2. Promise = "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life." Physical death results in eternal resurrected life. James 1:12 indicates that the "crown of life" is God's payment for persevering through suffering.

Revelation 2:11

(1) 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. (2) He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second (3) death.'

1. Admonition and Heed = same as above.
2. Promised Blessing = the second stated promise of blessing to the overcomer. *Shall not be hurt* carries the idea *to harm unjustly*. For the overcomer, the second death would be an unjust hurt.
3. The *second death* is defined in Revelation 20:14 as the lake of fire. Death in its essence is a separation. If the lake of fire is the second death and the lake of fire is the home of the wicked then the second death must be the spiritual separation of the wicked from the presence of God. The *first death* occurred in connection with the sin of Adam. The second death will occur in connection with the judgment of the second Adam. Question: why warn believers about something, which is not a possibility? Stated another way: will unfaithful believers be hurt by

the second death? It makes no sense to warn a person about something that cannot hurt them unless it really can hurt them. As is the case in other places, Scripture does not tell us what the exact consequences are for those who are unfaithful. We are not told how the second death will effect the unfaithful. The fact that it will have some effect is warning enough to be faithful.

Revelation 2:12

"And to the angel of the church in (1) Pergamum write: (2) The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this:

1. Pergamum = a church of compromise
2. Identification of Christ as Sender = refers back to Revelation 1:16. This "sharp two-edged sword" comes from the mouth of the Lord. The "sharp two-edged sword" is an instrument of war as seen in Revelation 2:16 and 19:15, 21. The "sharp two-edged sword" is not literal. The "sharp two-edged sword" is a figure of speech—metonymy of cause for effect. The spoken words of the Lord have the same effect that a "sharp two-edged sword" has. The result is the same—physical death.

Revelation 2:13

(1) 'I know (2) where you dwell, where (3) Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith, even in the days of (4) Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

1. Assertion of Knowledge = same as above.
2. Comment =
 - a. You live in a very difficult place.
 - b. You hold fast My name.
 - c. You did not deny My faith even in the face of the treat of death.
3. Satan's throne = is mentioned in Revelation 13:2 and 16:10. Throne is used throughout the New Testament to depict the place of official seat or chair of state. Matthew 5:34 states, "But I [Jesus] say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God...." Heaven is the official seat or chair of state for God Almighty. Why Pergamum is chosen as Satan's official seat is not indicated. However, this is where Satan lives.
4. Antipas = the first martyr mentioned in Revelation.

Revelation 2:14-15

(1) 'But I have a few things against you, because (1) you have there some who hold (2) the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, (3) to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit {acts of} immorality. (4) 'Thus you also have some who in the same way hold (5) the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

1. Criticism = Matthew 5:23 indicates that "to have something against another" prevents God's acceptance of one's gifts.
2. The teaching of Balaam = mentioned also in Jude 11 and 2 Peter 2:15. Both Jude and Peter indicate that the motive of Balaam's actions was money. However, Revelation 2:14 refers to Balaam's activities: (1) to cast a stumbling block;
3. (2) to eat meat sacrificed to an idol as an act of worship; and (3) to commit sexual immorality. After God prevented Balaam from cursing Israel at Balak's request, Balaam taught Balak the secret to Israel's destruction—compromise. Numbers 25:1-2 states that Israel played the harlot with the daughters of Moab, along with going to their sacrificial services, eating and worshipping the Moabite god, Baal. Because of Israel's sin, God instructed Moses to kill the leaders of the people. Twenty-four thousand individuals died. Thus, Balak got his wish. He did as Balaam instructed. It is in Numbers 31:16 that we later discover that Balaam taught Balak this strategy.

4. Thus = also = in the same way = a direct comparison is intended. The teachings of Balaam are the same as the teachings of the Nicolaitans.

5. The teaching of the Nicolaitans = unlike the Ephesians who hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans, some in Pergamum tolerated their teaching. Balaam/Nicolaitans taught people to compromise with the religious culture around them. This is the reason God hates the teaching of the Nicolaitans. It specifically breaks the first commandment of Moses.

Revelation 2:16

(1) 'Repent therefore; or else I am (2) coming to you quickly, and (3) I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.

1. Exhortation = repent

2. Coming to you quickly = occurs five times in Revelation (2:16; 3:11; 22:7, 12 and 20). Revelation 22:7, 12 and 20 refers to the Lord's parousia. Describes *how* the Lord will come—quickly. Revelation 2:16 and 3:11 refer to an immediate judgment before the Lord's parousia.

3. War... sword of My mouth = is a metonymy of cause for effect. This is a promise of physical death if repentance does not occur.

Revelation 2:17

(1) 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. (2) To him who overcomes, to him I will give {some} of the (3a) hidden manna, and I will give him a (3b) white stone, and a (3c) new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'

1. Admonition and Heed = same as above.

2. Promised Blessing = See nuke discussion above.

3. The overcomer will receive three things:

a. Hidden manna = manna refers to the miraculous feeding of Israel in the wilderness detailed in Exodus 16:4-36. Manna is identified as "bread from heaven" in John 6:31-33. The "hidden manna" refers to Exodus 16:31-33 where a jar of manna was placed in the ark for the following generations to remember God's provision throughout the wilderness wanderings. Unlike the manna of the Israelites that spoiled after one day, the manna in the ark never spoiled even after hundreds of years. This figure of speech indicates that the victorious bond-servants will be given the "manna" that lasts forever.

b. A white stone = possibly a special vote

c. A new name = as was the habit of the Lord to give his followers a new name, the overcomers are promised new names. Names, which will reflect the victory achieved by perseverance in the face of persecution. As Saul became Paul and Simon became Cephas (Peter), all overcomers will receive a new name fitting their faithful lifestyle on earth.

Revelation 2:18

(1) "And to the angel of the church in (2) Thyatira write: (3) The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this:

1. Salutation

2. Thyatira = a church of compromise

3. Identification of Christ as Sender = the title "The Son of God" occurs 46 times in the New Testament. It occurs only once in the book of Revelation. This lone exception is unique. This is the only example of the title used with a transitive verb. Instead a description, Jesus is speaking as "The Son of God." What is it about the church at Thyatira that demands such a unique testimony? It receives the longest message. It is probably the most difficult to understand and perhaps the most unimportant of the seven cities. Any doubt about the identity of the person speaking in Revelation 1:12-16 is dispelled at this point, particularly in light of the

subsequent phrases that repeat Revelation 1:14b and 15a.

Revelation 2:19

(1) 'I know your (2) deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first.

1. Assertion of knowledge = same as above.
2. Comments = the deeds of the Thyatirans are described by four nouns:
 - a. Love = mental attitude.
 - b. Faith = dependability or faithfulness.
 - c. Service = attending someone for the purpose of performing a task.
 - d. Perseverance = the correct way to respond to suffering by the overcomer.

Revelation 2:20-23

(1) 'But I have {this} against you, (2) that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, (2a) who calls herself a prophetess, and (2b) she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray, so that they commit {acts of} immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. (2c) 'And I gave her time to repent; and she does not want to repent of her immorality. (3a) 'Behold, I will cast her upon a bed {of sickness}, and (3b) those who commit adultery with her into (3c) great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. (3d) 'And I will kill her children with pestilence; and (4) all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.

1. Criticism of the Unfaithful in Thyratia = *but* indicates strong contrast with what precedes.
2. The indictment = "You tolerate the woman Jezebel..." The Lord states that the Thyatirans "tolerate the woman Jezebel." Revelation 2:24 indicates that some in Thyatira "do not hold to this teaching." This suggests that the meaning of "tolerate" in verse 20 is that some have actually adopted the teachings of this woman. This woman is the personification of a woman who lived in Israel eight hundred years earlier. The name *Jezebel* is picked up from 1 Kings 16:31. An evil woman who influenced King Ahab of Israel to worship the Canaanite gods. If not the most wicked, Ahab was certainly among the worst kings of the ten northern tribes. His wife died the worst death of any person among the kings of Israel—eaten by dogs. She was despicable. It was in no way a compliment to be called Jezebel. The Lord's choice of the name suggests the level of hate He has for this woman.
 - 2a. Who calls herself a prophetess = she has no authorization from God at all. She is self-appointed.
 - 2b. She teaches and leads my bond-servants astray = what she teaches is not directly stated. However, the impact of her teachings can be seen in the conduct of the bond-servants. That the bond-servants are true followers of Christ can be inferred because "The Son of God" calls them "bond-servants." She teaches the bond-servants to commit fornication (illicit sexual activity) and "to eat things sacrificed to idols" as an act of worship. Paul taught the Corinthians that in and of itself eating meat sacrificed to an idol was not wrong (1 Cor. 8). However, to eat as an act of worship is inherently wrong. To eat with the mindset that the idol is a true god is wrong.
 - 2c. I gave her time to repent = indicates that this problem had existed for some time. The Lord requested *repentance*. How the Lord communicated the need for change in the life of this woman is not indicated. The meaning of "to repent" is indicated in the statement, "she does not want to repent of her immorality." To *repent* means *to turn away from*. This woman flatly refuses to change her conduct.
3. Threat = the willful refusal to turn away from cultural compromise results in direct action from the Lord.
 - 3a. Behold, I will cast her upon a bed [of sickness] = indicates that this event will happen in the immediate future. *To cast upon a bed* is a figure of speech. The verb *ballo* is used in the New Testament to refer to someone sick in bed. Matthew 8:6 and Mark 7:30 support this conclusion.

The Bible is replete with examples of individuals thrown down with sickness because of sin. What sickness is not indicated, however, the degree of sickness is parallel to the punishment indicated for those who follow Jezebel's teachings.

3b. And [I will cast] those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation = indicates a punishment for those who have joined in with Jezebel's cultural compromise. *Adultery* can be either literal or figurative. It should be understood as the literal breaking of the marriage vows. There is nothing in the text to indicate that married individuals were not participating in Jezebel's activities. Just as they were physically eating meat offered to idols, they were engaging in illicit sexual activity. The penalty for this conduct is "great tribulation."

3c. Great tribulation = is used again in Revelation 7:14 with the definite article. Matthew 24:21 records the Lord's prediction of a future time of "great tribulation." In Matthew 24, the Lord indicates that He will return after a "great tribulation." Revelation 2:22 indicates that unfaithful bond-servants will be cast into a "great tribulation." Revelation 7:14 posits that an incalculable host suddenly appears in heaven who come out from the midst of "the great tribulation." That members of the church at Thyatira will be cast into "a great tribulation" demands the presence of the church of Thyatira on earth during "a great tribulation." This effectively places this punishment outside the eschatological "great tribulation" connected with Daniel's Seventieth Week. However, the fact that unfaithful members of the church at Thyatira could suffer "a great tribulation" certainly leaves room for the church to suffer "the great tribulation."

3d. And I will kill her children with pestilence = a case can be made for either physical or spiritual children. The outcome is the same—death. *Pestilence* is spoken of as the method of judgment. This event is specifically indicated to be authorized by the Lamb who is "The Son of God."

4. All the churches will know = this indicates that all churches will be aware of what is going to happen to each other. Each church is promised to be dealt with according to their deeds. Thus, every church will be able to determine the nature of every other church's obedience or disobedience. A church will either be persecuted for righteousness (Smyrna), protected for faithfulness (Philadelphia), or killed for compromise (Sardis, Laodicea, Thyatira, Ephesus or Pergamun).

Revelation 2:24

'But I say to you, (1) the rest who are in Thyatira, (2) who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, (3) as they call them--I place no other burden on you.

1. Commendation of the Faithful = "the rest who are in Thyatira," this is one of the places in Revelation 2-3 where the angel of the church is no longer addressed, but a specific group within the church receive direct address. These are clearly individuals who have nothing to do with Jezebel.

2. Who do not hold this teaching = this group has completely stayed away from this teaching.

3. The deep things of Satan, as they call them = taken at face value means that Jezebel and her children had association with Satan personally. The church at Smyrna faced a "synagogue of Satan," the church at Pergamum lived "where Satan's throne is," and the church at Thyatira fought against "the deep things of Satan." The level of satanic involvement in the church should not be underestimated.

Revelation 2:25

(1) 'Nevertheless what you have, hold fast (2) until I come.

1. Exhortation = while the Lord does not want to add another burden to his faithful bond-servants in Thyatira, they must "hold fast." The issue is urgency. Be all the more tenacious to not yield to the compromise that surrounds them, is the sense here.

2. Until I come = is a clear reference to the last days, since Christ hadn't come by the time Revelation was written, generally accepted to be approximately AD 90-95. (Revelation 2:5;

2:10; 2:16-17; here; 3:3 and 3:11) This represents the far application of Revelation 2-3.

Revelation 2:26-29

(1) 'And he who overcomes, and (2) he who keeps My deeds until the end, (2a) to him I will give authority over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received {authority} from My Father; (2b) and I will give him the morning star. 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

1. Promise = unlike previously stated, here the overcomer is clearly defined.

2. He who keeps My deeds until the end = defines the overcomer. One does not normally speak of "keeping" or "obeying" *deeds* or *works*. *Tareo* can mean *to obey*, but it also can mean *to guard*, which is the better sense here. *He who guards My works* is the literal sense of the phrase. The particular works of Christ are those which establish and maintain local churches. *Until the end* refers to the parousia of Christ, which is mentioned in verse 25.

2a. I will give authority over the nations = is the first reward given to those who guard the works of the Lord (the overcomer). This phrase and the subsequent ideas are modeled after Psalm 2:8-9. Christ is giving His authority to His bond-servants who are overcomers over the nations. The nations (tov ethnon) should be translated "the Gentiles." The overcomers will rule (exercise the Lord's sovereignty) over the Gentile nations. Jesus promised the apostles rulership over the twelve tribes of Israel," (Matt. 19:28). King David is promised a resurrection from the dead to rule over Israel and Judah, (Jeremiah 30:9).

2b. I will give him the morning star = since there is only one *morning* star, but all overcomers are promised it, we know this is a figure of speech. The Lord's point here is this: He will grant great honor.

□

[Next Section: Chapter Three - The Seven Churches, Part 2](#)

□

Revelation
COMMENTARY
WWW.REVELATIONCOMMENTARY.ORG

Questions? Comments?
Send us an email!

revelationcommentary.org

© Sola Scriptura

info@solagroup.org


SOLA SCRIPTURA

Produced and Developed by [Sola Scriptura](#)

□



□

Previous Section: Chapter Two - The Seven Churches, Part 1

□

CHAPTER THREE - THE SEVEN CHURCHES, PART 2

Revelation 3:1

And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: (1) he who has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars, says this: I know your deeds, that you have a (2) name that you are alive, but you are dead.

1. Identification of Christ as Sender = He who has the seven Spirits of God. Each of the previous descriptive pictures of Christ associated with the four previous churches can be found in Revelation 1:12-18. Revelation 1:16 indicates that the Lord had "seven stars" in his right hand. John identifies "the seven spirits of God" with the seven stars. This gives us the connection back to Revelation 1:12-18.

2. Name that you are alive, but you are dead = *Name* refers to reputation. *Life* and *death* are figures of speech. There are not physically dead. Rather, the point is that they lack spiritual vitality.

Revelation 3:2

Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, (1) which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God.

1. Which were about to die = the metaphor changes at this point. All is not dead. There remains life, which was about to die.

Revelation 3:3

Remember therefore what you have received and heard; and keep {it} and repent. (1) If therefore (2) you will not wake up, (3) I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour (4) I will come upon you.

1. If = indicates a condition. The potential to sleep is possible. Those who wake up will not be caught by surprise.

2. You will not wake up = this is the opposite of repentance.

3. I will come like a thief = the motif of coming like a thief is used several times by the Lord (Rev. 16:15). Scripture also indicates that the Day of the Lord will come like a thief (I Thess. 5:2; I Peter 3:10).

Scriptures use of the metaphor of an unexpected break-in by a nocturnal robber has lead some to apply a false principle of hermeneutics to Scripture. Every time the phrase *like a thief in the night* is used, the reader automatically assumes that the text is talking about the same event, at the same time with the same result. This is not good Bible interpretation.

The Lord Jesus indicates in John 10:10 that "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy..." In context, the thief comes to steal the sheep, kill the sheep for food, or to destroy the sheep. Thus, the *purpose* of a thief is clear. At any given opportunity the thief will do any one or all three of the above. His *modus operandi* is to come at night and without any previous warning. Most "thieving" takes place under the cover of darkness.

Therefore, in considering any text dealing with the thief metaphor, the reader must ask two questions: (1) what is the purpose of the thief, and (2) what is his *modus operandi*? In Revelation 3:3, the reason the Lord's return will be like a thief is because the Sardianians are spiritually asleep. Spiritual alertness would have prevented the Lord's return from being a secret.

4. I will come upon you = gives the purpose of the Lord's coming as a thief. He comes for destruction. This indicates that the coming of the Lord has two aspects: (1) He comes in a positive sense, and (2) He comes in a negative sense for believers. Those unprepared for His return will suffer the consequences. He does not explain what the precise consequences will be, but they are to be avoided at all cost.

Revelation 3:4

But you have a few people in Sardis who (1) have not soiled their garments; and they will (2) walk with Me in white; for they are worthy.

1. Have not soiled their garments = is a figure of speech referring to one's moral or spiritual condition. Repeatedly, the Revelation will focus on the condition of the clothing of the righteous. *Washed robes* and *linen clean and bright* are characteristics of those faithful to the Lord.

2. Walk with Me in white = is a reward of the faithful.

Revelation 3:5-6

He who overcomes shall thus be clothed in (1) white garments; and I will not (2) erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels. He, who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

1. White garments = bright white garments are the clothing of the heavenly (Luke 9:29, Rev. 19:8).

2. Erase his name from the book of life = is a debated phrase. For those who believe one can lose his or her salvation, the meaning is clear. For those of us who see eternal life as just that—eternal life, we struggle.

The book of life can refer to two concepts: (1) physical life on earth, or (2) spiritual (eternal life) from God. The first occurrence of a "book" containing the names of the righteous is Exodus 32:30-35. Moses offers the erasure of his name from God's book in exchange for the forgiveness of the people who had sinned. Among the sinners, were both Aaron (the chief priest) and the people (some saved and some not saved) indicating that the book contains the names of both sinners and saints. This book is therefore, a book of the *physically* alive on the earth. This is born out by the fact that every explicit reference to the *book of life* in the Old Testament refers to those *physically* alive on the earth (Exe 32:32ff; Ps. 69:28; Isa 4:3; Dan 12:1; Mal 3:16-17).

The *Lamb's book of life*, however, refers to those eternally elected. Revelation 13:8 states, "All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the lamb who has been slain."

"All who dwell on the earth" is a technical phrase used in the book of Revelation to refer to unsaved men in opposition to God and His people. "Written from the foundation of the world" indicates that the earth-dwellers were never written in "the book of life of the Lamb." Therefore, their names could never be erased. Those written in the book cannot be erased because God knows the end from the beginning. Therefore, God would have known any event that would result in the erasure of a name from the foundation of the world. That God would have waited until the event occurs to erase their name is non-sense. Therefore, the book of life of the Lamb refers to the *spiritually* elect.

Revelation 3:7

And to the angel of (1) the church in Philadelphia write: (2) He (2a) who is holy, (2b) who is true, (2c) who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this:

1. The Church in Philadelphia = a faithful church promised physical protection.
2. He = Jesus, the One with keys of death and hades (Rev 1:18).
 - 2a. Who is holy = the Greek literally says, "The Holy." This particular adjective is rarely used to refer to Jesus in the New Testament (Mark 1:24/Luke 4:34; John 6:69; Acts 3:14; 4:27, 30). In John 6:69, Peter uses it as a title for the Lord. Jesus is the most unique set apart one for God's service in all of history.
 - 2b. Who is true = the Greek literally says, "The True." Again, John uses a word that is rarely used to refer to Jesus in the New Testament (Mark 12:14/Matt 22:16; John 7:18). Jesus is true as the Father is true (John 3:33 and 8:26).
 - 2c. Who has the key of David = Most see this as an allusion to Isaiah 22:22. It is commonly accepted that keys are a symbol of power and authority. The authority and power of David is possessed by the Lord. The extent of the Lord's power and authority is absolute. What He opens no one can shut and what He shuts no one can open.

Revelation 3:8

I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you (1) an open door which no one can shut, (2) because you have (2a) a little power, and have (2b) kept My word, and (2c) have not denied My name.

1. An open door which no one can shut = having established His credentials for just such an act, the Lord states explicitly that the Philadelphians have an open door. The metaphor of an open door is not explicitly identified.
2. Because = indicates the reason the Lord has placed "an open door" before the Philadelphians.
 - 2a. A little power = the term *power* refers to the ability to exert force in the performance of an action.
 - 2b. Kept My word = this is the second reason the Philadelphians have an open door.
 - 2c. Have not denied My name = is the third reason.

It is important to understand that the Lord places the open door before the Philadelphians after they have proven themselves worthy. Therefore, the open door is an after effect. In other words, the benefits of the open door come after proven oneself worthy. This helps us understand what the open door is.

Revelation 3:9

Behold, I will cause those of (1) the synagogue of Satan, (2) who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—I will make them come and (3) bow down at your feet, and make them know (4) that I have loved you.

1. The synagogue of Satan = a figure of speech referring not to a literal place, but a community of people who are characterized as liars.
2. Who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie = the purpose of the lying is not stated.
3. Bow down at your feet = is basically the idea of worship. Used 24 times in the Revelation, usually a heavenly being is the object, but in Revelation 3:9 humans are the objects. The Revelation teaches that overcomers will sit on thrones and be given the authority to judge (Rev 20:4a; 2:25-27).
4. That I have loved you = this is a past tense verb, i.e. God loved the Philadelphians when

they were suffering. Some might conclude that God does not love his people when He allows them to go thorough suffering. This is not the case.

The faithful Philadelphians will one day reign with Christ. One benefit will be to personally see their persecutors bow at their feet to receive judgment.

Revelation 3:10

(1) Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also (2) will keep you from (3) the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, (4) to test (5) those who dwell on the earth.

1. Because you have kept the word of My perseverance = in verse 8 above, John states the fact first and gives the supporting reasons afterwards. But in this verse the opposite is true--the reason is given first. It is important to understand that whatever the Philadelphians had to do to receive this promise is done before the promise is made. "You have kept" does not mean "you will keep." The Philadelphians obeyed the Lord's command to abide even in the face of persecution.

2. Will keep you from = this phrase has been tortured by scholars. It simply means, "to keep out." While driving along a country road recently, I noticed a sign on a gate that said, "keep out, no trespassing allowed." This is the idea here.

3. The hour of testing = is defined as (1) a future event; (2) a worldwide event; (3) an event of testing; (4) an event focused on the earth-dwellers.

There are two future worldwide tests: (1) a great tribulation (Dan 12:1; Matt 24:15-21; Rev 13:7-8); and (2) the Day of the Lord (Jer 30:7; Luke 21:35; Rev 6:17). Scripture explicitly promises that faithful followers of Jesus Christ will be delivered from the Day of the Lord (I Thess 5:1-11; Luke 21:34-36). There is no explicit promise that the elect will not face the persecution of Satan/Antichrist, in fact many will die as martyrs.

4. Test = peirasmos = has two primary meanings: (a) to test in the sense of trying to learn the nature or character of someone or something by subjecting them or it to extensive examination (Louw-Nida, § 27.46) or (b) to tempt in the sense of attempting to cause someone to sin (Louw-Nida, § 88.308).

5. Those who dwell upon the earth = this phrase occurs nine times in the Revelation. It always refers to unbelievers who are hostile to God and his people.

This verse has been fought over by both pretribulationists and posttribulationists alike. Both believe that the correct interpretation of this verse will settle the issue concerning the timing of the Lord's return to rapture his church into the heavens. Sadly, theology has gotten in the way of sound exegesis. With regards to the great persecution of God's elect at the hands of Satan/Antichrist, this verse offers no hope.

This verse is subject to on-going dialogue.

Revelation 3:11

(1) I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

1. I am coming quickly = is a favorite phrase of pretribulationists, which is use to argue for their concept of imminency. The idea that no prophetic event precludes the Lord's return. In other words, He could come any second of any minute of any hour of any day of any year.

However, such a notion is rendered immediately suspect given that 1900 years has transpired since the words were written. If John wrote the words with the modern pretribulationists concept in mind, he was clearly mistaken. Jesus did not come quickly. There is no way that "coming quickly" can be reconciled with a 1900 hundred-year gap. *Coming quickly* cannot mean "at any moment." The Lord's coming is imminent only when the greatest persecution His children will ever face has begun.

Revelation 3:12

He who overcomes, I will make him a (1) pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and (2) I will write on him the (2a) name of My God, and the name of (2b) the city of My God, the new Jerusalem which comes down out of heaven from My God, and (2c) My new name.

1. Pillar in the temple of My God = obviously a literal *temple* and a literal *pillar* is not intended at this point. Revelation 21:22 indicates that there will be no temple in the New Jerusalem. God, Himself, and the Lamb are the temple. For the Jews, the temple was the permanent home of God. It was the place where His presence dwelt. Therefore, to be a pillar in the temple of God meant one was forever in the very presence of God, indeed, part of that which maintains his very presence. The Lord promises the overcomer that such a one will never ever again be out of the very presence of God.

2. I will write on him = a figure of speech that refers to ownership.

2a. The name of My God = I AM (Exe 3:14-15).

2b. The name of the city of My God = The Lord is there (Eze 48:35).

2c. My new name = Unknown at this moment (Rev 19:12).

Revelation 3:13

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the (1) Churches.

1. Churches = one would expect this verse to read "church." The fact that John uses the plural *churches*, as with the previous references, must weigh in on the question of application. Does the message of each individual church apply to the other churches? Can the overcomers of the church in Thyatira claim the promises to the church in Ephesus?

As the overcomer is promised particular blessings in Revelation 21:7, each church is offered future rewards in light of their particular situation. The overcoming Ephesians who struggle with their love are promised a return to Eden-fellowship. The overcoming Smyrnaeans who will face physical persecution unto death are promised protection from the second death. The victorious Pergamenes, who must face the deceptive practices of Satan himself, are promised to be revealed in glory. The Thyatirans victors who must daily refuse fleshly appetites are promised kingly rule and glory. To the Sardisians victors who must avoid worldly contamination eternal purity is promised. The Philadelphians who must stand strong in the face of physical persecutions are promised eternal fellowship in the presence of God. The Laodiceans who must over come blindness are promised kingly authority.

Revelation 3:14

To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: (1) The Amen, (2) the faithful and true Witness, (3) the Beginning of the creation of God, says this:

1. The Amen = a Greek word that means *truly*. It is a title used of God the Father in Isaiah 65:16. The particular title is used in the context of blessing or oath taking. The significance of this title is seen in the fact that the Lord Jesus is called by it as well. This indicates equality in person.

2. The faithful and true Witness = **forthcoming**

3. The beginning of the creation of God = **forthcoming**

Revelation 3:15-16

I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are (1) lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will (2) spit you out of My mouth.

1. Lukewarm = this figure of speech indicates that the Laodicean conduct is unacceptable to

the Lord.

2. Spit you out = (vomit) is a figure of speech, which means, "to utterly reject." The same basic idea can be found in Leviticus 18:25, 28; 20:22.

What is exactly meant is not at all clear. For this author, loss of salvation is not an option. The one thing that we can count on with the Lord is that He says exactly what He means. Eternal life is just that—eternal life (John 3:15-16). If conditionality played any role in salvation, the Bible would clearly indicate it. There would be no room for debate. The meaning of this extended metaphor is discipline. The Laodiceans are in for severe discipline just as Israel was promised and received in the Old Testament (Lev 20:22; 2 Chronicles 36:15-21).

Revelation 3:17-18

Because you say, I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing, and you do not know that you are (1) wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you (2) to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and (3) white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and (4) eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.

1. Wretched...naked = five adjectives used to express the desperate condition of the Laodiceans.

2. To buy from Me gold refined by fire = pure gold, which would be very expensive. The fact that the Lord indicates that the Laodiceans are poor, but the Lord advises they "buy gold" helps to underscore the figurative nature of this exchange. If one could buy gold, would not such a one be rich already? What is more expensive than gold? Allegiance is worth more than gold! With faithful service, the Laodiceans could "buy gold" from the Lord.

3. White garments = indicate purity.

4. Eye salve = medication to heal the eyes

The Laodiceans have three problems: (1) lack of divine favor; (2) lack of purity; and (3) lack of spiritual perception. These three problems can be solved by making purchases from the Lord. Gold, garments and medication will solve their problems respectively. They know their problem. They know the solution. Question: will they do it?

Revelation 3:19

Those whom (1) I love, (2) I reprove and discipline; therefore (3) be zealous and repent.

1. I love = the motive of God's disciplines

2. Reprove and discipline = explicit statement of the point figuratively alluded to in Revelation 3:15-16. Discipline for the sake of turning one away from sin.

3. Be zealous = to be deeply committed to something (Louw-Nida, § 25.76).

Revelation 3:20

Behold, I stand at the (1) door and knock; (2) if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will (3) dine with him, and he with Me.

1. Door and knock = are both figures of speech. Neither the door nor the knock is literal. Rather, the Lord is seeking fellowship. However, a knock is not distinguishable.

2. If = maybe the person inside the house will hear and maybe he will not hear. The issue is not recognition of the voice, but hearing the voice.

3. Dine with him, and he with Me = this verse is an extended metaphor. Reciprocal dining indicates fellowship. In context, this is the point of the God's discipline—fellowship. The

metaphor indicates the measures the Lord will take to secure the fellowship of His people. He knocks, but no answer. He calls! Will the believer respond?

Revelation 3:21-22

He who overcomes, I will grant to him (1) to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and (2) sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

1. To sit down with Me on My throne = is a figure of speech. Christ is seated on a (one) throne. It is impossible for all overcomers to sit with Him on a single throne. This phrase is a figure of speech that means *authority to reign*. This is a repeat of the promise made to the Thyatirans (Rev 2:26b-27).

2. Sat down with My Father on His throne = the comparison between the granting of rights by the Son versus the granting of rights by the Father adds to the clarity of this promise. The Lord Jesus does not literally sit on the Father's throne (Psalm 110:1). However, He shares the authority of the Father (Matt 28:18).

□

[Next Section: Chapter Four - Heaven](#)

□

Revelation
COMMENTARY
WWW.REVELATIONCOMMENTARY.ORG

Questions? Comments?
Send us an email!

revelationcommentary.org
© Sola Scriptura
info@solagroup.org


SOLA SCRIPTURA

Produced and Developed by [Sola Scriptura](#)

□



□

[Previous Section: Chapter Three - The Seven Churches, Part 2](#)

□

CHAPTER FOUR - HEAVEN

Revelation 4:1

(1) After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and (2) the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, (3) "Come up here, and I will (4) show you what must take place (5) after these things."

1. After these things I looked = introduces a new unit in John's vision sequence. *After these things* is clearly a textual marker. However, care should be exercised when stating what is actually indicated by this marker. The exact same phrase is used in Revelation 7:9; 15:5 and 18:1. Whatever else the marker indicates, it does not indicate a temporal shift. This does not mean that a significant amount of time has transpired between the units of material. Rather, the marker indicates that John received the vision in units of material. Revelation 1:1-3:22 is the first unit. Revelation 4:1-7:8 is the second unit. Revelation 7:9-15:4 is the third unit. Revelation 15:5-17:18 is the fourth unit. The last unit of material John saw is contained in Revelation 18:1-22.

2. The first voice which I had heard = connects us back to chapter one. The first voice John heard was that of "one like a son of man." This is none other than the Lord Jesus, Himself. As He has detailed His role as Judge of the church, He indicates to John the next sequence of events to follow. He is judge of the world.

3. Come up here = indicates that John must leave earth and enter heaven. On three separate occasions, John will be invited to a place to see a revelatory vision (4:1; 17:1; 21:9). The fact that John is called up into the heaven should not be pressed at this point. While this unit begins in heaven, it ends on earth.

Unfortunately, some pretribulationists have tortured this verse to support their notion of the timing of the Lord's removal of the elect from earth to heaven. However, this view is usually argued by laymen who merely repeat what they have heard others say. There is no exegetical or scriptural basis for this claim.

4. Show you = this particular verb is used eight times in the book of Revelation (1:1; 4:1; 17:1; 21:9, 10; 22:1, 6, 8). In six of the eight cases, an angel interprets the events seen by John (17:1; 21:9, 10; 22:1, 6, 8). In this particular vision, however no interpretation is necessary. John clearly sees the events and understands their significance (5:1, 2, 6, 11; 6:1, 12; 7:1).

5. After these things = "after what things?" is an important question. Pretribulationists like Robert L. Thomas attempt a divorcement between the "church age" and the events that constitute Revelation 4-19. Thomas states, "The prophecies [of Revelation 4-19] will describe what will happen after the period of the church has run its course (Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 337)." Thomas' exegesis is clearly biased.

There is no textual basis to claim that the "church age" has ended at Revelation 3:22. There are no explicit passages of Scripture that make such a claim. The argument that Revelation 4-19 does not involve the church is one of silence. It goes like this: the absence of any reference to the church between Revelation 4:1 and 18:24 means it is not involved in the events that constitute this section. Therefore, the church must be raptured to heaven.

This is called an argument from silence. It is not an argument at all. This type of logic can cut both ways. The term *church* is also absent from Revelation 20-21, which deals with the millennium and eternity future. The term *church* is never used to designate an entity in heaven. It is as if the church disappears from history after Revelation 3. However, this is clearly not the case.

A fundamental point of apocalyptic literature is to use nothing that would allow the unwanted to discern the meaning of the essential message. Leon Morris writes,

There appears to have been times when it would have been politically unwise for them to have done so. They evidently trusted that their friends would be able to discern their essential meaning, and that their enemies would not be able to do so. (Morris, *Apocalyptic*, 38)

It would have been very unwise for John to so identify the church with the future destruction of the kingdoms of the world that the world could easily discern it from his apocalypse. The Revelation was written to comfort God's people, not provide ammunition for their destruction. We have seen what the enemies of God will do with a little information detrimental to their future (Matt 2:1-12, 16-23).

The fact that the term *church* does not appear in Revelation 4-19 does not mean that the entity itself is not represented in these critical chapters. All would agree that the reference to *wife* in Revelation 19:7 designates the church. Revelation 20:4 records, "Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them." This group must contain at least a portion of the church given the Lord's promise in Revelation 2:26b-27 and 3:21 that overcomers will reign with Him during His physical temporal kingdom on earth (Matt 19:27-30).

There are at least nine different references to the church in Revelation 4-19:

1. Every tribe and tongue and people and nation, 5:9c
2. A kingdom and priest, 5:10
3. Fifth seal martyrs, 6:9
4. A multitude, 7:9; 19:5-6
5. Bond-servants, 11:18; 19:2, 5
6. Our brethren, 12:10
7. The rest of her children, 12:17
8. Saints, 13:7, 10; 14:12; 18:20, 24
9. Wife, 19:7

Each of these designations will be defended as we confront them in context. Please see relevant chapter and verse.

Revelation 4:2-3

Immediately I was (1) in the Spirit; and behold, (2) a throne was standing in heaven, and (3) One sitting on the throne. And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance.

1. In the Spirit = the capitalization of *spirit* by the translators suggests that John is in the Holy Spirit, which is certainly true. However, this is not what John is attempting to communicate here. All believers have opportunity to be in the Spirit, but that does not mean such a one will receive revelation from God. This phrase "is an idiom indicating that John's revelatory experiences took place not "in the body" but rather "in the spirit," i.e., in a vision trance...(Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 283).

2. A throne was standing in heaven = the Greek literally says "and behold a throne was set in the heaven." The difficulty arises with the timing of the verb *ekeito*. This verb is used 25 times in the New Testament. In the predominate number of cases, it refers to the recent past, as in John 2:6. However, it can refer to the indefinite or distant past, as in 1 Thess 3:3. John uses the term nine times. Seven occurrences refer to the recent past (John 2:6; 19:29; 20:5, 6, 7, 12; 21:9). One reference can refer to recent past or distant past depending on one's interpretation (Rev

21:16).

There is only one occasion in Scripture that records God the Father taking a seat (Daniel 7:9). Daniel describes the Ancient of Days in the context of the final period of human history, as we know it, taking a seat prior to the judgment of the little horn. Daniel's thrones are thrones of judgment (Dan 7:9-10). Revelation 4 records the Lamb's reception of the contract of judgment, which is indicated in the large scroll. Therefore, the scene John is shown occurred in the recent past. For it is only after the Lamb has been slain that He is worthy to open the seals.

Chapter 4 has been described by some as the throne-room scene. This is fitting. What follows in Revelation 4 is clearly focused on a throne. First, John focuses on the One seated on the throne. Second, he focuses on what is around the throne. Third, he indicates what flows out from the throne. Fourth, he points out what's before the throne.

3. One sitting on the throne = God the Father.

Revelation 4:4

Around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw (1) twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads.

1. Twenty-four elders sitting = around the throne. They form a complete circle. Twenty-four thrones encircle the throne of God. They face God's throne.

The identity of these individuals is tortured. Few pay attention to the textual details, but focus on wide speculations that feed the fires of non-literal interpretations of the Revelation. What does the Revelation say about these beings? Taken in order of fact:

- a. They form the first circle around the throne of God, 4:4a
- b. They are called elders, 4:4b
- c. They are twenty-four seated on twenty-four thrones, 4:4c
- d. They wear white garments and gold crowns, 4:4d
- e. They fall down and worship God, 4:10
- f. They sing hymns to God, 4:11
- g. They make comments to John, 5:5
- h. They have harps and censers full of incense that are said to represent the prayers of the saints, 5:8
- i. They explain things to John, 7:14-17

The Jews would have readily understood the entity *elders*. Both the meaning and significance of the term would have been plain to John's Jewish audience. However, John does not use the Greek article with this noun, which indicates that the readers were not familiar with this particular group of beings.

That the *elders* are angelic beings would not be questioned if it were not for a poor translation of Revelation 5:9-10 in the King James Version of the Bible.

King James translation of Revelation 5:9-10:

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

New American Standard translation:

And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. "And Thou hast made *them* to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and *they* will reign upon the earth" (Italics added).

The difference is easily recognized:

KJV = "us, us and we" vs. NASB = "men, them, and they"

The central issue concerns the Greek manuscripts used as the basis for our English translation. In terms of the sheer number of manuscripts, a reading with *us* is favored in verse 9. This would support the King James translation. However, following this same reasoning results in a contradiction with the last part of verse 10. The verb "they shall reign" is clearly third person plural. In other words, "they shall reign" and not "we shall reign," which is a first person plural pronoun.

Now a good English student knows that subjective and objective pronouns must agree in number, i.e., singular with singular and plural with plural. Since we believe that John did not make mistakes when recording his prophecy and that Scripture does not contain contradictions, we support a harmony of the text.

There is very little debate that verse 10 should read "they," and not "we." A guiding principle of biblical interpretation is to interpret the difficult in light of the clear. Reasoning back to the first part of verse 10, we conclude that the phrase "You have made us" should read "You have made them." This would necessitate that verse 9 should read "You have redeemed them."

This is the only reading of verses 9-10 that removes any possible contradiction, which is reflected in the New American Standard translation. This interpretation also answers the question concerning the identity of the elders. At least we are able to say that they are heavenly beings and in no way can be identified with the "church."

Revelation 4:5a

(1) Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder.

1. Out from the throne comes = John indicates that these storm indicators are a continual phenomenon. It is fitting that sights and sounds, which frighten all on-lookers, continually represent an invisible God.

Revelation 4:5b—8a

And there were seven lamps of fire burning (1) before the throne, which are the (2) seven Spirits of God; and before the throne there was something (3) like a sea of glass, like crystal; and (4) in the center and around the throne, (5) four living creatures (a) full of eyes in front and behind. (b) The first creature was like a lion, and the (c) second creature like a calf, and (d) the third creature had a face like that of a man, and (e) the fourth creature was like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, (f) each one of them having six wings, are full of (g) eyes around and within;

1. Before the throne = John's description moves now to the scene before the throne of God.

2. Seven Spirits of God = See comments at Revelation 1:4d.

3. Like a sea of glass, like crystal = the floor of God's throne-room.

4. In the center and around the throne = describes the location of the four living creatures. The phrase "in the center" is problematic. It is hard to understand how these creatures could be in the center of the throne. It is better to understand them as stationed in the four directions of the compass: east, north, south and west.

5. Four living creatures = Cherubim. These heavenly beings are described in similar language in Isaiah 6:2. Ezekiel 10:20 explicitly identifies "living creatures" as *cherubim*.

a. Full of eyes = the ability to see in all directions is necessary when one is charged with the responsibility to protect the holiness of God.

b. Like a lion = **forthcoming**

c. Like a calf = **forthcoming**

d. Like a man = **forthcoming**

e. Like a flying eagle = **forthcoming**

- f. Six wings = **forthcoming**
- g. Eyes around and inside = **forthcoming**

Revelation 4:8b

And day and night (1) they do not cease to say, " Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God, (2) the Almighty, (3) who was and who is and who is to come."

1. They do not cease to say = Not only are the Cherubim everywhere watching, but they are always praising God. This is a fabulous job. Natural human response: it must get tiresome after a while. Angelic response: it's never tiresome when God is the object of praise. Wait until you see Him.

2. The Almighty = *panto* (all) *krator* (powerful) = is the first self-designation God used for Himself in the Bible. Genesis 17:1 records, "Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, 'I am God Almighty...'"

Scholars are not sure of the basic meaning of the Hebrew term. It could refer to the *breast* or to a *mountain*. Regardless, the incomparability of God in power and might is foremost. The Cherubim constantly remind all who would approach Who it is they draw near unto.

3. See Revelation 1:4.

Revelation 4:9

And (1) when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks (2) to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever,

1. When the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks = the word *when* indicates that this is not a repeated action. This action will happen once. As John sees the vision, it has not occurred yet. Revelation 5:13-14 records the fulfillment of this event. It occurs in the context of the Lamb breaking the seals, which temporally relates to the Seventieth Week of Daniel. This event will mark the beginning of the final sequence of events associated with Revelation 6-19.

2. To = this preposition has two objects. Both refer to God the Father. The repeated reference to God's eternity serves to remind the reader that God's judgments are just. He has watched over all human history and consequently knows all the details related to the case.

Revelation 4:10-11

(1) The twenty-four elders (2) will (a) fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and (b) will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and (c) will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for (3) You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created."

1. The twenty-four elders = this will be the response of the twenty-four elders to the praise, honor and glory of the living creatures.

2. Will = indicates a future event.

- a. Fall down before Him = this is the first of a two-part action.
- b. Worship Him = this is the second of a two-part action. In ancient worship, one both bowed and offered verbal praise.
- c. Cast their crowns before the throne = some in misidentifying the twenty-four elders have suggested that believers will cast their crowns before the throne of God. However, this is poorly defended in Scripture.

3. You created all things = of all the possible comments available to the twenty-four elders, they focus on the fact that God alone is creator of all that is. This statement can be dismissed, but it cannot be discredited. Creation is a work of God, the Father and not an accident or the result of random chance.

It is clear that chapter 4 is dedicated to the exalted God who sits on the throne. This is none other than God, the Father. Chapter 5 will focus on the Lamb, who is none other than God, the Son.

□

[Next Section: Chapter Five - The Large Scroll](#)

□



**Questions? Comments?
Send us an email!**

revelationcommentary.org

© Sola Scriptura

info@solagroup.org



Produced and Developed by [Sola Scriptura](#)

□



□

Previous Section: Chapter Four - Heaven

□

CHAPTER FIVE - THE LARGE SCROLL

Revelation 5:1

I (1) saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a (2) book written inside and on the back, (3) sealed up with seven seals.

1. Saw = This is the first of thirty-nine occurrences of the phrase "and I saw." It serves to remind the reader that John describes exactly what he sees with his own eyes. He saw the book and he saw the seals—all seven of them. This requires that all seals be on the outside of the scroll. This requires that all seven seals are broken before John will know the contents of the scroll.

2. Book written inside and on the back = There are probably as many questions about this phrase as there are letters that compose it. However, the questions can be grouped under three headings: (a) function, (b) content, and (c) form. Of the three, function is the easiest question to answer.

a. Function: First, a sequential nature is established. With the seven seals, the author indicates the seals are opened one after another. This format will be repeated in relation to the trumpets and bowl judgments that follow. The book is built around these three sequences. Second, Christ, who is uniquely able to break the seven seals, is clearly established as a sovereign who executes the will of the One seated on the throne—God, the Father. The Father has willed that the Son oversees its execution. John 5:22, 27 and Acts 10:42 indicate that Jesus is Judge of all. This is the central purpose of the Revelation: to reveal the Son's execution of the Father's judgment against both the living and the dead. This naturally leads to the question of content.

b. Content: Once it is accepted that the seven seals are not a part of the contents of the scroll, but in fact are conditions to its opening, the reader is able to discern two things. First, John does not explicitly indicate what is contained in the scroll. However, with the breaking of the seventh and final seal, the first direct attack against the earth begins in the form of a trumpet judgment. That the trumpets are judgments of God will be detailed later. Second, since Revelation 8-20 contains the judgment of God against wickedness, the scroll must contain the eschatological judgment of God, else the contents of the scroll are never disclosed. This seems highly unlikely given the importance of the scroll indicated in Revelation 5. Ezekiel 2:9-10 speaks of a scroll similar to Revelation 5. Ezekiel's scroll contained "lamentations, mourning, and woe." All three terms are associated with disaster. All three express deep grief on the part of the afflicted.

c. Form: The exact form of the scroll is debated. However, taken at face value several points are obvious. First, the basic book form during John's time was the scroll. The fact that all seven seals were visible argues for a scroll. The fact that the contents of the scroll could not be known until it was opened argues for a rolled up scroll. There is no historical evidence of a sealed scroll within a sealed scroll.

3. Sealed up with seven seals = there is historical evidence of scrolls containing seven seals. In both the Jewish and Roman worlds, seven sealed scrolls were very common. Specifically,

Roman law mandated that wills be validated by the seals of five or seven witnesses. Jewish magic also employed the motif of seven seals.

Revelation 5:2

And I saw (1) a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "(2) Who is worthy (3) to open the book and to break its seals?"

1. A strong angel = this is the first of three "strong angels" introduced in the Revelation. Revelation 10:1 introduces a second "strong angel" in connection with the second scroll of the Revelation. The third and final "strong angel" appears in Revelation 18:21 as the prophet of doom for Babylon, the great city. These angels are not identified by name, but by duty. They proclaim God's revelation.

An interesting text that helps with the identity of this particular class of angelic being is Daniel 10:21. Here an angelic being, who identifies himself as one sent to proclaim revelation to Daniel, states, "Yet there is no one who stands firmly with me against these *forces* except Michael your prince." The New American Standard Translation indicates that the word *stands* should be translated *shows himself strong*. The Hebrew verb means *to be strong*. However, the Hebrew verb can be intensified, which in this case gives the sense *to show oneself strong*. That Michael is classed with this angelic being suggests that these two angels are a special class—*strong angels*.

2. Who is worthy = this rhetorical question focuses on the qualifications for the task. Naturally, the one who owns the scroll can break the seals. However, the question presupposes that someone else is necessary to set in motion the events connected with breaking of the seals.

Revelation 5:3-4

And (1) no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it. Then (2) I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it;

1. No one = John indicates that no one answered the angelic question. The division—in heaven, on earth and under the earth—serves to highlight the universal absence of a legitimate response. Think of all the great men of human history who acted as if they could and would answer. However, Jesus who is able and worthy to open the book does not answer the angelic question.

2. I began to weep greatly = the importance of the book and the absence of anyone to open it is highlighted by John's deep weeping. This particular vision is written in such a way by John that the importance of the Lamb is heightened.

Revelation 5:5

And (1) one of the elders said to me, "Stop weeping; behold, (2) the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, (3) the Root of David, (4) has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals."

1. One of the elders = evidences that this group of beings are capable of acting individually.

2. The Lion that is from the tribe of Judah = Judah is referred to as a lion in Genesis 49:9. There Jacob offers a great prophetic prediction about Judah's future, which includes the promise of a future ruler. Jesus is that ruler.

3. The Root of David = is the second Davidic title applied to Jesus here. The great Old Testament support for this title in reference to Jesus is replete. Isaiah 11:1, Jeremiah 23:5, Zechariah 3:8 and 6:12 are clear references.

The reference to Judah and David establishes Jesus as a royal descendant of King David. This requirement is stated throughout the New Testament (Luke 1:32; Acts 2:30-32; Romans 1:3; and 2 Timothy 2:8). However, it is not solely based on His genealogy that makes Him worthy to open the book.

4. Has overcome = this verb gives the reason that this particular Judeo-Davidite is worthy to open the book. This verb means *to conquer*. The particular Greek construction means, "to conquer absolutely." John does not explicitly state what the Judeo-Davidite did to conquer here, but an indirect allusion is given in verse 6.

Revelation 5:6

And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders (1) a Lamb standing, (2) as if slain, having (3) seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth.

1. A Lamb standing = this is the first of twenty-nine times *arnion* (lamb) occurs in the Revelation. With the exception of Revelation 13:11, all refer to Jesus:

- a. The Lamb standing, 5:6
- b. The Lamb worshipped, 5:8
- c. The Lamb praised, 5:12-13
- d. The Lamb, 6:1, 7, 9,
- e. The Lamb wrathful, 6:16
- f. The Lamb honored, 7:10
- g. The Lamb sacrificed, 7:14
- h. The Lamb provider, 7:17
- i. The Lamb, 8:1
- j. The Lamb sacrificed, 12:11
- k. The Lamb's book, 13:8
- l. The Lamb standing, 14:1
- m. The Lamb leads, 14:4
- n. The Lamb provider, 14:4
- o. The Lamb's presence, 14:10
- p. The Lamb's song, 15:3
- q. The Lamb's war, 17:14
- r. The Lamb's marriage, 19:7
- s. The Lamb's marriage supper, 19:9
- t. The Lamb's wife, 21:9
- u. The Lamb's apostles, 21:14
- v. The Lamb is temple and light, 21:22-23
- w. The Lamb's throne, 22:1, 3

From these references, we can discern that *lamb* is John's title of choice for the Lord in the Revelation. In the common phrase, "the Lamb of God," a Greek synonym is used. Thus, the term *arnion* is unique to the Revelation and the New Testament as a title for the Lord Jesus.

This Lamb is *standing*. Given the great detail offered in chapter 4 of the Revelation, some have argued that the Lamb must have been absent until chapter 5 of the Revelation. There is no way to be sure. The New Testament presents the Lord in two positions in heaven. Stephen declared that he saw the Lord "standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:56, 5:31). Mark 16:19 declares that "the Lord...was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God." Thus, the Lord is presented as both standing and sitting. Perhaps, the Lord's position is indicated by what He is about to do. In this case, He is standing because He is about to take the scroll from the hand of God.

2. As if slain = this phrase qualifies the messianic title. The phrase literally says, "as slain." There is no doubt indicated by the Greek that the Lamb was in fact slain. The point is that He was slain, but now He is alive.

In the Jewish worldview, a slain lamb related to their sacrificial system. In the Jewish sacrificial system, a lamb or sheep was used in several different sacrifices, i.e., Passover and burnt, sin, and guilt offerings. These sacrifices have as their goal either *peace* or *purification*. Thus, by the sacrifice of a lamb, one sought peace with God or purification from sin. Revelation 7:14 declares that the blood (the sacrificial death) of the Lamb makes robes (the person) white (pure or acceptable to God, the Father). This points to purification.

3. Seven horns and seven eyes = a horn is a symbol of power (Jer 48:25, Dan 7:7-8) and seven horns represent absolute power. *Seven eyes* are explained as "the seven spirits of God sent to the whole earth." The ability to see the "entire earth" at the same time indicates absolute sovereignty. Therefore, the slain, but alive Lamb is both the absolute power and sovereign of the earth.

Revelation 5:7

And (1) He came and (2) took the book out of (3) the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

1. He came = movement is suggested by this term. Jesus is reported to be standing "in the middle of the throne, (Rev 5:6)." The sense seems to be that Jesus is standing in the middle between the thrones of the elders and throne supported by the four living creatures.
2. Took the book = this particular verb expressions action with the emphasis on the result. *Took* does not suggest force, but the appropriate action in response to an outstretched hand. In other words, God is holding the book out waiting for the Lord to take it.
3. The right hand = symbolizes power.

Revelation 5:8

When He had taken the book, (1) the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and (2) golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of (3) the saints.

1. The four...before the Lamb = This is the only scene presented in the Revelation where the heavenly court fall down before the Lamb. The term *worship* is not used in the description of the action of the heavenly court, but the Lamb receives the honor no less.
2. Golden bowls...prayers of the saints = Revelation 8:3 will speak again of the prayers of the saints. Look there for more details.
3. Saints = the Greek says literally, "the holy ones." This term occurs thirteen times in the Revelation (5:8, 8:3, 4; 11:18; 13:7, 10; 14:12; 16:6; 17:6; 18:20, 24; 19:8; 20:9). This is clearly John's term of choice to designate those who belong to Jesus Christ throughout the ages. Notice the different descriptions:
 - a. Their prayers are collected and held in heaven, 5:8, 8:3.
 - b. They are rewarded by God, 11:18.
 - c. They are the object of Satan/Antichrist's persecution, 13:8.
 - d. They persevere and remain faithful during persecution, 13:10, 14:12.
 - e. They are the object the world's persecution, 16:6.
 - f. They are the object of "the great harlot's" persecution, 17:6.
 - g. They rejoice over God's punishment of the harlot, 18:20.
 - h. They are among the designated kill of the harlot, 18:24.
 - i. Their righteous deeds are the dress of the wife of the Lamb, 19:8.
 - j. They live in Jerusalem during the 1000 year kingdom, 20:9.

This term is used of Israelites in Daniel 7:21-22, 25, 27 and 8:24. They are depicted as the object of Antichrist's persecution and God's benevolence. At the time of Daniel's writing, *saints* referred to only those of Israel. This point has been seized on by pretribulationists who insist that the term *saint* be limited to those of Israel in the Revelation. Pretribulationists reason that the church will have been raptured to heaven before Revelation 5 occurs. It is argued that those persecuted by Satan/Antichrist during Daniel's Seventieth Week will not be part of the "bride of Christ" because the church age ends at the Rapture, which pretribbers argue most occur before Daniel Seventieth Week begins.

This whole line of reasoning is fundamentally flawed. While Daniel 7 and 8 can correctly be limited to Jews at the time of writing, whether the term *saints* as used in Revelation can be extended to include New Testament believers must be left to exegesis, not theological presuppositions. The term *saints* or *holy ones* is used throughout the New Testament to refer to

an individual believer, a small group or the entire body of Christ. (Notice: Acts 9:13, 32, 41; Rom 8:27; 12:13; 15:26; 16:2, 15; 1 Cor 6:1-2; 14:33; 2 Cor 1:1; 13:12; Eph 1:15; 3:18; 4:12; 5:3; 6:18; Phil 4:22; Col 1:4; 1 Tim 5:10; Philem 5, 7; Heb 6:10; 13:24; Jude 3).

Revelation 5:9-10

And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for (1) You were slain, and (2) purchased for God with Your blood (3) men from (4) every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made (5) them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and (6) they will reign upon the earth."

1. You were slain (sphazein) = indicates the basis upon which the Lamb is worthy to open the seals. The Lamb is worthy because of three things He did. First, literally the Greek says, "You were slaughtered..." This Greek verb implies a violent and merciless death (Louw-Nida, § 20.72). This term is used to describe the Lord's death in chapters five and thirteen. It is used of believers in Revelation 6:9 and 18:24. The fact that the term is used to describe both the deaths of the Lord and believers indicate that the mode of death is not indicated. While the death of the Lord resulted from crucifixion, it is clear that the death of all believers is not the result of crucifixion. It is used to describe the actions of Cain against his brother in 1 John 3:12. Cain killed his brother by cutting him.

2. (You) purchased (agorazein) = is the Greek verb used throughout the New Testament to designate the activity of the Lord in His death for sinners. The term means, in a figurative sense, "to cause the release of someone by paying a price." In this case, the price was the Lord's life.

3. Men = the reader will notice that this word appears in italics in the NASB. This indicates that the word does not appear in the original Greek. The reason this word is inserted is because the Greek does not contain an object of the verb. This is not reflected correctly in the King James Bible. However, the sense of the text demands that an object be inserted to make the sense complete. It is common sense that God purchased men (and women, boys and girls) with the death of the Lord.

4. Tribe and tongue and people and nation = these four ethnic units cumulatively emphasize the universality of the group purchased by the Lord's death. It is important to recognize that a group of individuals were purchased.

5. You have made them *to be* a kingdom = this is the third and final action describing the Lord's work that establishes His worthiness to break the seals. *He made them*. This act was done at the time the purchase was made. This helps all believers understand their position in Christ. We were bought before we were born and established as a kingdom. This is good news for the broken of our world. We are a kingdom and we are priests of God.

6. They will reign upon the earth = this is the final and ultimate outcome of the Lord's work at death. The undisputed "they" and "them" in the original Greek of verse 10 demand that the objects of verse 9 be objective in nature. This means that the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders do not include themselves in the list of those purchased by the blood of the Lamb.

Notice that the locale of the saints' reign will be the earth. This would strongly argue against an amillennial interpretation of the book of Revelation, which sees the reign of the saints restricted to heaven.

Revelation 5:11

Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was (1) myriads of myriads, and thousand of thousands,

1. Myriads...thousands = John's use of great size numbers should not be under appreciated. Daniel emphasized the innumerability of the angelic beings that attend the God of heaven and so does John.

Revelation 5:12-14

Saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever." And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshiped.

FORTHCOMING

□

[Next Section: Chapter Six - The First Six Seals](#)

□

Revelation
COMMENTARY
WWW.REVELATIONCOMMENTARY.ORG

Questions? Comments?
Send us an email!

revelationcommentary.org
© Sola Scriptura
info@solagroup.org


SOLA SCRIPTURA

Produced and Developed by [Sola Scriptura](#)

□



□

Previous Section: Chapter Five - The Large Scroll

□

CHAPTER SIX - THE FIRST SIX SEALS

Revelation 6:1

(1) Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of (2) the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, (3) "Come."

1. Then I saw = is a very important linking phrase used thirty-three times throughout the book of Revelation. It can introduce a new vision or a major segment of a continuing vision. Here it is obviously introducing a new segment in a continuing vision. The Lamb receives the scroll in chapter five and breaks the first seal in chapter six. There is no indication of a time lapse between these two chapters. One could argue that the Lamb has not actually received the scroll, but one day in the future will and thus will execute its content. This will prove a very important interpretive key to John's Revelation. That is, distinguishing between the events that have historically occurred and those merely described as occurring, but will in fact occur in the future.

2. The four living creatures = this is the first example of an angelic being commanding another angelic being to do a particular deed. This indicates a hierarchical structure among the angelic host.

3. Come = this verb can mean "to go" or "to come" depending on the context. The more natural sense seems to be something like "get going."

Revelation 6:2

I looked, and behold, (1) a white horse, and he who sat on it had (2) a bow; and (3) a crown was given to him, and (4) he went out conquering and to conquer.

1. A white horse = the fact that the horse is white is symbolic. However, what is symbolically represented by the white horse is not certain. Equally, the rider on the white horse is not certain. Some argue that the rider is Jesus Christ--a position that does not contextually fit. That the Lamb is breaking the seals and at the same time represented as a rider is unlikely. Equally, there is no prophetic indication that Christ comes at the beginning of the eschatological events. The only similarity between the rider of Revelation 6 and Revelation 19 is the "white horse," which is hardly a basis to claim equality. The identity or actions indicated by the breaking of the first seal can only be discerned from prophetic parallels throughout Scripture. A conquering rider fits best with the lawless one prophetically depicted in II Thessalonians 2.

2. A bow = is used in Scripture in both a literal and figurative manner. It is hardly possible that a literal bow is intended here. It was not the favorite weapon of choice for Roman soldiers and in modern warfare, a bow would be useless. The *bow* is used figuratively in Scripture as a symbol of war.

3. A crown was given to him = a crown is a symbol of authority or right to rule. *Was given* indicates that this rider does not take authority, but that it is given to him. This is an example of the passive voice in which the subject is acted upon instead of doing the acting. In other words, the subject receives the action. The particular Greek word used here appears 22 times throughout the book of Revelation. The *giver* is not explicitly identified, but context indicates that either God or Satan is the ultimate cause behind each action indicated in these passages.

4. He went out conquering and to conquer = here we see the purpose of the rider. He

conquers. What he conquers is not indicated.

There are several questions, which the seals foster. First, what is the relationship of the Lamb to the events unleashed by the broken seals? The second question: who is the rider on the white horse? The last question concerns the timing of the rider's conquest.

It is clear that the first four seals are different from the final three seals, a distinction also recognized in the trumpet judgments. In addition, it is clear that the breaking of a seal inaugurates the events of that seal. Therefore, what term properly reflects the Lamb's relationship to these events? Does the Lamb *cause* or *allow* the events? Is He *directly* or *indirectly* responsible for the events?

In relation to the first four seals, a third party causes the first, second, and fourth seals. The third seal indicates that "a voice in the center of the four living creatures" announces the impact of the third seal. David Aune concludes that these facts support the conclusion that God *commissions* or *enables* these events (Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 393). We, therefore, agree that God is the *direct cause* of these events. This is not to say that the first four seals are the wrath of God. A point proven by the question of the fifth seal martyrs, which we will discuss later. Rather, these are prophesied events of the future, which God will superintend to insure fulfillment. As all events on earth are controlled by heaven, the first four seals are broken in heaven to allow the riders to ride on earth. As in all cases, God allows evil, but is never its author or agent.

The second question fostered by the first seal concerns the identity of the rider. Out of the many possibilities offered, we prefer the person who will later be identified as *the beast from the sea* (Rev 13:1). As the primary antagonist and counterpart to the Lamb in the Revelation, the beast best accords with the description given in the first seal.

First, the rider is mounted on a white horse. This is compared to the Lord who rides a white horse when He comes at Armageddon as detailed in Revelation 19:11-21. This has led some commentators to argue that the rider is Christ Himself. This can hardly be the case given that Christ breaks the seals. Equally, it is clear that the seals initiate events on the earth in connection with the end of the age during which the Lord will return to earth from heaven. During this period, there is no prophetic indication that the Lord will initiate this period by conquering on the earth. The white horse imagery is the first indicator of the rider's identity. As the imitator of Christ and world-deceiver, the beast fulfills his destiny. The white horse is a part of his deception.

The second descriptive detail associated with this rider is a *bow*. The bow is an ancient instrument of war. This rider is prepared for war. The third descriptive detail concerns a *crown*. The crown (*stephanos*) denotes rule or authority (II Sam 12:29-30). The fourth and final descriptive detail concerns the rider's conduct—"he went out conquering and that he might conquer." To rule over others by conquest is the goal of this rider. As will be evident later, these are descriptive details related to the beast.

The Lord Jesus predicted that the end of the age would begin with a dramatic increase in false proclaimers. These false proclaimers will proclaim one message, but have false motives (Matt 24:5).

Revelation 6:3-4

When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come." And another, (1) a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, (2) it was granted to take peace (3) from the earth, and (4) that men would (5) slay one another; and (6) a great sword was given to him.

1. A red horse = is the color designation for the second horse. Unlike white, which is a possible color for a horse, *fiery red* clearly is not intended to be taken literally. Given the nature of the second seal, fiery red may be intended to be symbolic of bloodshed.

2. It was granted = is another indication that a third party is controlling these events.

3. From the earth = suggests that this rider's influence will be felt worldwide. John does not intend that every nation on the face of the earth will be at war, but that the climate of the earth will be one of warfare and unrest.

4. That = indicates the purpose of the unrest caused by the rider.

5. Slay one another = connotes violence and savagery (Louw-Nida, § 20.72). This does not mean that all nations will be at war, but that many will be at war and death will be brutal.

6. A great sword = is symbolic of authority to put to death (Rom. 13:4). Again, the agency of a third party is required. This proves what heaven authorizes earth executes.

Revelation 6:5-6

When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, "Come." I looked, and behold, (1) a black horse; and he who sat on it had (2) a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard something like (3) a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of (4) wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a (5) denarius; and (6) do not damage (7) the oil and the wine."

1. A black horse = is symbolic of famine. Since black is a possible color for a horse, some are tempted to argue for a literal black horse here. However, this horse, as the previous ones, represents a condition about to be let loose on the earth.

2. A pair of scales = represents the dire situation some will face on the earth. A balance scale would be used for weighing bread only in a severe famine. Leviticus 26:26 and Ezekiel 4:16-17 both indicate that weighed bread is a condition of severe famine.

3. A voice in the center of the four living creatures = is previously identified as the Lamb (Rev 4:6, 5:6). The voice declares the condition of the earth. Again, heaven is actively involved in the events connected with the seals. However, at no point can the first four seals be shown to be the wrath of God.

4. Wheat...barley = is one of two harvest in the Middle East. Wheat is necessary for bread and barley for porridge and the stalk for feeding animals.

5. Denarius = was indicated to be a day's wage by the Lord in Matthew 20:1-16.

6. Do not harm = the Greek suggests that no harm has come to the earth prior to this command.

7. Wine and oil = is the second of two harvest in the Middle East. Olives and grapes are spared destruction.

Revelation 6:7-8

When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come." I looked, and behold, (1) an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name (2) Death; and Hades was following with (3) him. (4) Authority was given to them over (5) a fourth of the earth, (6) to kill with (7) sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.

1. An ashen horse = green, which indicates a symbol, perhaps of life.

2. Death and Hades = is referred to here as a person. This is called "personification" and is a figure of speech. This occurs four times in the Revelation (1:18; 6:8; 20:13, 14). The term *death* is always followed by the term *Hades*. Since Hades is a result of death (there would be no Hades if there was no death); death is primary.

3. Him = death, which is spoken of as a person.

4. Authority = dominion.

5. A fourth of the earth = is speaking either geographically or demographically.

The focus is clearly on the people of this "fourth of the earth." The beast will be given "a fourth of the earth," but he will attempt to take control of the whole earth. Based on Daniel 2 and Ezekiel 38 the final Beast Empire will consist of peoples from modern day Iraq, Iran, Syria, Ethiopia, Libya, Ukraine, Turkey, Russia and Germany. These nations at present combine populations equal to about one-tenth the total population of the earth. However, geographically, these nations equal one-fourth the earth's total landmass. (9 million square miles)

6. To kill = this is the purpose of Antichrist's dominion. This does not mean that he will kill "a fourth of the earth," but that he could if he wanted to do so. The "fourth of the earth" references does not refer to *Christians*. If "a fourth of the earth" was Christians and the beast killed them all, there would be none left when the Lord appears from heaven.

7. Sword, famine, pestilence and wild beasts of the earth = Commentators are quick to find an Old Testament parallel for this phrase. While it is true that God used the sword, famine and pestilence to discipline Israel in the past (Jer 24:10, Ezek 12:16). There is no prophecy of a future judgment of this nature against Israel. There is only one occurrence where "wild beasts" is added to the list—Ezekiel 14:21. Context limits that judgment to the city of Jerusalem only.

However, Revelation 6:8 speaks about "a fourth of the earth" suffering the events mentioned above. The fact that the term "wild beasts" is used in some translations has led some to a false interpretation. It should be first admitted that "wild beast" is not the correct translation of the Greek in Revelation 6:8. The word is *tharion* and its basic meaning is *beast*. It can be translated *beast* (Titus 1:12) or *wild beast* (Acts 11:6). Context determines which translation is best. It is used thirty-nine times in the book of Revelation. In thirty-eight occurrences, the term refers either to the beast, the false prophet (the second beast) or the image of the beast, and it is correctly translated *beast*. However, the translators attempting to clarify the meaning in Revelation 6:8 incorrectly translated the text *wild beasts*.

There is no grounds for the translation *wild beast* in Revelation 6:8. Since *beast* (antichrist) (Rev 13:7), the false prophet (Rev 13:15), and the image of the beast (Rev 13:15) all have power to put to death; and since both the *beast* (Rev.13:1) and the false prophet (Rev 13:11) are of the earth, they are better referents for "beasts" in Revelation 6:8.

Revelation 6:9-11

And when he broke (1) the fifth seal, I saw underneath (2) the altar (3) the souls of those (4) who had been slain (5) because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, (6) "How long, O Lord, holy and true, (7) wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging (8) our blood on (9) those who dwell on the earth?" And there was given to each of them (10) a white robe; and they were told that they should (11) rest for a little while longer, until the number of their (12) fellow servants and their brethren (13) who were to be killed even as they had been, should be completed also.

1. The fifth seal = initiates a second series of seals that are unlike the first four. Gone are the horses and riders who initiate events. The fact that death reigned over "a fourth of the earth" in the fourth seal makes the fifth seal a probable result. The relationship between seals five, six and seven is the wrath of God: seal 5 asks for it; seal 6 announces it; and seal 7 depicts it.

2. The altar = a very definite *altar* is in view here. Yet, this is the first of eight occurrences of the term in the Revelation. Two distinct "altars" are represented in the Revelation. The altar of incense is mentioned in Revelation 8:5 and 9:13. The altar of burnt offerings is mentioned in Revelation 6:9; 11:1; and 16:7. The altar of burnt offerings was located in the court of the priests. The altar of incense was located in the holy place before the curtain that separated the holy place from the most holy place. Therefore, the altar mentioned in Revelation 6:8 is likely the altar of incense which may suggest why the souls "cry out with a loud voice."

Why would these faithful souls be kept underneath this particular altar? No explicit reason is given. However, inasmuch as these individuals paid the ultimate sacrifice for God (physical death), they are symbolically kept at the place nearest to God, the very place from which God receives fragrant aromas, the altar of incense. We should discern that God finds great pleasure in these souls.

3. The souls = this term is used twice in the Revelation (Rev 6:9 and 20:4). In both cases, those represented have not been resurrected.

4. Who had been slain = the term used here occurs throughout the Revelation. It can be used to describe death from a variety of causes. In Revelation 5:12 and 13:8, it describes the Lord's death by crucifixion. In Revelation 18:24, it describes the death of "all who have been slain on the earth." Therefore, we can say that this term does not focus on any particular mode of death. The result is the important issue—death. The same cannot be said for the martyrs mentioned in Revelation 20:4. There, the specific issue of beheading is important as the mode of death. It is important to remember concerning the martyrs of Revelation 6:9 that all believers of all the

ages are not represented by this reference. Only those recently killed are in focus. This point is defended by the martyrs' own statement that God is to avenge their blood "on those who dwell on the earth." Those living on the earth at this time are the only ones responsible for the death of the martyrs since they are the only one who will receive God's judgment. Nothing is stated about the dead would also include some who would be guilty of the death of God's righteous ones.

5. Because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained = here we have two reasons given for the physical death of these saints.

a. Because of the word of God = concerns truth. These people died for the truth, which they could not deny.

b. Because of the testimony which they had maintained = both this and the phrase above is similar to the statement of Revelation 1:2 and 9. There, *testimony* is followed by *of Jesus Christ*. These individuals died for the same reason John suffered. They maintained or continued to witness to the fact Jesus is Lord. This clearly establishes what the primary issue will be for those who claim the name of Jesus during the persecution of "death and hades": the word of God and the believer's testimony for Jesus, the Christ. There is nothing here to preclude these people from being members of the body of Christ as was John, the apostle.

6. How long = the importance of the martyrs comes to light at this point. They question the Lord concerning their persecutors. The phrase "how long?" in the context of a prayer is not uncommon in Scripture—particularly the Old Testament (Pss 6:3-4; 13:1-2; 35:17; 74:9-10; 79:5; 80:4). The martyrs cry out for vengeance. Their question echoes the sentiment that too much time has passed between the deed and punishment. This is very similar to many Psalms which demand of God that He punish evil doers (Pss 7, 35, 55, 58, 59, 69, 79, 139). King David prayed such a prayer (2 Sam 3:28-29). Nehemiah prayed a similar prayer (Neh 4:4-5).

7. Wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging = this is the essence of their question. The Greek literally says, "how long you not judge and avenge?" The words *will* and *refrain from* do not appear in the original Greek. Both the verbs *to judge* and *to avenge* are in the present tense, but it is a special use of the present tense, thus the insertion of the terms *will* and *refrain from*. It is critical that the reader understands that at this point in the narration God has not begun to judge and avenge. The verb *to avenge* will appear again in Revelation 19:2, which depicts the end of God's wrath. No clue has yet surfaced to indicate that the wrath of God has begun through Revelation 6:10.

8. Our blood = this is the reason God is implored to take vengeance. *Blood* is used here as a figure of speech. *Blood* stands for the act that caused it to be poured from the body. In other words, *blood* stands for murder. These individuals died violent deaths, which demands justice.

9. Those who dwell on the earth = is a technical phrase that refers to the same group each time it is used in the book of Revelation. It is used nine times in the book:

a. Revelation 3:10 – those represented by the phrase are the object of the test that faithful followers of Christ are promised deliverance from.

b. Revelation 6:10 – they are directly responsible for the violent deaths of the faithful followers of Christ under the altar in heaven.

c. Revelation 8:13 – they are the expressed objects of the three "woes" expressed in trumpets five, six and seven.

d. Revelation 11:10a – they rejoice when the beast from the bottomless pit is finally able to put the two witnesses of God to death.

e. Revelation 11:10b – they are the objects of the torment of the two witnesses.

f. Revelation 13:8 – they are the non-elect worshippers of the beast who comes up out of the sea.

g. Revelation 13: 14a – the beast that comes up out of earth deceives them.

h. Revelation 13:14b – they make an image of the beast that comes up out of the sea.

i. Revelation 17:8 – they are the non-elect who wonder at the restoration of the beast from the abyss.

In each verse quoted above, those represented by the phrase "those who dwell upon the earth" are either hostile to the people of God or supportive of the beast and his endeavors.

10. A white robe = white garments are clearly the proper attire of those in the presence of God. Notice it will be the attire of:

- a. The overcomers, (Rev 3:4-5, 18).
- b. The Elders, (Rev 4:4).
- c. The martyrs, (Rev 6:11).
- d. The universally innumerable multitude, (Rev 7:9).
- e. The armies of heaven, (Rev 19:14).

It is not altogether certain that literal "white robes" are the intent of John. More than likely, "white robes" are a metaphor (a figure of speech) that connotes moral purity. Moral purity can be possessed in this life as well as in the presence of God. John indicates that the Lord instructs the church at Laodicea "to buy from Me...white garments that you may clothe yourself." In other words, they can wear the robes, now. Yet, the Sardis church is promised "white garments" when the Lord returns. This supports the conclusion that "white garments" represent moral purity and not necessarily literal attire.

11. Rest = this is the second of two commands the martyrs receive from God. Louw-Nida indicates about the verb *to rest* that "the focus of meaning seems to be upon the restorative character of rest rather than mere cessation of activity" (Louw-Nida § 23.80). This indicates that the souls were in a state that allows for refreshment from the labors of this life.

12. Fellow servants and their brethren = an important question to be answered about this phrase is whether one or two groups are represented. There is no significance to a possible difference. Both will be killed. The phrase *Fellow servants* (*sundouloi*) is used three times in the book of Revelation (6:11; 19:10; 22:9). Twice, the apostle Paul uses it (Col 1:7; 4:7). In every case, faithful followers of God are intended. These are clearly church-age saints. There is nothing to preclude them from it.

13. Who were to be killed = is a clear indication that God has set a number of those who will be killed during the period represented in the Revelation. Equally, this indicates that death is not a sign of unfaithfulness, but in fact might be a sign of faithfulness. Some believers will die, no doubt, because of their unfaithfulness, but these are killed for their faithfulness. How many people will actually be killed may be indicated by the phrase "a little while longer." This tells us how long the killing will last. The exact Greek grammatical phrase occurs in John 7:33 and 12:35. The time represented by the phrase in John's gospel could be from several days to a little more than a year. We are unable to be dogmatic, but the time represented in the Revelation by "a little while longer" is certainly not indefinite. Therefore, the number of those to be killed is not unlimited. Of particular interest is the fact that Revelation 10:6 announces that "there shall be delay no longer." This is a possible reference to Revelation 6:11. (A point to be discussed at length at location.)

Revelation 6:12-17

And I looked when He broke (1) the sixth seal, and (2) there was (2a) a great earthquake; and (2b) the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and (2c) the whole moon became like blood; and (2d) the stars of the sky fell to the earth, (2e) as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. And (2f) the sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up; and (2g) every mountain and island were moved out of their places. (3) And the (3a) kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man, (3b) hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and (3c) they said to the mountains and to the rocks, (3d) "Fall on us and hide us (3e) from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and (3f) from the wrath of the Lamb; (3g) for the (3h)

great day of their wrath has come; and (3i) who is able to stand?"

1. The sixth seal = the sixth seal continues a pattern begun at seal five, which demonstrates a difference between seals one through four and seals five through seven. No horse and rider is indicated. The question of the Martyrs is answered indirectly. The sign that announces the imminent arrival of the wrath of God is given in the form of earthly and cosmic disturbances unparalleled in human history. The impact is obvious—"men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world (Luke 21:26)."

2. John introduces earthly and cosmic disturbances, which are unparalleled in human history. This event has both Old and New Testament parallels.

2a. A great earthquake = the first sign of the imminent outbreak of the wrath of God is "a great earthquake." The NASB's translation at this point may be a bit misleading. *Seismos* (the Greek word from which we get the English word *seismology*) literally means *shaking*. Whether the heavens or the earth is shaking is not clear here. Luke 21:26 indicates that "the powers of the heavens will be shaken." This is also supported by both Matthew 24:29 and mark 13:25. However, Isaiah 12:13 and Joel 3:16 both indicate that both the heavens and the earth will be shaken during the Day of the Lord. Therefore, both the heavens and the earth will shake violently. It is not clear how the shaking of the heavens will be experienced by those on the earth. The evangelists indicate that "the powers of heaven will be shaken."

2b. The sun became black as sackcloth made of hair = this phrase indicates that something very dramatic will happen to the sun. The figure of speech—black as sackcloth made of hair—indicates that the sun will not give light, i.e. darkness in the universe. This point is echoed in Matthew 24:29. Now some find this point difficult to understand and therefore would rather understand this event to be symbolic and not literal. After all, they reason, it would not be just a matter of loss of light, but heat as well. This seems impossible, but this event will be unparalleled in human history. Many would have argued the impossibility of stopping the sun at high noon for twelve hours, but Joshua would argue differently, particularly given the effects of a solar eclipse. A total solar eclipse renders the earth dark, but does not cause a drop in temperature.

2c The whole moon became like blood = this third sign concerns the moon's loss as a light source. The term *Like blood* indicates a figure of speech is used here.

Metaphors and similes are two examples of a particular kind of figure of speech that deals with comparisons. A metaphor says "one thing *is* another thing", i.e., "the Lord is my shepherd." In this case, this statement intends every attribute of a shepherd. In other words, everything about a shepherd is exactly what the Lord is. However, a simile is different in what it imports. A simile says one thing is *like* or *as* another, i.e., "the Lord is like a shepherd." Now this statement is much narrower than the metaphor. Unlike the metaphor, which is very broad in its application, the simile focuses on a contextually defined attribute. Usually that attribute is defined in the context. In our example above, "the Lord is like a shepherd" in that He protects me from my enemies.

Therefore, when John says, "the moon became like blood," we discern quickly that a simile is used. Now the question is this: what attribute of blood does John intend here? Based on the context and given what happens to the sun and the stars, John's point concerns light—specifically the absence of light. Therefore, the moon will cease to be a light source for the night. Matthew 24:29 states, "the moon will not give its light."

2d. The stars of the sky fell to the earth = this is the fourth sign that will indicate the imminent outbreak of the wrath of God. Immediately, we have a problem. Given modern science, we know that it would be impossible for the stars, given their size, to fall literally upon the earth. However, the context suggests that a figure of speech is intended. The loss of their light is what is meant here.

2e. As a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind = this simile explains John's intent concerning the stars. Echoing Isaiah 34:4, which depicts both the leaves and the figs dropping, John highlights the figs. Matthew 24:29 states,

"the stars will fall from the sky." Mark 13:25 says, "the stars will be falling from heaven." Joel 3:15 records, "the stars [will] lose their brightness." This is in concert with that which happens to the sun and the moon, i.e. the stars give off no light. It will look as if the stars have fallen from the heavens. There will be no light in the universe.

2f. The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up = this is fifth cosmic disturbance John records. Literally, the text says *the heaven*. "The heaven was split," John says. The verb used here has several nuances. It can mean, "to split" or "to disappear." The simile, "like a scroll when it is rolled up," is not helpful at this point. Both nuances are possible. Many have experienced the phenomenon of placing on a desk a map that is continually rolled up. It will only lay flat as long as force is applied, but immediately if let go, the map will roll up quickly. In this sense, the map disappeared. However, a tightly wound up map recoils with a fast rate of speed when let go by a tight grip. Therefore, it is possible that John is emphasizing the speed with which the heaven will split.

Isaiah 34:4 is helpful at this point. There the prophet states, "And the host of heaven will rot, and the sky will be rolled up like a scroll...." The Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) uses the same word to translate the Hebrew that is used in the Revelation—to *roll up*. The sense is this: the sky will split apart in the same way a scroll is rolled up. The Hebrew scrolls of Isaiah's day were rolled between two spindles. The issue of speed is therefore removed. A rolled up scroll removes the content of the scroll from sight. The heaven will move apart, which will allow the earth dwellers to see the spectacular descent of the Lamb from the very throne of God.

2g. Every mountain and island were moved out of their places = is the final event of this spectacular display of cosmic and earthly signs to signal the imminent outbreak of the wrath of God. Every single mountain and island will be moved out of its original place. This should not be confused with the seventh and final bowl judgment of Revelation 16:20. There, John indicates that no mountain shall be found and every island will flee away. Here the emphasis is on disappearance or ceasing to exist, but in Revelation 6:14 the emphasis is simple transition from one place to another. This textual detail should not be overlooked or minimized. Two distinct events are described in these two passages and only by minimizing the textual details can these two passages be described as the same event.

Clearly, these six cataclysms are designed to accomplish one thing—to get man's attention. No man on the face of the earth at this time can possibly conclude anything other than the fact that the great God of heaven is coming in wrath, particularly when the Lamb is seen descending from heaven!

These six signs described above have a rich history in the Old Testament. The single most important event prophetically depicted in the Old Testament is the eschatological wrath of God—The Day of the Lord. John has eclectically gathered from Isaiah and Joel those cataclysms, which the Lord Jesus Himself depicted in Matthew 24:29-30.

Significantly, Joel 2:31 places an important time marker in relationship to these events. Joel declares, "The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, *before* the great and awesome day of the Lord comes." Any and everyone who attempts to make the sign that initiates the Day of the Lord and Day of the Lord equal must violate this verse. Joel is clear: the sign occurs *before* the Day of the Lord comes. Whatever else the first four seals are, they are *not* a part of the eschatological wrath of God, a fact to be substantiated later.

3. The second significant portion of the sixth seal is the response of "those who dwell upon the earth" in Revelation 6:14-17.

3a. Kings...the great men...the commanders...the rich...the strong...every slave...free man = John lists a very broad cross section of humanity who respond to the sign that signals the imminent outbreak of the wrath of God. This list is intended to show that all unbelievers living on the earth at this time are the subjects of the coming wrath. Revelation 19:18-19 indicates that these are the very groups God

shall sacrifice to the birds at His great supper.

3b. Hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains = this phrase indicates that the wide circle of humanity recognizes the import of these signs. This supports our claim that the "mountains" and "islands" do not disappear at this point, but move out of their original locations. Notice, they "hid themselves," which is past tense. These people are *in* the caves and mountains.

3c. They said to the mountains and to the rocks = indicates that the wicked desire death.

3d. Fall on us and hide us = this phrase is a bit strange. Perhaps, the strangeness of this verse demonstrates the level of fear the wicked are experiencing at this point. Death is not the immediate goal of the wicked at this point. Obviously, if the mountain falls on them, they will die, but they request not only to die, but also to be hidden from the sight of God. This suggests that the "presence of God" is beyond human appreciation unless man is holy. A wicked man in the presence of a holy God is beyond human tolerance. To be dead is not enough. To merely commit suicide is not enough. For the wicked, even to be dead in the presence of a holy God is not enough. They want to be buried. They want to be out of sight.

3e. From the presence of Him who sits on the throne = is a clear reference to God the Father. Throughout the book of Revelation, and in this context (notice the Lamb), God the Father is seated on the throne. Some argue that "the presence of Him who sits on the throne" is a roundabout way of referring to God the Father without mentioning His name directly. Who is seated is not an issue! For this author, we are more interested in what is seen by the wicked.

Isaiah 2:19 states, "And men will go into caves of the rocks, and into holes of the ground before the terror of the Lord, and before the splendor of His majesty, when He arises to make the earth tremble." *The terror of the Lord and the splendor of His majesty* may refer to the glory of God. Peter declares in his second letter that Jesus, "received honor and glory from God the Father...the Majestic Glory...." Job 13:11 records, "Will not His majesty terrify you, and the dread of Him fall on you?" The point is this: there is going to be a manifestation of God the Father at this event. It will involve His glory, which might be depicted through a great throne since God is invisible.

3f. From the wrath of the Lamb = is the second object of terror for the wicked who seek death and burial as an escape. It is clear that the Lamb is Jesus Christ, the second member of the Trinity.

With the Lamb is connected wrath. This is the first explicit usage of the term *wrath* in the book of Revelation. That it is connected with the Lamb should not be taken lightly. Jesus is the eschatological Judge (John 5:27, Acts 10:42 and Daniel 7:13-14). He executes the Father's wishes.

3g. For = indicates the reason for the conduct of the wicked. The reason the wicked call upon the mountains and the rocks to kill and bury them is because of the great day of wrath initiated by the cataclysms.

3h. Great day of their (His) wrath has come = is an important clause for several reasons. However, before we look at the significance of the complete clause, the reader may be aware of a slight difference in wording of this verse in different translations. *Their* versus *His* wrath is an ongoing discussion. One cannot be dogmatic either way. There is no theological difference regardless of the adopted reading. The Lord Jesus clearly states that He and the Father are one in every way important. Therefore, His wrath is their wrath and their wrath is His wrath.

The context clearly identifies this day as the eschatological Day of the Lord, which in the Old Testament is God the Father's day of wrath. However, in the New Testament, the term *Lord* comes to represent Jesus as well (Acts 2:36). Therefore, the Day of the Lord is both Jesus' and the Father's eschatological wrath.

Has come properly translates the grammatical construction, but the sense of the

Greek verb is missing. The Greek suggests the sense "is about to come." The emphasis is on the initiation of the action. This fits well with the question of the Martyrs in the fifth seal. The fifth seal requests the coming of the wrath of God. The sixth seal announces the impending or imminent arrival of the wrath of God and the seventh seal demonstrates the wrath of God.

3i. Who is able to stand? = This rhetorical question demands an answer, which is "no one!" There is no wicked person able to stand up against the wrath of God.

□

[Next Section: Chapter Seven - Deliverance](#)

□

Revelation
COMMENTARY
WWW.REVELATIONCOMMENTARY.ORG

Questions? Comments?
Send us an email!

revelationcommentary.org
© Sola Scriptura
info@solagroup.org


SOLA SCRIPTURA

Produced and Developed by [Sola Scriptura](#)

□



□

Previous Section: Chapter Six - The First Six Seals

□

CHAPTER SEVEN - DELIVERANCE

Revelation 7:1

(1) After this I saw (2) four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back (3) the four winds of the earth, (4) so that no wind should blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree.

1. After this I saw = a popular formula used by John to introduce a new unit of material. It indicates a new sequence, but not necessarily a new time factor. In sequence, the fact that the sixth seal renders the earth absent of all light demands a temporary darkness.

There is no justification on the part of those who attempt to assign a permanent end to sun, moon, and stars at the sixth seal. Only by ignoring textual details and/or maximizing textual similarities with regards to seal six, trumpet four and bowl four can one make a case against a limited cessation of light during the sixth seal. The use of the sun to scorch men on the earth at the fourth bowl judgment demands that whatever happens at the sixth seals, it is limited in duration.

2. Four angels = we are not told who these angles are. We are told that they are positioned at the four corners of the earth. The significance of their position is seen in the fact that they control the whole earth.

3. The four winds of the earth = refers to the directions North, South, East and West (Eze 37:9; Jer 49:36 and Dan 7:2; 8:8 and 11:4).

4. So that = indicates the purpose of the restraining angels. They are holding back the wind. We are not told why the wind needs to be restrained, but the implication is danger. That is, these winds will cause great destruction on the earth once let lose. By implication, only those divinely protected will be safe from the blowing wind.

Revelation 7:2-3

And I saw another angel ascending (1) from the rising of the sun, having (2) the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted (3) to harm the earth and the sea, saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until (4) we have sealed (5) the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads."

1. From the rising of the sun = is a figure of speech that means *the East*.

2. The seal of the living God = is not explicitly defined at this point. Neither are we told what the sealing is for. Later in the book, we will see that God divinely protects Israel by giving her seclusion in a special place from the wrath of Satan/Antichrist. However, those sealed by the angelic beings will not be secluded. This marks a distinction between the wrath of God and the wrath of man. Seclusion will not be a defense against the wrath of God.

3. To harm = this Greek verb means "to hurt or harm, with the implication of doing something which is wrong or undeserved (Louw & Nida, § 20:25). This is an appropriate verb to use at this point. The earth, sea and trees will very much receive *undeserved* wrath. Nature, locked in a perpetual fallen state since Adam's sin (Rom 8:18-22), finally begins her journey to rebirth.

Like Christ, she must suffer before ultimate freedom comes.

4. We have sealed = "we" implies multiple angles are involved in the sealing process. Given the number to be sealed, this is understandable. The context clearly indicates what will be done. Each person will receive a special mark on his or her forehead, which will clearly identify said person as God's property. The context also demonstrates what the purpose of the mark or brand is. Some argue that the seal is salvation, but there is no evidence of this claim. Those who take this position are reading into this passage ideas taken from the writings of the apostle Paul (Eph 1:13). In context, the sealing is to prevent harm. It is a sealing of protection. Revelation 9:4 explicitly declares that those who have the seal of God are protected from the fallout of the fifth trumpet.

5. The bond-servants = the context will eventually designate the bond-servants explicitly. However, it is strange that this term is used to designate the 144,000 Jews. Strange because this term in the New Testament is usually used to refer to believers. However, clearly the folk who are sealed are not believers. The primary argument against the notion that the sealed are believers is the fact that only a limited number are sealed. Only by spiritualizing the number 144,000 can one argue that this number refers to the whole Church. *Slave* or *bond-servant* is used here in the true sense of ownership. God owns, claims, and seals His property. Such a view is not inconsistent with the long held biblical notion that Israel is God's unique people.

Revelation 7:4-8

And (1) I heard the number of those who were sealed, (2) one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from (3) every tribe of the sons of (4) Israel: from Judah, twelve thousand were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben... Gad... Asher... Naphtali... Manasseh... Simeon... Levi... Issachar... Zebulun... Joseph... Benjamin, twelve thousand were sealed.

1. I heard = is an important textual detail. Many would suspect John of making up this material if it were not clear that he got this information from a direct source. As with everything else in the book, this information is given by a voice, which is not defined explicitly!

2. One hundred and forty-four thousand = this number has received great consideration. Speculations abound. It is sad that commentators do not take this number literally. To denominate the number by 12,000 adds to the literal nature of this figure. We are not told why 12,000 are chosen, but that twelve thousand are chosen is clear.

There is no textual basis to support those who claim that the 144,000 are any entity other than physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. To spiritualize the 144,000 into a Christian group violates the plain sense of the text. John gives the reader every detail necessary to correctly identify this group. The critical phrase "from every tribe of the sons of Israel" should settle any debate about their identity. This phrase always refers to physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Out of six hundred and thirty-five occurrences of this phrase throughout the Scriptures, Revelation 7:4 would be the only exception. There is no compelling reason to spiritualize away the literal sense. *Every tribe of the sons of Israel* has solid biblical support as a referent of Jews only.

3. Every = would seem to suggest that all twelve sons of Jacob are intended here. However, Manasseh is included and Dan is left out. Manasseh's inclusion and Dan's exclusion are interesting. Who is included or excluded from a list of Jacob's sons is determined by the author's intent.

A biological list of Jacob's sons would include Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Joseph, and Benjamin. A land grant list would include Reuben, Simeon, Judah, Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, and Benjamin. Joseph and Levi would be excluded and Manasseh and Ephraim would be included reflecting that Joseph received the double portion of his father's inheritance. A blessing/curse list would include or exclude those not affected by it. In the case of Moses' blessings list of Deuteronomy 33, Simeon is not included.

A change in the list of Jacob's sons occurs after Genesis 49. There, Jacob stripped Reuben of

his rights as first-born. The right of the first-born to receive a double portion of the father's inheritance passed to Joseph. The reason Reuben lost it is that he defiled Jacob by sleeping with Bilhah, Jacob's concubine. This is how Ephraim and Manasseh received land grants from Joshua. Judah prevailed over his brothers and from him came the leader (king) of Israel (1 Chr 5:1-2).

It is clear that the list of Revelation 7 is not based on the land grant, which would exclude Joseph and Levi. The list is not based on physical lineage, for Manasseh is not the biological child of Jacob, but is adopted. Like the list of those blessed by Moses in Deuteronomy 33, this list is based on blessings/curses. As Simeon was left out of that list, Dan is left out of this list. Dan is left out of the list because he is not blessed. The purpose of the sealing is to prevent harm to those sealed. The fact that no members of the tribe of Dan receive this special protection is at first surprising. However, the selection of only twelve thousand from each tribe indicates that only a few of the larger group receives this special protection. That not a single Danite receives this special protection indicates an unfavorable attitude towards him. Some have suggested that Dan's idolatry is the reason for his exclusion at this point. There is no explicit biblical basis to be dogmatic either way.

Joseph can substitute for either Ephraim, Manasseh or both and in the Revelation list he is a substitute for Ephraim (Eze 37:16-19). The name Ephraim became synonymous with sin. Joseph is a substitute for Ephraim for two reasons. First, the name Ephraim became a substitute for Israel (the ten northern tribes) during the time of the prophets. Since that time, the name had an unfavorable connotation—willful rebellion. Second, the name Ephraim represents the 10 northern tribes and therefore was not fitting in the Revelation list, which is focusing on individual tribes.

4. Israel = refers to the father of the twelve tribes. It is amazing how many commentators attempt to argue that this is a reference to the church. Yet, the context screams against such a conclusion. For John to list out twelve historical sons of Jacob from which twelve thousand individuals are protected and yet be so misunderstood is mind numbing! There is but one passage in the whole Bible where the term *Israel* is disputed—Galatians 6:16. Given the hundreds of other clear passage, Galatians 6:16 should be interpreted in light of them. Israel always stands for a historical place; a man named Jacob or his physical descendants. There is not one clear biblical passage that uses the term *Israel* for spiritual descendants of Abraham. Therefore, the one hundred and forty-four thousand protected individuals are a divinely chosen remnant, physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Conclusion

With John's depiction of God's mercy to a divinely chosen remnant of Israel, the second major series of visions are finished.

Revelation 7:9-10

(1) After these things I looked, and behold, (2) a great multitude, (3) which no one could count, (4) from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, (5) standing (6) before the throne and before the Lamb, (7) clothed in white robes, and (8) palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, (9) "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb."

1. After these things = this is the second occurrence of this phrase in the Revelation to mark the beginning of a new vision sequence. How much time elapses between these two visions is not known. This vision sequence begins at Revelation 7:9 and will continue through Revelation 15:4.

2. A great multitude = the Greek literally says *a much or many group or multitude*. We would say "a huge crowd."

3. Which no one could count = this phrase is obviously a figure of speech. It is not intended to be taken literally. Logic requires this conclusion. If the language is forced to be literal, then John has lied. A man could certainly number the multitude given the time and cooperation of those to be counted. The author is emphasizing the vast number of individuals that compose this group. The contrast between the specific number of sealed Jews and the unlimited nature of the great multitude should not be missed. This is the first important contrastive point that we

should glean from this text.

4. From every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues = points out the second important contrastive point to be gleaned from this text. This innumerable multitude is Gentile and Jew in composition. This innumerable multitude represents a universal gathering unlike the 144, 000 who are specifically identified as Jewish.

5. Standing = is a perfect participle. This is very important because it indicates that the universally innumerable multitude is one group. In other words, they are not assembling, but have assembled. John sees the finished product. The importance of this point will become evident later.

6. Before the throne and before the Lamb = gives us the location of the standing universally innumerable multitude. This is the third important contrastive point John gives us. Unlike the earth bound 144, 000, this group is in heaven.

7. Clothed in white robes = signals a change in the status of these earthly beings who are in heaven in contrast to martyrs of the fifth seal. These individuals have bodies and are clothed. The fifth seal martyrs did not have bodies and were given robes to be worn later.

8. Palm branches in their hands = immediately reminds of us of the Lord's entrance into Jerusalem days before His death. The palm frond is an ancient symbol of victory. That these individuals are no doubt waving them before God the Father and God the Son suggests a celebration is taking place. John 12:13 records a similar event. The multitude waved palm fronds before the Lord as He rode into Jerusalem. They said, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord (God the Father), even the King of Israel."

Hosanna is an Aramaic transliteration that means possibly, "save, I pray." That it was a term of supplication is without debate--a call to God for salvation. Yet, the universally innumerable multitude is not asking for salvation. They are praising God for salvation completed.

9. Salvation = is a strange term to associate with God the Father and God the Son. However, the universally innumerable multitude is not indicating God's need for salvation, rather, they are stating a fact: salvation or victory belongs to God. Their experience bears this out. God the Father and God the Son are both recognized as the source of deliverance for the universally innumerable multitude.

Revelation 7:11-12

And (1) all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, (2) "Amen, (3) blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen."

1. All the angels were standing around the throne = indicates that the universally innumerable multitude has joined the "adorers of God" in heaven. In the fashion of a "round," first the universally innumerable multitude offers words of adoration. Then, "all the angels" follow. Closer yet to the throne of God, the elders and the closest group of all—the four living creatures join the heavenly praise session.

2. Amen = concludes the praise statement of the universally innumerable multitude. Then follows the praise statement of the angels, the elders and the four living creatures.

3. Blessing...glory...wisdom...thanksgiving...honor...power and might = is a unique sevenfold doxological predicate. This is another example of the author's heavy use of the number seven to indicate the perfected nature of the end-time events.

Revelation 7:13

And (1) one of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are clothed in the white robes, (2) who are they, and from where have they come?"

1. One of the elders answered = argues against any attempt to identify the twenty-four elders with the church as some pretribulationists attempt to do. The elders are not a monolith. They act as individuals as well as a group.

2. Who are they, and from where have they come? = indicates two important questions. First, the identity of the group is questioned. The second issue concerns their point of origination. These two questions will be answered in reverse order beginning in verse 14b. This is typical NT methodology. In Matthew 24:3, two questions are asked and Matthew 24:4-31 records the Lord's answer in reverse order, i.e. the last question is answered first.

Revelation 7:14

And I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, (1) "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and (2) they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

1. These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation = is full of interpretive insights. First, the elder is answering the second question asked in verse 13b, "from where have they come?" In English, a "where" question usually anticipates a specific location. However, a specific place is not given but a specific time is indicated. *The great tribulation* has one parallel in Scripture—Matthew 24:21. In that specific passage, the definite article *the* is not used. As one of the original recipients of the Olivet Discourse (Mark 13:3), John, the apostle, heard Jesus use this very specific term. Therefore, his use reflects previous knowledge. *The great tribulation* is not a place, but a specific time. This is reflected in the translation of NASB, which states, "For those days will be a *time of tribulation*...(Mark 13:19)." This is in harmony with Daniel 12:1, which also calls this period "a time of distress." This universally innumerable multitude will arrive in heaven during the period of *the great tribulation*.

Out of suggests that this universally innumerable multitude come out of the midst of the great tribulation. The phrase, *the ones who come* translates a Greek substantival participle. In the context, the universally innumerable multitude is composed of "the ones who come." The participle in and of itself does not speak to issue of the timing of their arrival. However, this group is not in the process of coming one by one, but they come as a group. This is supported by the following statement.

2. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb = answers the second question posted in verse 13b above. The fact that the Lord states that overcomers "shall be clothed in white garments (Rev 3:5)," and that the Laodiceans should purchase "white garments, that the shame [of their] nakedness may not be revealed...(Rev 3:18)," limits the interpretation of Revelation 7:14b. The fact that every member of the universally innumerable multitude has "washed and made white" his robes removes any possibility that martyrdom is the action described here. While some members of the universally innumerable multitude did die the death of a martyr, this cannot be said for the entire group. Yet, every single member "washed and made white" his or her robe.

The fact that both the "washing" and the "making white" are described as past tense forces the participle "the ones who come" to be past tense as well. The Greek language works this way. This supports our conclusion that the universally innumerable multitude arrives in heaven as a group and not as individuals over a period of time.

Blood will not make anything white. Therefore, we know this is a figure of speech. The literal blood of Jesus is not intended here. Rather, the blood of Jesus is a metaphor for his life. Equally, literal white robes are not intended here either. Literally, the atoning death of Jesus has secured the eternal life of the universally innumerable multitude. These people are saved by the life of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 7:15

(1) For this reason, they are (2) before the throne of God; and (3) they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne (4) shall spread His tabernacle over them.

1. For this reason = explains why the universally innumerable multitude is before the throne of God. The reason they can stand before the throne of God is because of their salvation, which

they owe to the Lamb.

2. Before the throne of God = refers to God the Father.

3. They serve Him day and night in His temple = focuses on two issues. *Day and night* refers to the unceasing nature of praise and worship in heaven. The universally innumerable multitude joins in the eternal activity of the adorers of heaven. *His temple* refers to God's dwelling place in heaven.

4. Shall spread His tabernacle over them = refers to God's presence among the universally innumerable multitude.

Revelation 7:16-17

(1) They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; (2) neither shall the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; (3) for the Lamb in the center of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them to springs of (4) the water of life; and (5) God shall wipe every tear from their eyes."

1. They shall hunger...neither thirst any more = indicates the removal of physical discomforts. This is a clear sign of their resurrection.

2. Neither shall the sun beat down on them, nor any heat = indicates the removal of environmental discomforts.

3. For = indicates the reason for the removal of physical and environmental discomforts. The Lamb shepherds and guides the universally innumerable multitude.

4. Water of life = stands for the abundant life of glorified people. There will be no needs.

5. God will wipe every tear from their eyes = indicates the removal of all emotional discomforts.

□

[Next Section: Chapter Eight - Seventh Seal Events \[Trumpet Judgments 1-4\]](#)

□

Revelation
COMMENTARY
WWW.REVELATIONCOMMENTARY.ORG

Questions? Comments?
Send us an email!

revelationcommentary.org
© Sola Scriptura
info@solagroup.org


SOLA SCRIPTURA

Produced and Developed by [Sola Scriptura](#)

□



□

Previous Section: Chapter Seven - Deliverance

□

CHAPTER EIGHT - SEVENTH SEAL EVENTS [Trumpet Judgments 1-4]

Revelation 8:1-2

And when he broke (1) the seventh seal, there was (2) silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw (3) the seven angels who stand before God; and (4) seven trumpets were given to them.

1. The seventh seal = is the last of the seven seals which keeps the content of the scroll hidden. Only now can the content of the scroll be known. The seventh seal is of the nature of the last three seals. That is, the wrath of God is in focus. The fifth seal requests the pouring out of the wrath of God. The sixth seal announces the imminent outbreak of the wrath of God. Now the seventh and final seal depicts the actual beginning of God's wrath in the form of seven trumpet judgments.

2. Silence in heaven = has received wide discussion. Lacking explicit explanation wild speculation has abounded about the significance of this period of silence. The fact that the *silence* occurs in heaven is important. Since the creation of the angelic host, the adorers of heaven have continually praised and worshiped the great God of glory. That stops! There is only one event at this point in human history that could possibly render heaven silent—the wrath of God. Restrained since the Flood and promised since Adam, the eschatological wrath of God is about to finally begin. So dramatic is God's wrath that all the eternal activities of heaven—praise and worship of the Magnificent—stop!

3. The seven Angels (who stand before God) = is a definite group. *A*, *and*, and *the* are articles. They are used with nouns to indicate general or specific information about something. One can say, "An apple or the apple." In the Greek language, the presence of the article *the* can indicate several things. In the case of Revelation 8:2, the article indicates a group known to the readers. Some argue that these seven angles are archangels. However, John simply identifies these angels as those *who stand before God*. The Greek perfect tense (which is used with the verb *to stand*) suggests that these angels are special. All angels at one time or another stand before God for instructions, but these stand continually. Perhaps, these angels have a special activity for which they have waited to do since the beginning of creation.

4. Seven trumpets were given to them = is the special activity of these seven angels. They will blow the trumpets, which will be specifically defined beginning in verse 6 below.

Revelation 8:3-5

And another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much (1) incense was given to him, (2) that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer; and he filled it with the fire of the altar and threw it to the earth; and there followed (3) peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

1. Incense = in Israel was usually a spice that produced a pleasing order when burnt.

2. That he might add it to the prayers of all the saints = indicates the purpose of the incense or spices. The purpose of an incense offering was to please God in the hope that He would

respond with favor regarding ones request or need. The adding of incense to the prayers of the saints suggest the final step in gaining God's response.

The saints (ton hagion) refers to believers, naturally. Some have suggested that only living believers on earth at this particular point in human history is the focus of the term. However, John states that "the prayers of all the saints" are on this altar. What prayers is an obvious question? The only prayers of all the saints unanswered and contextually appropriate at this point are prayers of vengeance. Unanswered down through the ages, the prayers for God's ultimate judgment against those who persecute the righteous has finally come.

3. Peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake = describe the first evidence of God's wrath about to fall on the earth. Because thunder, sounds, lightning and an earthquake occur in connection with the seventh bowl, some argue that the trumpets and bowls are synonymous. However, this is a result of ignoring the textual details and focusing on generalities. At this point, in the chronology of the Revelation, God's wrath has not begun. Only the sign of its imminent outbreak has occurred.

Revelation 8:6

And the seven angels who had (1) the seven trumpets (2) prepared themselves to sound them.

1. The seven trumpets = is the sound cycle of seven that appears in the book of Revelation. Like the seven seals, the trumpets can be divided into two cycles. Like the first four seals, the first four trumpets are alike in nature. Similarly, the final three trumpets are alike as were the final three seals. As the final three seals dealt with the wrath of God, the final three trumpets will deal with an intensified expression of God's wrath (the three woes).

Trumpets have a rich tradition in the Old Testament Scriptures. Predominantly, trumpets were used to (1) call God's people together; (2) call to repentance; (3) announce judgment; (4) call to salvation; (5) call to the king's coronation; and (6) announce eschatological judgment. The apostle Paul indicates that the trumpet of God will blow at the Parousia of Christ (1 Thess 4:16, 1 Cor 15:52). A teaching reflected in the teachings of Christ in the Olivet Discourse (Matt 24:30-31). The seven trumpets of Revelation clearly announce judgment.

2. Prepared themselves to sound them = is not defined, i.e. we do not know what preparation was made.

Revelation 8:7

And the first sounded, and there came (1) hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and (2) a third of the earth (3) was burnt up, and a third of the trees were burnt up, and all the green grass was burnt up.

1. Hail and fire, mixed with blood = are the manifestations of the first trumpet. Because of the results stated after this announcement, fire is the primary characteristic of the first trumpet.

2. A third of the earth = is clearly a defining trait of the trumpet judgments which should not be overlooked or generalized. This point clearly distinguishes the trumpet judgments from the seals and bowls. Only those who wish to ignore textual details while overly pressing generalities would equate the seals, trumpets and bowls.

3. Burnt up = the inhabitable part of the earth's surface has been reduced by one-third.

Revelation 8:8-9

And the second angel sounded, and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea; and (1) a third of the sea became blood; and a third of the creatures, which were in the sea and had life, died; and (2) a third of the ships were destroyed.

1. A third of the sea became blood = focuses the affects of the second trumpet. Destruction is focused against one-third of the salt water of the earth. Salt water becomes *blood*. We see no reason not to take this text literally. As the Nile became blood for Moses, one-third of salt water

will do the same. This naturally results in death for those creatures needing oxygen. Blood is the only element of a dead body, which cannot be harvested.

2. A third of the ships were destroyed = is a natural disaster resulting from the destruction of the sea.

Revelation 8:10-11

And the third angel sounded, and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on (1) a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters; and (2) the name of the star is called Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood; and (3) many men died from the waters, (4) because they were made bitter.

1. A third of the rivers and on the springs of waters = indicates a progression from land, to water (salt and fresh), to the heavens. The first four trumpets share the same nature. The surface of the earth is dramatically reduced by one-third. Since a single star could not literally fall on a third of the fresh water sources of the earth, John intends the reader to understand that the star affected one-third of the rivers and springs on the earth. How? That is unknown.

2. The name of the star is called Wormwood = is a unique phrase. There is no historical evidence that a star by this name existed in the ancient world. *Wormwood* is a medicinal herb of antiquity used to dispel worms from the intestines. It is very bitter.

3. Many men died from the water = is the natural result of fresh water made bitter. Wormwood is known for its bitterness, however, death is not normally associated with this herb.

4. Because they were made bitter = indicates the reason for the death of many people. Dehydration is not the cause of death, but drinking the water kills people. Thus, the purpose of the third trumpet is to kill men with bitter water.

Revelation 8:12

And the fourth angel sounded, and (1) a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were smitten, (2) so that a third of them might be darkened and (3) the day might not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way.

1. A third of the sun...moon...and...stars were smitten = again indicates an affect on the heavenly light sources.

2. So that a third of them might be darkened = Unlike the sixth seal where all light sources were temporally darkened, here only a third of the stars are darkened.

3. The day...and the night (might not shine) = what the exact affect of the fourth trumpet is not clear. Whether a twenty-four hour day becomes a sixteen hours day or whether three eight hour segments (day, night, and darkness) are intended cannot be dogmatically stated. At any rate, man loses a third of his light.

Revelation 8:13

And I looked, and (1) I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, (2) "Woe, woe, woe, to (3) those who dwell on the earth, because of the (4) remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"

1. I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying = is obviously a figure of speech. One cannot hear an eagle flying, but normally one sees an eagle flying. Equally, eagles do not speak normally. It is possible that this particular eagle will speak in the same way Balaam's ass spoke (Num 22:22-30). However, a solution that is more probable is that the eagle is a figure of speech. The actions of an angelic being moving in midheaven can be compared to an eagle flying in the sky. Flying suggests horizontal movement rather than the descending/ascending movement typical of angels.

2. Woe, woe, woe = a sign of trouble. The three "woes" are critical to the debate concerning the

chronology of the Revelation. See the discussion of the structure of the book for more details.

3. Those who dwell on the earth = this is the third occurrence of this important phrase. The eagle makes clear that the intended victims of the trumpet judgments are the earth-dwellers. These individuals are consistently portrayed throughout the Revelation as enemies of God and the objects of God's wrath.

4. Remaining blasts = there are three blasts or trumpets left to blow. These three trumpets are the three "woes." The severity of the three last trumpets is clearly emphasized.

□

[Next Section: Chapter Nine - Completion of 70th Week \[Trumpet Judgments 5-6\]](#)

□

Revelation
COMMENTARY
WWW.REVELATIONCOMMENTARY.ORG

Questions? Comments?
Send us an email!

revelationcommentary.org
© Sola Scriptura
info@solagroup.org


SOLA SCRIPTURA

Produced and Developed by [Sola Scriptura](#)

□

Revelation COMMENTARY

WWW.REVELATIONCOMMENTARY.ORG

□

[Previous Section: Chapter Eight - Seventh Seal Events \[Trumpet Judgments 1-4\]](#)

□

CHAPTER NINE - COMPLETION OF 70TH WEEK [Trumpet Judgments 5-6]

Revelation 9:1

And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw (1) a star from heaven (2) which had fallen to the earth; and (3) the key of the bottomless pit was given to him.

1. A star from heaven = is a supernatural being. *To him* indicates person-hood. In as much as this star is "from heaven," we can conclude that is an angelic being.

2. Which had fallen to the earth = describes the state of this angel. The tense of the verbal indicates that John did not see the angel falling, but saw it after it had already fallen. When the angel fell is not indicated. Who is this fallen angel? Theologically, *fallen angels* represent evil angelic beings. "Fallen angels" as a descriptive title has more extra-biblical support than biblical support. In Luke 10:18, Jesus does see Satan falling from heaven. However, here "fallen" is a part of the metaphor of "a fallen star." Therefore, no theological point is made. Rather, This is another angel that has come down to earth on a divine mission. John's description is apocalyptic in nature and should not be taken to mean anything else.

3. The key of the bottomless pit = refers to a very important biblical concept. The term "bottomless," which is a transliteration of *abussos* (abyss), occurs nine times in the New Testament, seven of them in the Revelation. It refers to a place of confinement of supernatural beings. The first occurrence of this term in the New Testament relates to Jesus miraculous deliverance of a demon possessed man that lived in a local graveyard. Significantly, prior to their departure from the Gadarian demoniac, the demons requested of Christ that He not "command them to depart into the abyss (Luke 8:31)." Matthew's account of this same incident adds the detail, "...Have You come here to torment us before the time (Matt 8:29)?" Clearly the *abyss* and the *time of torment* are connected. That the demons are aware of a future time when they will be assigned to the abyss is clear. Equally, the abyss will be a place of torment for demons. Revelation 20:3 locates the time of confinement of demons to coincide with the millennial reign of Christ. It also indicates that Satan will also occupy this place for 1000 years. The 1000-year imprisonment of Satan will not be a simple restriction of movement.

Revelation 11:7 and 17:8 indicate that the beast that kills God's two prophetic witnesses and persecutes the people of God during the end times also "ascends from the bottomless pit." Revelation 9:1-11 describes a locust's plague that is connected with the bottomless pit. Thus, in the NT the "abyss" is connected with supernatural beings.

Pit is the NASB's translation of the Greek term *phrear*. This word is used three times outside the Revelation. Luke 14:5 and John 4:11-12 refers to a well from which water is drawn. The NIV uses the term *shaft* as a translation of *phrear*. Contextually, this makes better sense. A *key to the shaft of the abyss* is a literal translation here.

Revelation 9:2

And (1) he opened the bottomless pit; and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and (2) the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit.

1. He opened the bottomless pit = or more literally, *he opened the shaft of the abyss*. This is the purpose of the angel's possession of the key. Since this pit is the imprisoning chamber of

supernatural powers, earth is safe as long as the pit is locked.

2. The sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit = this phrase serves to indicate that the opening of the pit results in a tremendous unleashing of smoke.

Revelation 9:3

And (1) out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth; and (2) power was given to them, (3) as the scorpions of the earth have power.

1. Out of the smoke came forth locusts = indicates the purpose of the smoke released from the pit. The onset of a locust's plague usually involved a darkening of the sky by the locusts as they approached. The uniqueness and purpose of these locusts necessitates an answer concerning their origin. They will be unlike any locusts the world has ever seen. They are not natural to this earth. Therefore, they come from the smoke.

Locusts have a long and rich tradition in Scripture. However, Revelation 9:11 reports that these locusts have "as king over them, the angel of the abyss." This along with the description that follows supports the conclusion that these are not real locusts. Whether the locust-like creatures were actually in the pit cannot be dogmatically affirmed.

2. Power was given to them = the term *power* is literally *authority*.

3. As the scorpions of the earth have power = As indicates that a comparison is intended here. The horrible locust-like creatures have authority just like the authority scorpions have. That said, however, we are challenged to understand what John means. Scorpions have the ability to sting, which results in extreme pain and possibly death. This type of ability is not normally referred to as authority. Yet, this is John's meaning here. As the God given ability of the scorpion is to hurt, so will be the authority of the horrible locust-like creatures from the smoke.

Revelation 9:4

(1) And they were told (2) that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but (3) only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

1. And they were told = indicates intelligence beyond that of mere locusts. Who tells the locust-like creatures what they are to do is not explicitly stated. Scholars are apt to opine that this is an example of a *passive of divine activity*. That is, the author has deliberately gone out of his way to avoid the direct mention of God's name in the activity described. We shall speak to this issue a bit later. However, Revelation 9:11 states that the locusts have a king over them. Logically, their king commands them concerning who to hurt and who not to hurt. The angelic king receives instructions from God.

2. That they should not hurt the grass...green thing...nor any tree = defines a limitation placed on the locust-like-creatures. Locust's plagues are notorious for destroying grass, green things and trees. However, the job of the locust-like-creatures is to hurt men. Since the first four trumpets focused on nature, the final three trumpets will focus on humanity directly.

3. Only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads = additionally defines the limitations placed on the locust-like-creatures. This confirms that the purpose of the sealing of the 144,000 physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was one of protection. Thus, the rest of humanity (both Jews and Gentiles) will suffer the pain inflicted by the locust-like-creatures. This argues strongly against identifying the 144,000 as believers. That God would only protect some believers and not other believers does not seem to accord with the context here.

Revelation 9:5-6

And (1) they were not permitted to kill anyone, but (2) to torment for five months; and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man. And in those days (3) men will seek death and will not find it, and they will long to die and death flees from them.

1. They were not permitted to kill anyone = continues the limitations placed on the locust-like-creatures. Unlike a true scorpion's sting, which can lead to death, the locust-like-creatures are only able to inflict pain.

2. To torment for five months = is the ultimate purpose of the locust-like-creatures. To *torment* literally means, "to punish by physical torment." Interestingly, this is the same word used by the legion of demons in Matthew 8:29 to Jesus. This is clearly divine judgment. Most scholars are of the opinion that "five months" should not be taken literally. However, the fact that not one of the seals or the bowls has such a limitation argues that this time limit should be taken literally. The severity of this particular trumpet judgment also argues for a literal interpretation.

3. Men will seek death = describes the response of those stung by the locust-like-creatures. This again is poetic justice. They killed others, but they themselves are denied death. The righteous died, but did not want to. The wicked want to die, but cannot. Note the irony!

This also argues against the notion that those stung are believers. Revelation 9:20-21 lists those who were stung. There is no indication that the unrepentant are true believers. Conversely, the list signals unbelief.

Revelation 9:7

And (1) the appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle; and (2) on their heads, as it were, crowns like gold, and (3) their faces were like the faces of men.

1. The appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle = is the first of ten characteristics John will give the reader. Unfortunately, we are at a loss to explain some of his references. We cannot be sure of what aspect of "horses prepared for battle" John is referring to here. Perhaps, the idea is that of horses lined up across the horizon just prior to the charge into battle.

2. On their heads, as it were, crowns like gold = is the second descriptive characteristic John gives of the locust-like-creatures. The crowns are not literal gold crowns, but give the appearance as gold. Perhaps, they shine like gold.

3. Their faces were like the faces of men = is the third in a series of ten descriptive characteristics. The locust-like-creatures have both the characteristics of animals and humans.

Revelation 9:8

And (1) they had hair like the hair of women, and (2) their teeth were like *the teeth* of lions.

1. They had hair like the hair of women = continues the descriptive portrait. Perhaps, John's point here is the length of hair on these creatures.

2. Their teeth were like the teeth of lions = focuses attention on the destructive capabilities of these creatures. It is the sting of these creatures that man will fear, however, their appearance is not encouraging. These creatures have the ability to kill, but they are not permitted to do so.

Revelation 9:9

And (1) they had breastplates like breastplates of iron; and (2) the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle.

1. They had breastplates like breastplates of iron = is perhaps a reference back to the animal-like characteristics. As horses prepared for battle, these creatures have a covering across their chest.

2. The sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots = continues John focus on the tremendous number of these creatures. Every intent is taken to terrorize mankind.

Revelation 9:10

And (1) they have tails like scorpions, and stings; and (2) in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months.

1. They have tails like scorpions = is probably a focus on the shape of the locusts' tail.

2. In their tails is their power to hurt men = is again a focus on their authority.

Revelation 9:11

(1) They have as king over them, (2) the angel of the abyss; (3) his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and (4) in the Greek he has the name Apollyon.

1. They have as king over them = suggests that these locusts have order and purpose. The appellation *king* is interesting. Scripture never accords such a title to Satan, himself. However, these creatures have a unique purpose and as such are required a strict discipline, which perhaps explains their need for a king. Proverbs 30:27 states "The locusts have no king..." However, no contradiction exists here because these horrible locusts-like creatures only appear as locusts.

2. The angel of the abyss = is identified as king over the horrible locust-like-creatures. The exact identity of this angel is not certain. The particular grammatical construction (Genitive of subordination) here indicates that this angel is over the bottomless pit. It does not say that the angel is from the bottomless pit.

3. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon = contains two important ideas. First, the phrase "in Hebrew" is a unique Johannine expression (Rev 16:16, John 5:2; 19:13, 17, 20; 20:6). That some of John's readers are intended to be of Jewish background is clear. *Abaddon* has a rich tradition in the Old Testament Scriptures. It is used as the name of the place of the dead in Proverbs 15:11, Job 26:6, and Psalms 88:11. It is also used as a poetic parallel to Sheol in Job 15:11 and Proverbs 15:11; to death in Job 28:22; and to the grave in Psalms 88:11.

Interestingly, the LXX translates the Hebrew term *abaddon* with the Greek term *apoleia* (destruction). The apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 labels the Man of Lawlessness (Antichrist) as "the son of destruction (*abaddon*)." The Lord Jesus indicates that Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, was "the son of predition (*abaddon*)" in fulfillment of Scripture.

It is altogether unclear who this angel is. Scripture does not explicitly state that the "angel" who fell from heaven and the "angel" over the abyss are the same. However, there is no contextual reason why they cannot be the same individuals.

The name of this angelic leader is Abaddon (Hebrew = Destruction) and Apollyon (Greek = Destroyer). There is no biblical basis for assigning this angelic being the same identification as Satan as some commentators attempt to do. The Hebrew term *Abaddon* is used to refer to the realm of the dead (Prov 15:11; Job 26:6; Ps 88:11). It is the place of destruction.

This is the only place in Scripture that a particular angel is explicitly identified by the name *Destruction* or *Destroyer*, but we discern his presence in Scripture. 1 Corinthians 10:8-10 states, "Nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor murmur, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed by *the destroyer*" (italics added). The murmuring event Paul is referencing occurs in Numbers 14 in connection with the report of the twelve spies. The death of the ten "unbelievers" is credited to "the destroyer." Hebrews 11:28 also reports that "the destroyer" (Masculine participle) was responsible for the death of the first born in Egypt just prior to the Exodus (Ex 12:23). As in Numbers 14, where the plague led by the destroyer accomplished God's punishment of the wicked so in Revelation 9 the locusts plague led by the destroyer will accomplish God's punishment of the wicked.

4. In the Greek he has the name Apollyon = attests to the fact that John also intends a Greek audience among his readers. *Apollyon* comes from a Greek verb (*apollunai*), which mean, "to destroy." This is the destroyer. Not Satan, but an angelic lieutenant committed to the task of destruction of God's enemies.

Given the description of the locusts that occurs in Revelation 9:7-10:

And the shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle; and on their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men. They had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. And they had breastplates like breastplates or iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle. They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. And their power was to hurt men five months.

and the fact that an angel leads them (Rev 9:11), some interpreters are inclined to see demonic figures represented here. However, this is highly unlikely. Revelation 9:20 declares, "But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons...." It is inconceivable that people would be continuing to worship demons if demons are in fact the perpetrators of trumpets 5 and 6 given the horrible nature of the torment.

Equally, since trumpet five is the wrath of God it is difficult to see God using demonic forces to accomplish His punishment of the wicked. Many commentators associate the horrible locust-like-creatures with demons because of their appearance. However, this is unjustified.

Revelation 9:12

(1) The first woe is past; behold, two woes are still coming (2) after these things.

1. The first woe is past = designates an essential structural indicator for the whole book of Revelation. See the [Introduction](#) for a detailed discussion of this point.
2. After these things = that John places this structural indicator at this point and introduces what follows as the result of the sixth trumpet should settle any debate that the fifth and sixth trumpets are two different events.

This critical structural mark should settle the debate about the structure of the book of Revelation. Chronology and sequence is mandated.

Revelation 9:13-14

And the sixth angel sounded, and (1) I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, (2) "release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."

1. I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God = is limiting in its focus. It does not refer to God since the voice is "before God." Who or what speaks is not clearly indicated.
2. Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates = is a difficult phrase. Just who "the four angels" are is not certain. Four angels were identified in Revelation 7:1. However, these four angels are bound, which indicate a different set of angels.

Revelation 9:15

And the four angels, (1) who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released, (2) so that they might kill a third of mankind.

1. Who had been prepared for the hour... day... month... and year = clearly emphasizes the predetermined will of God. God placed these angels in confinement for a specific purpose, which has come due.

This powerful verse clearly and unmistakably argues against the pretribulational doctrine of imminency. Since the events of the Revelation have not occurred (in contradistinction to preterists), it is clear that the hour, day, month, and year is still future.

2. So that they might kill a third of mankind = is both frightening and enlightening. This is the stated purpose of the predetermined will of God.

Revelation 9:16

And (1) the number of the armies of the horsemen was two hundred million; (2) I heard the number of them.

1. The number of the armies of the horsemen was two hundred million = is a staggering number. However, the abrupt transition has led some to conclude that the four angels were merely necessary to excite the armies for war. That is, what follows in verses 17-19 is a resumption of the fifth trumpet judgment described above! However, the fact that the sixth

trumpet's clearly identified purpose is to kill and the fifth trumpet's purpose is to torment (without death as a result) should dispel such notions.

John specifically and clearly states that "the four angels" will "kill a third of mankind." In verse 18, he indicates the "three plagues" killed "a third of mankind." How are these details harmonized? We shall see shortly.

2. I heard the number of them = indicates the source of John's knowledge. Those who doubt John and what is written in the Revelation as to its truthfulness do so out of sheer unbelief, not for lack of information.

Revelation 9:17-19

And this is how I saw in the vision (1) the horses and those who sat on them: (2) the riders had breastplates the color of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone; and (3) the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions; and (4) out of their mouths proceed fire and smoke and brimstone. A third of mankind was killed by these three plagues, by (5) the fire and the smoke and the brimstone, which proceeded out of their mouths. For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents and have heads; and with them they do harm.

1. The horses and those who sat on them = clearly points to a very different group than those identified in Revelation 9:1-11. This vision includes both horse and rider.

2. The riders = are described, but not specifically identified.

3. The heads of the horses are like the heads of lions =

4. Out of their mouths proceed fire and smoke and brimstone =

5. The fire and the smoke and the brimstone = are stated to be the expressed cause of the death of a third of mankind. John says that these are plagues.

An important question concerns the relationship between "the four angels," and "the horses and those who sat on them." The easiest solution is to recognize the four angels are leaders of the horses and riders as the horrible locust-like-creatures had an angelic leader.

Revelation 9:20-21

(1) The rest of mankind, (2) who were not killed by these plagues, (3) did not repent of the works of their hands, (4) so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, (5) which can neither see nor hear nor walk; and (6) they did not repent of their murders not of their sorceries not of their immorality nor of their thefts.

1. The rest of mankind = confirms that only a third of mankind was killed. The term *mankind* is a translation of the Greek word *anthropos*. This is a general term. This group is composed of those who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

2. Who were not killed by these plagues =

3. Did not repent of the works of their hands = is the first of two concluding statements about repentance to follow the judgments of God (9:20-21 and 16:9, 11). There are no explicit statements that the purpose of God's judgment is to elicit repentance from the wicked. Contrarily, Revelation 2-3 is marked by a continual call for repentance on the part of the righteous. The righteous are called upon to repent, but no word is given as to whether they did or did not. On the other hand, the wicked are not explicitly called upon to repent, but they are repeatedly stated to be unrepentant. *The works of their hands* is a recurring theme in Scripture that refers to either idols (Deut 31:29) or man's deeds (Ps 28:4).

4. So as not to worship demons = clarifies John's intent. Here, the phrase, *the works of man's hands* refers to idols. Scripture indicates that idols are nothing more than demons. Specifically, 1 Corinthians 10:19-20 states, "What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons."

Therefore, a better translation of this section would be, "with the result that they did not stop

worshipping the demons, or idols, made etc..." In other words, demons and idols are the same thing. John lists the material from which demons were made: gold, silver, brass, stone and wood. John moves from the most expensive to the least expensive.

5. Which can neither see nor hear nor walk = adds insult to injury. That people worship such things is ridiculous. However, demonic involvement explains why people worship idols. The supernatural component is achieved through demons.

6. They did not repent of their murders... sorceries... immorality... thefts = concludes John's list of vices uncorrected by trumpet judgments one through six. These vices are listed on several occasions throughout the NT in connection with wickedness (Rom 13:9, Mark 7:21-22). *Sorceries* can refer to either *poison* or *magical spells*. In biblical times, the term referred mostly to magical spells. However, *sorcery* (*pharmakon*) can mean *medicine* or *drug*. One needs to exercise caution at this point and not read modern history back into Scripture, but it may be possible to see wide spread drug abuse during this period. Particularly, given the wide- spread unveiled manifestations of Satan and demons during the same period. Magic in the traditional sense would be passé.

□

[Next Section: Chapter Ten - The Little Scroll](#)

□

Revelation
COMMENTARY
WWW.REVELATIONCOMMENTARY.ORG

Questions? Comments?
Send us an email!

revelationcommentary.org
© Sola Scriptura
info@solagroup.org


SOLA SCRIPTURA

Produced and Developed by [Sola Scriptura](#)

□



□

Previous Section: Chapter Nine - Completion of 70th Week [Trumpet Judgments 5-6]

□

CHAPTER TEN - THE LITTLE SCROLL

Revelation 10:1

I saw (1) another strong angel coming down out of heaven, (2) clothed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire;

1. Another strong angel = sends us back to Revelation 5:2. There "a strong angel" is associated with the large scroll. That John indicates that this angel is *another* limits the possible referent. Some have attempted to argue that this angel is none other than Jesus, Himself. However, this point should not be pressed. It would appear safer to allow the text to limit our discussion.

Three angelic beings are identified as "strong" in the Revelation. The first occurrence appears in Revelation 5:2. The second is in Revelation 10:1 and the final occurrence is in Revelation 18:21. What is the significance of the "strong angels?" The characteristics associated with "another strong angel" in Revelation 10:1-7 are closely parallel to an angelic being described in Daniel 10:5-6 and 12:5-7. These similarities have given some interpreters the basis to see a connection between these two texts.

Based on Revelation 5:2, 10:1 and 18:21, *strong angels* are revelatory angels. That is, they specifically communicate to man information from God. In Revelation 5:2, the strong angel communicates the identity of the person worthy to open the sealed scroll. In Revelation 10:1, he communicates a significant transition in the program of God. In Revelation 18:21, he communicates the destiny of the capital city of the beast empire. Similarly, an angelic being in Daniel 10 communicates the destiny of the Jews and Jerusalem.

Daniel 10:21b states, "Yet there is no one who stands firmly with me against these *forces* except Michael your prince." The verse literally says, "Yet there is no one who shows himself strong with me...." Hebrew language emphasizes the continuing nature of these angelic beings. In other words, they are continually strong. Therefore, Michael and this angelic being are *strong angels*. In Revelation 10:1, the adjective *strong* comes from the Greek word *ischuros*. In Daniel 10:21b, the verb *to show oneself strong* comes from the Hebrew word *chazak*. The verb form used in Daniel 10:21b means *to prove to be strong/ courageous*.

Therefore, like this angelic being, Michael is a strong angel. Notice again Daniel 10:21b, "Yet there is no one who shows himself strong with me against these forces except Michael your prince." Michael is described as "one of the chief princes," in Daniel 10:13, which demands that there is more than one chief prince. The apostle Jude indicates that Michael is an *archangel* (Jude 1:9). Thus, the angel who speaks in Daniel 10 and Revelation 10 are probably both of the same type as Michael, the archangel.

2. Clothed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire = is similar to the description given in Daniel 10:5-6 and Revelation 1:13-15. In both passages, a case can be made that Christ is the referent. However, the fact that the description in Revelation 10:1 is specifically identified as an angel should settle the matter of the identity of the angel here.

Revelation 10:2-3

(1) (2) And he had in his hand a little book (3) which was open. (4) He placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land; (5) and he cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars; and when he had cried out, (6) the seven peals of thunder uttered their voices.

1. It is critical that the reader understands that John's personal involvement in the scene that constitutes the tenth chapter of Revelation *will not be repeated* in the future! In other words, when the events of the book of Revelation begin to unfold this strong angel will not descend from heaven and communicate with John again. The event recorded in chapter 10 occurred literally at the time that John received the book of Revelation. We have the benefit of what occurred because several important details are given to us. However, the event itself, the angel coming down to talk with John will not happen again. This is critical to understand the importance of John's vision. That this is a correct conclusion is supported by several facts. First, in order for these events to happen again literally, the apostle John must be resurrected from the dead. Second, John will have to eat the little scroll again. Third, John would have to prophesy again concerning end time events.

The single most important point of chapter 10 seems to be the angelic announcement that "in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished." Now that we know this fact, there will be no need for the strong angel to descend from heaven to report a fact already known by the reader of the Revelation.

2. And he had in his hand a little book = is an obvious contrast with the first strong angel of chapter five. In chapter five, the book is in God's hand and it is sealed. In chapter 10, an angel has the book and it is opened. Similarly, Ezekiel 2:9-10 reports a heavenly being gave him a scroll to be eaten. The importance of the little book will be seen shortly.

3. Which was open = in contrast to the scroll of Revelation 5, this little book is opened. This indicates that John would see the contents of the page exposed. If it were written in a language that John could read, he would be able to read whatever was visible to him.

4. He placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land = describes the stance of the strong angel. The importance of the angel's stance will become evident later. However, it is important at this point to recognize that both land and sea are under the foot (authority) of this angelic being.

5. And he cried out with a loud voice = is typical of angelic communications throughout the book of Revelation. It is critically important for the reader to understand that John is describing what he sees happening during his reception of the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. We are not told exactly what the strong angel said.

6. The seven peals of thunder uttered their voices = is not defined. Scripture does not identify the one specifically speaking at this point. This fact underscores the conclusion that who is speaking is not the important point.

Revelation 10:4

When the seven peals of thunder had spoken, I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven saying, (1) "Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken and do not write them."

1. Seal up the things = seems inappropriate at this point because John has not written anything down that the seven thunders said in order to seal it up. However, the sealing of something was intended to keep it safe. The point seems to be that John must keep the particular information shared by the seven thunders "secure." The way he would accomplish this would involve two things. First, he must not write it down and secondly, he must never tell anyone what was said. He was to secure it in his own mind.

Revelation 10:5-7

(1) Then the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land (2) lifted up his right hand to heaven,

and (3) swore by Him who lives forever and ever, (4) who created heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it, (5) that there will be delay no longer, (6) but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, (7) when he is about to sound, (8) then the mystery of God is finished, (9) as He preached to His servants the prophets.

1. Then the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land = should clear up any confusion about who "the strong angel" is at the beginning of this chapter. For those who want to make the "strong angel" Jesus Christ, John clearly states, "then the angel." This severely limits the reference. That this is a unique angelic being cannot be debated, but he is certainly not Jesus Christ.

2. Lifted up his right hand to heaven = has a very limited background in Scripture. Some read the modern notion of appearing in court, raising the hand and pledging to tell the truth, back into the Bible. There is but one occasion in Scripture where a hand is raised in accordance with truth telling. Daniel 12:7 records an angelic being who lifts both right and left hands to heaven when pledging truth when communicating revelation to mankind.

There are no other examples of this practice recorded in Scripture. However, the practice of lifting up hands in Scripture is well attested. Psalms 28:2 records the psalmists indicating that he lifts his hands toward the holy sanctuary. Leviticus 9:22 indicates that Aaron, the priest, raised his hands to bless the people. Ezekiel 36:7 states that God lifted up his hand against the nations which were around Israel. The NASB has translated this verse, "I have sworn that surely the nations... will themselves endure their insults." This may or may not be an example of oath taking. It seems safe to say that the lifting of the hand is a gesture that symbolically appeals to God as witness and vouches safe the statement about to be given.

3. Swore by Him who lives forever and ever = heightens the significance of the statement about to be made by the angel. Scripture is replete with examples of sworn oaths. The swearing of an oath bound the oath-taker to his promise. To keep his promise resulted in blessings, but to break one's oath resulted in curses. Deuteronomy 6:13 and 10:20 command that Israelites were to swear by the name of God. God, Himself, swore oaths as indicated in Numbers 14:20-26. In our modern culture, oath taking is seldom used. Our knowledge is limited to affidavits and notaries.

However, in ancient Israel oath taking was an important part of the culture. In the biblical sense, an oath was a promise between two or more people in which the name of God was invoked as witness and guarantor. Unlike a vow, where man promised God, the oath contracted man and man with God's watchfulness. According to Matthew 23:16-22, the Lord Jesus condemns the Pharisees for abusing the oath taking policy. Evidently, they had figured a way to make an oath that was not morally binding. This Jesus condemns.

Him who lives forever and ever = indicates the witness and guarantor of the oath about to be taken. It is none other than God, Himself. Like the high priest in Matthew 26:63, this angel takes his oath "by the living God." In the OT, "As the Lord lives," served the same purpose (Judges 9:19 and Ruth 3:13). It is the eternity of God that is invoked as guarantor of the oath.

4. Who created heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it = continues the description of the person who will witness and guarantee the oath about to be taken. Interestingly, the Lord Jesus in condemning the pharisaical practice of His day indicates that they were employing "heaven," "earth," and "the city of Jerusalem" as witnesses and guarantors of their promises (Matt 5:33-37). A practice condemned because the Pharisees had failed to understand the significance of their statements. To swear by *heaven* was to swear by the very throne of God, i.e. God, Himself. To swear by the *earth* was to swear by the "footstool of His feet," i.e. God's domain. To swear by *Jerusalem* was to swear by "city of the great King," i.e. Jesus, Himself. Jesus indicates that a man's promise should not need a guarantor.

Therefore, we can conclude that the purpose of the angelic oath calling upon the eternal creator of heaven and earth is not to vouch his promise as true. Rather, God guarantees its ultimate fulfillment.

5. That there will be delay no longer = begins the critical prophetic declaration of this angelic

being. *That* translates a Greek word that function much like modern quotation marks. Unfortunately, the Greeks did not use quotation marks to indicate direct speech. Instead, they introduced direct speech with the word *hoti*. The prophetic declaration continues to the end of verse 7.

Literally, the Greek phrase looks like this: *hoti chronos ouketi estai*. *Estai* is the main verb and should be translated, *There will be*. *Ouketi* is an adverb of time and refers to "the extension of time up to a point but not beyond — 'no longer (Louw & Nida § 67.130).'" *Chronos* presents the most difficulty in understanding this phrase. The term usually refers to time, mostly in the sense of a *period of time* (BADG, page 896)." "How much time" is usually indicated by the context. A popular interpretation of this text by some church fathers included the notion that time, as we know it ceases and timeless eternity begins. However, Revelation 20:4-6 contradicts this interpretation, which promises the beheaded dead 1000 years of rule upon the earth with Christ. Equally, Revelation 18:17 indicates that Babylon the great will be laid waste in one hour. This indicates that the earlier interpretive notion that time ceases must be rejected.

As indicated in the NASB, *delay* expresses the sense of the text. This is the translation utilized by modern translations. "Delay" is an appropriate translation in Revelation 10:6. In response to the question of the fifth seal martyrs, God indicates that His eternal plan is suffering under a self imposed "delay" in punishing the wicked earth-dwellers who are responsible for the ongoing death of His elect (Rev 6:9-11). We can conclude that the condition for God's self-imposed "delay"—the completion of the predestined number of martyrs—has been met. God is therefore free to begin the final phase of His judgment of the living earth-dwellers.

6. But in the days of the voice (sounding) of the seventh angel = is important to say the least. One would normally expect this phrase to begin with the word *for*. This would indicate the reason for why the delay ends. "But" seems unnatural at this point. *Alla* (but) is the strongest Greek term used to indicate contrast. By the use of *alla*, the angel is emphasizing the fact that the "delay" will certainly end with the sounding of the seventh trumpet. *In the days* makes clear that time will not cease with the sounding of the seventh and final trumpet. This indicates that some amount of time will precede or follow the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

7. When he is about to sound = continues to qualify the exact moment when God's self-imposed "delay" will end. The phrase *he is about* translates the Greek verb *mello*. There are two possible ways this verb can be translated here. "When he is about to sound" is one possibility. The implication of this translation is this: the mystery of God is finished before the seventh trumpet sounds. The other possible translation would say, "when he will sound." The implication of this translation is this: the mystery of God is finished during the period introduced by the seventh trumpet. Most modern scholars favor the latter position.

However, we are not convinced. The fact that the angel states that "in the days of the voice of the seventh angel" argues for a period between the sixth and seventh trumpets. In addition, the resurrection of the two witnesses requires three and a half days between their death and resurrection. This event occurs between trumpets six and seven as will be argued later. In addition, if "when he will sound" is the correct translation, then it serves as nothing more than a redundant statement of the phrase, "in the days of the voice of the seventh angel." Now, John is free to be redundant, but it is unlikely at this point. The normal sense of *mello* is *to be about to*. In this case, the NASB reflects the correct sense of the Greek. The mystery of God will be complete before the seventh and final trumpet blows.

8. Then the mystery of God is finished = is the second critical fact revealed by this angel. A very important detail in discovering John's intent here is the meaning of "the mystery of God." The phrase *mystery of God* occurs two other times in Scripture. It shows up as a textual variant in 1 Corinthians 2:1. The variant reading is not adopted by the NASB, which takes the reading: *testimony*. However, the United Bible Society adopts the reading: *mystery*. Either reading does not significantly change Paul meaning. The Corinthians were Gentile believers whom the apostle Paul evangelized during his second missionary journey (Acts 18). In 1 Corinthians 2, Paul defends his message as derived through the Spirit and not the wisdom of man. That message is summarized in the statement, "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified (1 Cor 2:2). Paul indicates in 1 Corinthians 2:7 that this unique message of which Christ is center is in fact spoken "in a mystery." Based on 1 Corinthians 2, we are able to conclude that "the mystery of God" concerns Jesus Christ and

His crucifixion.

The second occurs of this unique phrase is found in Colossians 1:24-2:3. In Colossians 1:24-2:3, the apostle Paul writes,

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh, I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. Of *this church* I was made a minister... so that I might fully carry out the *preaching* of the word of God, *that is*, the mystery [of God] which has been hidden from the *past* ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery [of God] among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. We proclaim Him... so that we may present every man complete in Christ.... For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf... that [your] hearts may be encouraged... *resulting* in a true knowledge of God's mystery, *that is*, Christ *Himself* in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

In Colossians 1:26, Paul declares the Word of God, which he preaches, to be a mystery. "This mystery is so rich with glory that God desired to make it known to the saints (1:27)." He states, "the mystery is, *Christ in you* (Gentiles), *the hope of glory*." Again in Colossians 2:2c, Paul states, "Jesus Christ is the mystery of God." An obvious question concerns whether these two occurrences refer to the same thing. The context indicates that Jesus Christ is the primary focus of the first two chapters of Colossians. His special work among Gentiles is Paul's primary concern. The particular passage quoted above could be summarized as follows: Paul preaches Christ among the Gentiles because God has a plan to present many Gentiles in glory when Christ returns. So, the mystery of God is God's special work in Christ to bring Gentiles to glory. The apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 1:9-10, "And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment — to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ (NIV)." When the mystery of God (God's special work in Christ to bring Gentiles to glory) is finished, then God will bring "all things in heaven and on earth together under one head."

Peter states in Acts 15:14-16 that "God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name," and "after these things, I will return and rebuild the tabernacle of David..." This passage establishes a very important connection between God's special work in Christ to bring Gentiles to glory and Israel's restoration. Similarly, Romans 11:25b - 26 states that the mystery of Israel's partial hardening will continue "until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved..." This passage highlights two facts. First, God has determined a specific number of Gentiles to be saved, and second, the completion of the salvation of the Gentiles will lead to Israel's salvation.

Most scholars recognize the close relationship between the books of Ephesians and Colossians. "Colossians has significant parallels to other Pauline writings. The most extensive parallels occur with Ephesians (Melick: Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, NAC, page 171.)." It is therefore no surprise that when discussing the same issue in Ephesians, Paul states his insight into the *mystery of Christ*, which he defines as "the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel...(Eph 3:4-6)."

Returning to Revelation 10, we argue that the "mystery of God" is God's special work in Jesus Christ to bring many Gentiles to glory. This effort on the part of God concludes or is finished just prior to the sounding of the seventh and final trumpet.

This by definition necessitates that God's special work in Jesus Christ to bring Gentiles to glory does not conclude with the Rapture. This is easily proven given that the beheaded martyrs of Revelation 20:4 who are resurrected in close proximity to the beginning of the millennial reign of Christ reign with Him for 1000 years. Paul states in 2 Timothy 2:12, "If we endure, we will also reign with Him..." To reign with Christ in His temporal kingdom is a privilege shared by those who are saved (particularly Gentiles) during this present age. That the beheaded martyrs refer to Gentiles and not Jews can be discerned from the fact that the woman (Israel) is put in protective custody for three and a half years (Rev 12:6, 14). The beheaded martyrs are those

who resisted the mark and the worship of Antichrist (Rev 20:4), but held to the testimony of Jesus. Since they are resurrected near the beginning of the millennium, they must have died after the Rapture, else they would have been taken at the Rapture.

9. As He preached to His servants the prophets = concludes the revelatory message of angelic being. "His servants the prophets" is most often used to refer to the OT prophets (2 Kgs 9:7; Jer 7:25; Zech 1:6). Whether NT prophets are included cannot be dogmatically stated.

A biblical *mystery* by definition involves revelation not previously given. According to the apostle Paul, the mystery of God was "hidden from past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints." Are we therefore wrong in our interpretation? The critical question concerns this: what did God preach to the Old Testament prophets? As the sentence is written—"as He preached to His servants the prophets"—the object is not stated. That is, what God preached is not stated in the sentence. It must be discerned from the context. God did not preach the "mystery," otherwise, it would not have been a mystery to Paul. What God preached to His prophets was the fact that when His special work was done, then the end would come. The prophets did not fully understand all of God's special works in the world, but they clearly understand that once God finished, the end would come. The angelic being of Daniel 12:7 states as much when answering Daniel's question concerning "the end of *these* wonders." Daniel writes, "I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a *time*; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these *events* will be completed."

Revelation 10:8-10

Then the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard again speaking with me, and saying, (1) "Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land." So I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book. And he said to me (2) "Take it and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey." I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and in my mouth it was sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter.

1. Go, take the book = in terms of purpose, nothing is explained until the following verse. At this point, John does not know why he must take the book.
2. Take it and eat it = is paralleled in Ezekiel 2:8-3:3. As with Ezekiel, John is instructed to eat a book that proves to be sweet as honey. Why the book must be eaten may involve its content. Any comments beyond the obvious at this point are highly speculative.

Revelation 10:11

(1) And they said to me, (2) "You must prophesy again (3) concerning (4) many peoples and nations and tongues and kings."

1. And they said to me = is not clear. That is, who are the "they?" In context, the angel and a voice from heaven were prior spokesmen in this chapter. It is more likely that "they" conjoined in John's re-commission to prophesy.
2. You must prophesy again = is loaded with importance. *You* meaning John the apostle is placed in an emphatic position. *Must* is the English translation of the Greek verb *dei*. This is the verb of divine necessity. This is God's explicit will. As with other prophets, John has no choice (Amos 3:7-8; Jer 4:19). *Prophesy* is John's job description. He must proclaim the message of God. *Again* signals that Revelation 1:3 and what follows through Revelation 9:21 is prophetic. John is going to do what he has already done. However, there is a slight change in emphasis here.
3. Concerning = highlights John's new commission. *Concerning*, which is the translation reflected in the NASB, is but one sense of the Greek word *epi*. A better translation at this point is the term, *against*. John must *prophesy against*... Revelation 11-20 focuses on God's wrath in fulfillment of His promise to the fifth seal martyrs' cry for justice against the living earth-dwellers. God will judge and avenge the death of his people, which is detailed by John in the remaining chapters of the Revelation.

4. Many peoples and nations and tongues and kings = defines the scope of John's prophecy. This list of four ethnic groups occurs seven times in the Revelation (5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15). No two lists are presented in the same order. This argues that John is focusing on the universality of the world.

Interestingly, Revelation 11:7 focuses on the universality of the human opposition to God's prophetic witnesses. Revelation 11:18 focuses on the nations in opposition to God's sovereign rule. Revelation 12:3 focuses on the kings who are in opposition to the eternal plan of God for Israel. Revelation 13:1-2 focuses on kings in opposition to God's sovereign rule on earth. Therefore, John does in fact prophesy against "peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.

□

[Next Section: Chapter Eleven - Daniel 9:24 Completed \[Trumpet Judgment 7\]](#)

□

Revelation
COMMENTARY
WWW.REVELATIONCOMMENTARY.ORG

Questions? Comments?
Send us an email!

revelationcommentary.org

© Sola Scriptura

info@solagroup.org


SOLA SCRIPTURA

Produced and Developed by [Sola Scriptura](#)

□



□

Previous Section: Chapter Ten - The Little Scroll

□

CHAPTER ELEVEN - DANIEL 9:24 COMPLETED [Trumpet Judgment 7]

Revelation 11:1-2

(1) Then there was given me (2) a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, (3) "Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it. (4) Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, (5) for it has been given to the nations; and (6) they will tread under foot the holy city for (7) forty-two months.

1. Chapter 11 begins somewhat abruptly from a grammatical standpoint. Specific grammatical indicators that suggest types of transitions usually support chapter divisions. These are usually not evident in an English translation, but are very clear in the original Greek. A grammatical connection between chapters 10 and 11 is absent. However, there is a logical reason for why the content of chapter 11 follows chapter 10. The strong angel announced the end of God's "delay" in punishing the living earth-dwellers responsible for the death of His faithful followers. We were told the "what," but not the "why." Why is the end of God's "delay" suddenly and dramatically announced following the sixth trumpet, just before the seventh trumpet sounds?

Chapter 11 will explain that the announcement of God's suspension of His "delay" is neither sudden nor unexpected. In fact, it comes at God's precisely intended point in the sequence of end-time events. In step with the rest of the NT, the sequence of the end time events in the Revelation is known, but the exact timing when these events will occur is not known. Therefore, chapter 10 is a critical chronological marker. In addition, chapter 11 will explain why John must prophesy against nations, tongues, peoples and kings.

One other note: modern commentaries are much too quick to spiritualize this chapter. While there are figures of speech employed to communicate John's intended meaning, this is no basis to claim nothing literal or yet futuristic about Revelation 11. The only obstacle to a futuristic literal fulfillment of Revelation 11 is the intellectual bias of modern theologians.

2. A measuring rod = is similar to Ezekiel 40:3. John is given an instrument for measuring.

3. Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it = explains what John is to measure. John is clearly on the earth, since the strong angel of chapter 10 descended from heaven and stood on the earth. We are not told how John will get to the temple, when he will actually carry out the measuring or the results of his measurements. *The temple of God* is a clear reference to the earthly tabernacle of God. One can be sure that there is no outer court that the nations trample in heaven. "The temple (*naos*) of God" is referred to in Revelation 11:19 with the designation *which is in heaven*. This clearly sets it apart from the temple on earth. The term *temple* can translate two Greek words: *naos* or *hieron*. *Naos* normally only refers to the building that houses the holy of holies. *Hieron* refers to the complete temple area including the building that houses the holy of holies as well as the courts.

From the building that houses the holy of holies (*naos*), John is to proceed to measure the *altar*. Since the altar of incense is located in the holy place, which is part of the building that houses the holy of holies, this altar is more than likely the altar of burnt offerings. It (in the Herodian temple) was located in the court of the priests, which is the next area one sees when leaving the building that houses the holy of holies.

The third and final thing to be measured by John concerns "those who worship in (near) it (the altar located in court of the priests). "Those who worship" in this particular area are the priests. Naturally, John would not measure people the same way he would measure a building. Therefore, John is to count the priests who worship in the area of the altar of burnt offerings. Why does God want these three entities measured/counted? We shall return to this question later.

4. Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it = is the second half of John's instructions. John is told to exclude the outer court, which was the area designated for Gentiles. It is not to be measured.

5. For it has been given to the nations = explains the reason the outer court is not to be measured. God has ordained by His sovereign choice to allow the outer court, reserved for Gentiles to honor Him, to be dishonored by Gentiles. "The nations" usually refer to Gentiles only.

6. And they will tread under foot the holy city = explains what the Gentiles will do. *To tread under foot* is a figure of speech. It means "to mistreat or abuse (BADG 640 §1ag)." "The holy city" is a clear and unmistakable reference to Jerusalem. However, there is doubt on the part of some that it refers to the literal earthly city, Jerusalem. Some argue that the reference concerns a spiritualized "mother of cities." All arguments betray a bias against a literal interpretation of this chapter. As the earthly home of God Almighty, Jerusalem was referred to as a "holy city" in the Old Testament (Isa 52:1, Neh 11:1). Gentiles will dishonor God's place of worship and abuse the city.

7. Forty-two months = defines the length of time "the holy city" will be abused. Forty-two months equals three and a half years or 1,260 days. This numerically specific number has a pre-history in the book of Daniel. Daniel predicted a future period of human history, which he described in several ways: (1) time, times, and half a time (Dan 7:25; 12:7); (2) half a week (Dan 9:27); (3) 1,290 days (Dan 12:11). The fact that the Revelation refers to a period of human history, which is also described as: (1) 1,260 days (Rev 11:3; 12:6); (2) time, times, and half a time (Rev 12:14); and (3) forty-two months (Rev 11:2), confirms a Danielic connection.

This unique time frame is specifically prophetic in connection with the prophesied reign of "the prince." There is no doubt on the part of scholars that Daniel and the Revelation speaks of the fulfillment of the same prophetic event. However, the problem concerns the fulfillment itself. Preterists argue that the events are synonymous, but were fulfilled in the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem. Those who spiritualize the text see an on-going fulfillment as God and His people battle against evil in the world. Futurists see a literal future fulfillment of Daniel's prophecies that are confirmed in the Revelation.

Daniel predicts that a beast (a king) from the sea would arise and persecute the people of God for time, times and half a time. The Revelation confirms this (Rev 12-13). The crucial question concerns how this event relates to "the holy city" suffering abuse by the nations for forty-two months. Luke 21:24 states, "and they (the Jews) will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem (the holy city) will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles (the nations) until the times of the Gentiles (the nations) are fulfilled." The Lord Jesus prophetically indicates that Gentile abuse of the Jews and Jerusalem would be set in motion by a terrible destruction "by armies (Luke 21:20)." As Luke 21:12 indicates this terrible destruction and enslavement of the Jews and Jerusalem would begin during the lifetime of the Disciples and would eventuate into the coming of the kingdom of God. This prophetic event begun in AD 70 is said to continue "until the times of the Gentiles (the nations) are fulfilled." Therefore, the preterists are half right and half wrong. The events of AD 70 did fulfill prophecy, but not all prophecy. The events necessary to inaugurate the Lord's return began, but not the consummation of His return.

In content, one characteristic of "the times of the Gentiles (the nations)" is an abuse of Jerusalem by the Gentiles. Their abuse consists of their fundamental disregard for Jerusalem as the city of God upon the earth. Their willingness to worship other gods upon the very site the true God of heaven calls His home is the gravest and most abusive act of human history. This God will allow during this Gentile dispensation. The final three and a half years of this Gentile

dispensation will be the worst of all. It is during this period that the ultimate act of abuse of Jerusalem will occur. This event will be presented in detail in Revelation 12-13.

However, the reason this detail appears at this point in the narrative of the Revelation is because while the Gentile dispensation of abuse of the Jews and Jerusalem runs its course, God has at the same time been taking a people for his name from among the Gentiles. *The mystery* of God (God's special work in Jesus to bring Gentiles to glory) ends at the same time that "the times of the Gentiles" ends. They run concurrent and they culminate at the same time. While God has poured out grace on the Gentiles (the nations), they have returned his mercy with abuse of His people (the Jews) and His City (Jerusalem). The termination of the "delay" also means the termination of the Gentile abuse of God's people and their city. The punishment of the abusers of God's holy city is John's first prophecy in fulfillment of his charge to prophesy against people, nations, tongues and kings.

Revelation 11:3

(1) And I will grant (2) *authority* to (3) my two witnesses, and (4) they will prophesy for (5) twelve hundred and sixty days (6) clothed in sackcloth."

1. And I will grant = is another very abrupt comment. There is no grammatical connection indicated. However, the connection is a logical one. The ministry and death of the two Jewish witnesses is another example and reason for John's prophetic ministry against peoples, nations, tongues and kings. Specifically, the abuse the two Jewish witnesses will experience justifies God's wrath against the living earth-dwellers (peoples, nations, tongues, and kings). The unspecified speaker of Revelation 11:1 (*someone said*) is specified in Revelation 11:3 (*I will grant*). The speaker is none other than God, Himself.

2. Authority = is put in italics in the NASB because it is not in the original text. The translators have added it to give the reader a sense of what John intended.

3. My two witnesses = identifies who receives authority from God. With the definite Greek article "the" before it, John indicates his audience's familiarity with the witnesses--not their specific names and identity, but their specific roles. Verse four will deal with this issue in detail.

Wild and unnecessary speculations about the identity of these two witnesses have filled many pages. Enoch and Elijah are by far the leaders in this theological guessing game. Given the fact that both are murdered and savagely treated, it is highly unlikely that the two witnesses are historical figures from Israel's past. The Lord Jesus, Himself, states, that the living "will not be persuaded" to repent "even if someone rises from the dead (Luke 16:31)." A point proved by His own resurrection. Equally, given that these two witnesses are murdered, it is extremely unlike God to resurrect faithful giants like Moses, Elijah, Enoch or any other great figure from the OT only to have them murdered in the streets of Jerusalem. Another point that argues against past historical figures, particular Elijah, concerns the ministry of the two witnesses.

The ministry of Elijah is specifically defined. Malachi 4:5-6 states,

Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.

What exactly is Malachi predicting here? The Lord Jesus helps us understand the meaning of this text. He states in Matthew 17:11, "Elijah is coming and will restore all things...." Literally, "Indeed, Elijah is coming and he will restore all things." This demands that John the Baptist was in a figurative sense, Elijah. However, the verse also supports the conclusion that the real literal Elijah is going to come. Jesus summarizes Elijah's mission: to restore all things. Elijah is going to bring reconciliation among the people of Israel. Now the reader must pay close attention to the Lord's words. Elijah will restore all things. Notice Elijah will not try to restore. Elijah will not desire to restore, but in fact, Elijah will restore all things. Such a ministry is not reported to be a part of the ministry of the two witnesses. It is therefore best to see the two witnesses as two future individuals whom God will use in ministry reminiscent of Moses and Elijah (for reason to be stated below).

4. They will prophesy = explains the two witnesses' ministry. The two witnesses are specially called *prophets* in Revelation 11:10. These prophets will function as Old Testament prophets functioned. They will speak for God to the people and judge those who refuse to obey. What they will prophesy is not stated explicitly, but the objects of their punishment is stated emphatically.

5. Twelve hundred and sixty days = is the length of the ministry of the two witnesses. This numerical designation finds affinity with Daniel 7:26 and 12:7. It is the same time frame during which the holy city will experience the worst abuse and dishonor the Gentile nations will ever level against it.

6. Clothed in sackcloth = explains the dress of the witnesses and gives us a clue to the content of their prophecies. "Sackcloth" (of OT fame) was usually made of coarse animal hair like goats or camels. Genesis 37:34 indicates sackcloth was a garment of mourning. I Kings 20:31-32 indicates the wearing of sackcloth evidences humility in the face of authority (see also Dan 9:3). Sackcloth could also be used to indicate a desire for forgiveness when repentance is made, which is evidenced in John 3:5-8. Zechariah 13:7 indicates that sackcloth was the attire of the prophets on various occasions (See Isa 20:2). Zechariah indicates that the wearing of sackcloth was or will be the habit of those attempting to deceive the people of God. Thus, the wearing of sackcloth by a prophet evidenced true or faked sincerity. It was a mark of authenticity for the prophet.

Revelation 11:4

These are (1) the two olive trees and (2) the two lampstands that stand before (3) the Lord of the earth.

1. The two olive trees = offers one more clue to the identity of the two witnesses. Here we have an explicit allusion to Zechariah 4:14. Where the two olive trees are identified as "the two anointed ones who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth." Exactly who the anointed ones are is not explicitly stated, but this explains John's use of the definite article back in verse three. John's audience knew the witnesses as prophetic characters, but did not know their names or unique identities.

2. The two lampstands = is the second clue given about the two witnesses. This also appears to allude to Zechariah 4:11.

3. The Lord of the earth = is God, Himself.

Revelation 11:5

(1) And if anyone wants to harm them, (2) fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies; so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way.

1. If anyone wants to harm them = is curious to say the least. Why would anyone want to harm them? *To harm* means to hurt or to harm, with the implication of doing something which is wrong and undeserved (Louw & Nida § 20.25). Therefore, whoever it is that seeks to harm the witnesses, their reason to do so is fraudulent. John describes those who will want to harm the two witnesses as "their enemies."

2. Fire flows out of their mouth = is one of the many reasons most scholars either see a spiritualized or symbolical significance to the book of Revelation. Fire proceeding from the mouth can hardly be taken literally or can it? Jeremiah 4:14 speaks metaphorically of God's word as fire. However, the fact that John emphasizes by restatement, "if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way," argues strongly for a literal interpretation here. In the tradition of the Old Testament, particularly Elijah, the miraculous use of literal fire in judgment has precedent. In addition, John describes the death of the enemies of the two witnesses as *devouring*. Incineration by fire would be an effective means of disposing of your enemies.

Revelation 11:6

(1) These have the power to shut up the sky, (2) so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying; and (3) they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and (4) to strike the earth with every plague, (5) as often as they desire.

1. These have the power to shut up the sky = is the first of three prerogatives of the two witnesses. *Power* is better translated *authority*. This prerogative is assigned to both witnesses. While Elijah is typically pictured, as the one shutting up the heavens, both witnesses will have this authority. Interestingly, Elijah did in fact shut the heavens of rain for three and a half years during his earthly ministry (Luke 4:25; James 5:17).

2. So that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying = is the result of a shut up sky. "Rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying" is a severe judgment. The fact that Israel experienced a three and a half-year period without rain means it is possible to survive, but with great difficulty. Water will be an expensive commodity. Given the trumpet and bowl judgments that deal with salt and fresh water sources, it is clear that the two witnesses will limit their influence to specific geographical areas—Jerusalem and its environs will be one of them.

3. They have power [authority] over waters to turn them into blood = is the second prerogative of the witnesses. Not only will they stop the rain from heaven, but they will also ruin water sources on earth. Turning water into blood is reminiscent of the prophet Moses. However, both witnesses will have this prerogative.

4. [They have authority] to strike the earth with every plague = defines the third prerogative of this group. They both have this ability. The witnesses have an unlimited range of possible plagues; are unlimited as to how many times they strike; and the total earth surface can be their victim. This does not bode well for the world.

5. As often as they desire = indicates that God has given these witnesses the choice concerning how often they strike. This indicates a tremendous amount of trust on God's part in these witnesses.

Revelation 11:7

(1) When they have finished their testimony, (2) the beast that comes up out of the abyss (3) will make war with them, and (4) overcome them and kill them.

1. When they have finished their testimony = refers back to the designation of "twelve hundred and sixty days," in Revelation 11:3. It is critical for the reader to discover which half of the of Daniel's seven-year prophetic week the ministry of the two witnesses will occur. There are those who would debate whether Daniel's Seventieth Week is in view throughout Revelation 4-19. Linguistic, theological, semantic and historical details make any other conclusion unacceptable. We shall deal with this question at chapters 12-13, later.

When will the two witnesses finish their work: the first half or the second half of Daniel's Seventieth Week? It is our belief that they prophecy and torment the wicked during the second half of Daniel's Seventieth Week. Our reasons are thus: The unique length of the two witnesses' ministry is proof that Revelation 10-11 coincides with the end of Daniel's Seventieth Week and the beginning of the seventy-five day period that immediately follows it. God states in Revelation 11:3 that He would "grant authority to my two witnesses and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days...." Twelve hundred and sixty days is equal to forty-two months, three and a half years or time, times, and half a time.

These particular time references are explicitly identified only in the books of Daniel and Revelation. In every case, the same prophetic period is indicated—the second half of Daniel's Seventieth Week (Dan. 9:27). Daniel 7:25, 12:7 and Revelation 13:5 indicate that "time, times and half a time" or "forty-two months" is the amount of time given to the beast to persecute the saints of God. Daniel 9:27 indicates that "the prince" will have half a week, which is three and half years, to persecute the people of God. Revelation 12:6 and 14 indicate that "twelve hundred and sixty days" or "time, times, and half a time" is the amount of time God will protect "the woman" in the wilderness from Antichrist's persecution. There is no significant debate, among those who hold to the futurity of Daniel's last week of prophecy, that the six references above refer to the second half of Daniel's Seventieth Week.

Revelation 11:3 is the seventh explicit reference to a three and a half year period in the books of Daniel and Revelation. The burden of proof that Revelation 11:3 does not refer to the second half of Daniel's Seventieth Week lies with those who would argue differently. This question might have been left in the unsolvable category if it were not for the three woes. The strategic placement of the ministry of the two witnesses between woes one and two prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that the ministry of the two witness must occur during the second half of Daniel's Seventieth Week. John's choice to place the details of the ministry of the witnesses in Revelation 11 is logical. The death of the two witnesses coincides with the end of the Seventieth Week and provides another reason for John to "prophesy against many peoples and nations and tongues and kings."

2. The beast that comes up out of the abyss = is identified as the primary antagonist of the two witnesses. The *beast* (*tharion*) is not an animal, but a man or kingdom. This is a figurative extension of the literal sense—wild animal. Louw and Nida state, "a bad person in the sense of being both harmful and dangerous (88.199)." John clearly wants the reader to understand that this beast is both harmful and dangerous.

John introduces the "beast" at this point because of his relationship to the two witnesses. Scholars are inclined to make a big deal of the fact that John introduces the beast with the article "the." This indicates that the readers are familiar with this entity, but not the specific name and identify. It is true that this is the first explicit reference to the beast (singular) in the Revelation. However, the beasts (plural) were introduced in the fourth seal. There, John indicates that "the beasts of the earth" will be agents of Death prior to the wrath of God.

The literal referents of the beasts of Revelation are very difficult to identify.

- Revelation 11:7 – the beast that comes up out of the abyss.
- Revelation 12:3 – the red dragon (seven heads and ten horns)
- Revelation 12:9 – the dragon (Satan)
- Revelation 13:1 – a beast that comes up out of the sea (seven heads and ten horns).
- Revelation 13:11 – Another beast (the false prophet)
- Revelation 17:3 – a red beast (seven heads and ten horns) comes up out of the abyss.

See the lengthy discussion of the identity of the beast in chapters 12-13.

3. Will make war with them = describes the agenda of "the beast." *War* is not typically used to describe an attack on two people. However, given the abilities of the two witnesses, "the beast" will use every avenue available to defeat them. The two witnesses are more than the beast's armies.

4. Overcome them and kill them = is the result of three and a half years of desire. Having tormented the people without mercy, authority or permission is granted the beast to kill the witnesses.

Revelation 11:8

(1) And their dead bodies *will lie* in the street of (2) the great city (3) which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, (4) where also their Lord was crucified.

1. Their dead bodies will lie in the street = indicates the level of contempt the beast and his faithful followers will have for the witnesses. That the two witnesses will be put to death argues against the identification of Elijah and Moses or angelic beings as the two witnesses.

2. The great city = can be none other than Jerusalem for reasons to follow.

3. Which *mystically* = indicates that author is employing a figure of speech. Mystically is a translation of the Greek word *pneumatikos*. This same word is used in 1 Corinthians 2:14, where it is translated *spiritually*. The point John is making is this: spiritual perception is necessary to understand "the great city." The great city is a literal city, however, it is great for a

different reason than normal.

Sodom is the first clue to why this is the great city. Destroyed by God for gross immorality (homosexuality), Sodom became a by-word for wickedness. It is always depicted as a city destroyed by God because of its wickedness (Deut 29:23; Isa 1:9; Jer 49:18; Amos 4:11; Zeph 2:9; Matt 10:15; Luke 10:12; 2 Pet 2:6; Jude 7).

Egypt is the second clue to why this is the great city. Egypt is not a city, but a state. However, it is what the state represents that is the point of comparison. Egypt is depicted in Scripture as a symbol of slavery (Deut 5:6; Judg 6:8; Neh 9:17; Jer 34:13) and idolatry (Isa 19:1; Ezek 20:7). Both Sodom and Egypt were destroyed by God because of their wickedness.

4. Where their Lord was also crucified = is the third and final clue that positively identifies the great city. This phrase clearly identifies this city as Jerusalem. Yet, many scholars will not accept a literal interpretation at this point. The spiritual interpretation only applies to Sodom and Egypt. Jerusalem will forever be known as the place of the Lord's death. This supports the author's intent that Jerusalem is a wicked city. Wicked because Gentiles are dishonoring God's place of worship and abusing God's holy city.

This is the first place in the Revelation where the title *Lord* is applied directly to Jesus. The title is specifically applied to God the Father in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament Jesus is Lord. In the Revelation, the title is applied to God the Father fifteen times. It is applied to Christ eight times. The absolute use of this title for Jesus here argues against the notion that these witnesses are not part of the church family. This is a NT designation for the believer's relationship to his savior.

Whether Jerusalem and its environs are the sole focus of the two witnesses' ministry cannot be dogmatically stated. However, the fact that they are killed in Jerusalem, which is consistent with OT parallels, seems to support the conclusion that it is their base of operation. Jesus indicates in Luke 13:33 that Jerusalem is the death site for the prophets.

Revelation 11:9

(1) Those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations (2) will look at their dead bodies for (3) three and a half days, and (4) will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb.

1. Peoples... tribes... tongues... nations = indicates a universal presence in Jerusalem at the death of these witnesses. The reason for the gathering of such a wide selection of the world in Jerusalem at this time is not indicated.

2. Will look at their dead bodies = is a very unpleasant detail included in the text. This is the first response of the wicked earth-dwellers to the death of the witnesses. Why would the dead bodies of these witnesses bring pleasure to this universally represented people group?

3. Three and a half days = is a literal reference. There is nothing here to suggest a non-literal interpretation.

4. Will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb = suggests a spirit of meanness. This is the second response of the wicked earth-dwellers to the death of the two witnesses. Having been tormented, the people are not satisfied with the mere death of the witnesses. They take satisfaction from allowing the bodies to rot in the streets of Jerusalem. This expresses the degree of anger and hatred they have for the witnesses.

Revelation 11:10

(1) And those who dwell on the earth (2) *will* rejoice over them and celebrate; and they will send gifts to one another, (3) because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

1. Those who dwell on the earth = further defines who the universal gathering in Jerusalem is. This or a similar phrase is used nine times in the Revelation and always refers to the wicked people of the earth who are hostile to God and His people. The wicked earth-dwellers are in contrast to those who are of God and whose citizenship is in heaven.

2. *Will rejoice over them* = is the third response of the wicked earth-dwellers to the death of the witnesses. They are genuinely happy at the death of the witnesses. This elevates our understanding of the suffering the witnesses will cause the wicked earth-dwellers. "*(They will) celebrate*" is the fourth response of the wicked earth-dwellers. This party spirit follows good news. *They will send gifts to one another* is the fifth and final response of the wicked earth-dwellers. In ancient times, there is information that suggests men often gave gifts at festivals, marriages and other similar joyous events. However, events that involved the exchanging of gifts is a rare event and heightens the sense of joy the wicked earth-dwellers experienced at the death of the witnesses. This again makes the degree of torment by the witnesses of the wicked earth-dwellers apparent.

3. Because the two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth = is the directly stated reason for the response of the wicked earth-dwellers. Notice that they are now called *prophets*. They have declared the will of God. They have also unleashed plagues and punishments upon the wicked earth-dwellers. Nothing brings the wrath of the world more than plagues and preaching. Whoever would do either must be fully prepared to suffer!

Revelation 11:11

(1) But after the three and a half days, (2) the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and (3) great fear fell upon those who were watching them.

1. After the three and a half days = is repeated from Revelation 11:9. Many have attempted a spiritual or allegorical understanding of these numbers. However, there is no basis to such findings. A literal three and a half day period is intended.

2. The breath of life from God came into them = has OT parallels (Gen 1:30; 2:7; 6:17; Job 32:8). As God gave Adam breath for the first time, the two prophets will receive it a second time. This is a beautiful picture of the resurrection for all the dead that awaits God's breath in the grave.

3. Great fear fell upon those who were watching = has NT parallels as a response to a supernatural display of God's power (Luke 1:12, 65; Acts 5:5; 19:17).

Revelation 11:12

(1) And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, (2) "Come up here." (3) Then they went up into heaven in the cloud, (4) and their enemies watched them.

1. They heard a loud voice from heaven saying = is an oft-repeated motif throughout the Revelation. The voice is not identified. It is *loud* enough for all wicked earth-dwellers to hear.

2. Come up here = is the exact same command given to John in Revelation 4:1.

3. Then they went up into heaven in the cloud = or on the cloud would be another way to say it. The two prophetic witnesses are taken up to heaven in bodily form. Their transportation system is the cloud. The cloud as a divine transportation system has broad biblical usage (Acts 1:9; 1 Thess 4:17; Dan 7:13; Isa 19:1; Mark 13:26; Exod 14:24).

4. Their enemies = is a final identification of the wicked earth-dwellers.

Revelation 11:13

(1) And in that hour (2) there was a great earthquake, (3) and a tenth of the city fell; (4) seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, (5) and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

1. In that hour = speaks to the immediate judgment of God that followed the witnesses rapture to heaven (Matt 8:13; 10:19; Luke 7:21; John 4:53).

2. There was a great earthquake = is God's response of judgment on the wicked earth-dwellers in the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem.

3. A tenth of the city fell = clearly suggests a literal city is in view. Some scholars still insist that John is referring to a city that represents the whole wide world. Clearly, a tenth of the city of Jerusalem is destroyed.

4. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake = is both a precise number and small in comparison to the present number of people who live in Jerusalem. We are not told if this number represents a tenth of the inhabitants of Jerusalem at the time. God's sense of balance is evident. For the death and inhuman treatment of the prophetic witnesses, 7,000 souls were required as just payment.

5. The rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven = is John's final comment concerning the ministry of the prophetic witnesses. A reaction of fear and the giving of glory are two reactions typical of supernatural manifestations of God.

Matthew 17:6 indicates fear was the disciples (believers) reaction to God's voice at the transfiguration of Jesus. Matthew 27:54 indicates "fear" was the centurion and company (unbelievers) reaction to the events connected with the death of Christ. Matthew 8:27 indicates the disciples (believers) were amazed at Jesus' ability to command the winds and the sea.

Luke indicates that a typical acclamation at the conclusion of a supernatural event is "they glorified God (Luke 13:13; 18:43)." Both were recipients of miraculous healing. Mark 2:12 indicates that both believers and unbelievers "were glorifying God" at the conclusion of Jesus' miracle concerning the man let down through the roof on a pallet. This is important because some scholars indicate the possible conversion of the living earth-dwellers in Jerusalem following this supernatural event.

To give glory to God is used in Scripture in several ways. First, it can mean "to tell the truth ([John 9:24], Louw-Nida, § 33.468). Second, it can summarize the praise and honor one gives to God as a result of His goodness (Luke 17:18; Acts 4:21; 11:18; 12:23; 13:48; 21:20). What then is the significance of this phrase for the wicked earth-dwellers in Jerusalem? Perhaps, Acts 13:48 is helpful at this point. Luke writes, "When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed." This verse clearly teaches that while all rejoiced and glorified, not all believed. Thus, it is possible for an unbeliever to speak the truth with those who believe in the God of truth. Equally, while those who are converted do "give God glory," it not the same to say that everyone who gives God glory is saved. It is one thing to recognize God's power and abilities and to audibly express it, but it something altogether different to suggest the mere act proves conversion.

The wicked earth-dwellers in Jerusalem express the obvious, but there is no indication of repentance. There is no calling upon the name of Jesus for forgiveness. *To give God glory* can be nothing more than the mere recognition of God's sovereignty over heaven and earth. This is exactly the meaning of this phrase in 1 Samuel 6:5. The priests and diviners of the Philistines command the capturers of the Ark to acknowledge God's sovereignty (give glory to the God of Israel) by sending the Ark home. The Philistines (in context) are clearly unbelievers, both before and after the experience with the Ark. This is the meaning of Revelation 16:9 where the living wicked earth-dwellers refuse to repent and give God glory (recognize his sovereignty) as sovereign of heaven and earth. It renders the wicked without excuse. They consciously chose to worship the creature rather than the creator. Thus, the sixth and seventh bowl is necessary. This is the point of Acts 12:23 where Herod is killed because he refused to acknowledge God's sovereignty and his submission to that God.

The death of the two witnesses is the second important reason John must prophesy against the living wicked earth-dwellers again. Equally, their death is the final installment of God's promise to the fifth seal martyrs. With the death of the two witnesses, the number of those to be killed as the martyrs who had been killed is complete. Thus, the mystery of God is complete.

Revelation 11:14

(1) The second woe is past; behold, (2) the third woe is coming quickly.

1. The second woe is past = is perhaps one of the most important sentences in the whole Revelation in relation to the chronology and sequencing of the book of Revelation. The fact that not one seal is punctuated with a pronouncement of a "woe" fulfilled argues against recapitulation or the overlapping of seals, trumpets, and bowls (with the exception that seal seven contains the first six trumpets and the seventh trumpet contains the bowls judgments).

The pronouncement of the second woe is also critical to understanding the placement of the summary of the prophetic witnesses' ministry in the book of Revelation.

There are basically three options: first, that the ministry to the two prophetic witnesses recorded in Revelation 11:1-13 occurs between trumpets six and seven; or second, that the ministry of the two witnesses runs concurrent with the trumpet judgments, but is summarized in Revelation 11:1-13; or third, that the ministry of the two prophetic witnesses symbolically represent the struggles of all believers during the period of the church.

Daniel specifically limits the time frame "three and a half-years" (represented in the Revelation as time, times and half a time, one thousand two hundred and sixty days, forty-two months) to the eschatological period just prior to the coming of "One like a Son of Man." Daniel indicates that two "three and half-year periods" would characterize his Seventieth Week. A unique beginning would mark the second period. Jesus, in Mathew 24:15 calls it "the Abomination of Desolation."

Of the three other references to a three and a half-year period in the Revelation, each reference concerns persecution. Revelation 12:6: the woman flees to protective custody for one thousand two hundred and sixty days. Revelation 12:14: the woman escapes from the Dragon (Satan) to protective custody for time, times and half a time. Revelation 13:5: the beast from the sea is authorized by the Dragon (Satan) to act for forty-two months. Thus, we conclude that the Revelation is unconcerned with the life of the beast from the sea prior to his authorization by the Dragon.

It is clear that the ministry of the two prophetic witnesses is presented in summary fashion. The emphasis is a focus on the termination rather than the beginning of their ministry. Therefore, it is our contention that the ministry of the two prophetic witnesses begins before the trumpet judgments, but terminates with the sixth trumpet. Consequently, the ministry of the two prophetic witnesses runs concurrent with the time of the dragon-empowered-beast that comes from the sea. The purpose of the strategic placement of Revelation 10:1-11:13 is clear. The termination of the mystery of God and the ministry of the two prophetic witnesses set in motion the final display of God's wrath against the living wicked earth-dwellers. With the death of the two witnesses, God's promise to the fifth seal martyrs that with the completion of the death of those who were to be killed, He would avenge and punish the living wicked earth-dwellers is vindicated.

2. The third woe is coming quickly = is significant for the debate about imminency. The only way one may designate that the third woe is imminent is the second woe must have been initiated. Similarly, the Rapture is imminent only if some event sets it in motion. Jesus indicated that His return is imminent only after a season of unparalleled suffering has been initiated. Then and only then will the Rapture be imminent.

Revelation 11:15

(1) Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, (2) "The kingdom of the world has become *the kingdom* of our Lord and of His Christ; and (3) He will reign forever and ever."

1. Then the seventh angel sounded = establishes a chronological sequence that is important to recognize. The seventh trumpet must be the third and final woe. The three woes (trumpets five, six and seven) are the worst expression of God's wrath recorded in the Book of Revelation. Nothing in the seals can compare to the trumpet judgments without over generalizing the similarities and minimizing the differences of the trumpets and seals.

Loud voices distinguish this oft-repeated phrase from other occurrences by the fact that it is plural in this particular case. This points to the significance of what is announced at this point.

2. The kingdom of the world has become *the kingdom* of our Lord and of His Christ = is none other than God's reclamation of the earth. God almighty and His Christ are now in complete physical control of the earth. Physical, in the sense that God and His Christ are physically manifested on the earth and are in the process of removing all that is unlike Themselves—the Gospel of the Kingdom fulfilled. Heaven has already been cleansed through the war of Michael and his angels (Rev 12:7-90), which occurs at the middle of Daniel's final week. The gospel of the kingdom of God is in its final phase of clean up. It will be complete when Satan and his forces are locked away for one thousand years in the abyss. The end of the end of the age is in view. This by definition means that Satan is no longer the god of this world (2 Cor 4:4). He will be defeated, arrested, bound and imprisoned for a millennium.

Has become is past tense and suggests that this is a done deal. However, some scholars argue that this is an example of *prophetic perfect*; i.e. something stated as completed, but still future. That is, the loud voices are so certain that this will happen that they state it as if it has already happened. However, this conclusion is unnecessary. It grows out of a failure to understand the sequence of end-time events and the chronology of the book of Revelation. This is merely the announcement that God has publicly reclaimed his rightful rule over the earth. However, God is still in the process of cleansing the earth of the living wicked earth-dwellers and their satanic leaders, which is the result of the bowl judgments.

Our Lord and of His Christ is not an unusual way to refer to God the Father and His Anointed. This is an allusion to Psalms 2:2, which will control the content of this section--Revelation 11:15-18. The temporal kingdom of Christ (the millennium) has not begun at this point. Therefore, Christ who will rule during the temporal kingdom is subordinate to the Father. Since God the Father is invisible and will never manifest Himself in physical form, God the Son will act as visible King on the earth.

3. He will reign forever and ever = does not agree with the previous statement. One would expect the last sentence to say; "They will reign." However, the loud voices from heaven are correct in their theology. *He will reign* applies to God the Father. God the Father will reign forever and ever. This is specifically declared in OT Scriptures (Exod 15:18; Ps 10:16; Dan 4:3). Jesus, on the other hand, will reign over a temporal kingdom (one millennium) after which He will subject Himself and all rule and authority to God the Father forever (1 Cor 15:27-28).

Revelation 11:16-17

(1) And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, (2) "We give you thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were, (3) because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign.

1. And the twenty-four elders = are the only group specifically identified at this grand celebration of God's reclamation of the earth. Why this is the case is not stated. However, the elders are given the opportunity to up-date the reader concerning what transpire at the sounding of the seventh trumpet. When God reclaims the earth as His sovereign domain, four very important events find their fulfillment.

2. We give you thanks = is prayer of thanksgiving. This prayer is directed to the Lord God, which indicates God the Father. He (God the Father) is *pantokrator* (almighty) (Rev 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 21:22), which is a literal translation of the Hebrew phrase *Jehovah, the Lord of Host* (Amos 3:13; 2 Sam 5:10; 1 Kigs 19:10; Jer 5:14; Ps 89:8). As the Almighty nothing could, can or will stop Him. He is sovereign.

3. Because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign = indicates the reason for the prayer of thanksgiving. *You have taken* reflects the Greek tense of this verb. It is an accomplished fact. It is not that God has not always had the power. Rather, He at this point has determined to use it. *Have begun to reign* also suggests a past act. However, the emphasis is ingressive. That is, God the Father has taken his great power and just started to reign. This confirms the pronouncement of the loud voices in heaven that "the kingdom of the world has just become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ."

Revelation 11:18

(1) And the nations were enraged, and (2) Your wrath came, and (3) the time *came* for the dead to be judged, (4) and the *time* to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and (5) to destroy those who destroy the earth."

1. And the nations were enraged = is the first reaction to God's reclamation of the earth by those on the earth. *Ta ethna* (the nations) refers to the Gentiles. Israel would not be involved because the kingdom of God is their temporal hope. Psalm 2:1-2 speaks of an enraged response from the nations when God enthrones His Son as king of the nations. The reason the nations are enraged is that Jesus' lordship demands submission and recognition of His sovereignty which the nations reject (Rev 16:9).

2. Your wrath came = is God's response to the rage of the nations. Their failure to submit to God results in their destruction. God's wrath is expressed in the bowl judgments (Rev 15:1).

3. The time *came* for the dead to be judged = is the second of four events that follow God's reclamation of the earth. The verb *came* is understood. Scholars recognize a difficulty with the judgment of the dead at this point in the sequence of the Revelation. The *dead* can refer to either the righteous dead, the wicked dead or both. Since God is not through with his judgment of the living wicked earth-dwellers, it hardly seems proper to judge the wicked dead at this point. Particularly, given that more wicked-dead will follow and a judgment will follow the 1000-year kingdom. This judgment involves the righteous dead only. An event necessary before the Lord of lords returns at Armageddon with His armies.

4. And the *time* to reward Your bond-servants = requires extra thought. The Greek conjunction *and* can be translated *even* when an apposition type sense is intended. We believe this to be the better interpretation at this point. Therefore, we translate this portion to say, "and the time came for the dead to be judged, even to reward your bond-servants the prophets..." To judge the righteous dead means the same thing as to reward God's bond-servants. *Misthos* (reward) refers to the payment one is due based on prior work. Scripture promises the faithful rewards. Ultimate on the list of rewards, is the right to reign with Christ.

Since the judgment of the righteous is in view, what groups are indicated is important. Scholars do not agree concerning the grouping indicated in Revelation 11:18b. We suggest the following translation, "and the time came for the dead to be judged, even Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints, namely those who fear Your name, the small and the great..." This allows a qualifying phrase for both prophets and saints. The prophets are the bond-servants and the saints are those who fear Your name. Revelation 16:6 speaks of saints and prophets. Revelation 18:24 also speaks of prophets and saints. These are clearly two separate groups. The Revelation also speaks of the prophets as servants of God (Rev 10:7d). This is a reference used for the prophets more than eighteen times in the Old Testament (Dan 9:6; Amos 3:7; Zech 1:6).

5. [The time came] to destroy those who destroy the earth = is the final event introduced by John that occurs immediately after God Almighty takes back His rightful rule over the earth. The verb *to destroy* in the Greek literally means "to cause the complete destruction of someone or something — 'to destroy utterly (Louw-Nida, § 20.40)." The object of this utter destruction is "those who destroy the earth." *Those who destroy* have the same verb as *to destroy* just referenced. Scholars do not agree on its meaning here. Most claim a figurative meaning here. The sense is *those who morally ruin the earth* (Louw-Nida, § 88.266). God will physically destroy those who have bankrupted the people. This is the expressed purpose of the bowl judgments, which constitutes the third "woe." The primary party guilty of morally ruining the earth is the "great harlot" of Revelation 17-18.

Revelation 11:19

SEE CHAPTER [TWELVE](#)

[Next Section: Chapter Twelve - The Beginning](#)





**Questions? Comments?
Send us an email!**

revelationcommentary.org
© Sola Scriptura
info@solagroup.org



Produced and Developed by [Sola Scriptura](#)

□



□

[Previous Section: Chapter Eleven - Daniel 9:24 Completed \[Trumpet Judgment 7\]](#)

□

CHAPTER TWELVE - THE BEGINNING

Revelation 11:19

(1) And (2) the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and (3) the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple, and (4) there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake, and a great hailstorm.

1. The placement of Revelation 11:19 has caused no little debate. Is it the summary of chapter 11 or the introduction of chapter 12? Or is it a transition from chapter 11 to chapter 12? The reader must keep in mind that the chapter divisions are contrived by men. Therefore, discretion is in order. The key to understanding the placement of this verse is the reference to the temple and the ark. Both symbolize the manifest presence of God among His people.

2. The temple of God which is in heaven was opened = indicates that God has come forth from His dwelling-place. An opened door indicates either entrance or exit. Here it indicates exit. With the reversion of earth to God's direct rule, He will destroy those who have ruined the people of the earth. Future wrath (the bowls) will be executed from the temple of God.

3. The ark of His covenant appeared in His temple = indicates the localized presence of God. Where the ark is, there either is blessings or curses (1 Sam 5-6). God is about to pour out curses upon the wicked earth-dwellers.

4. There were flashes...hailstorm = indicates the imminent outbreak of God's wrath. At each point, just prior to the outpouring of God's wrath, there are heavenly disturbances to indicate the outbreak of God's wrath (Rev 6:12-17; 8:1-5; 11:19). Some are tempted because of this recurring pattern to see recapitulation throughout the Revelation. They see an overlap between, the seals, trumpets and bowls. However, this conclusion is simplistic and is built upon an exaggeration of textual generalities to the exclusion of textual details. The trumpets and the bowls do have common straits, but the differences are major.

Revelation 12:1-2

(1) A great sign appeared in heaven: (2) a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; and (3) she was with child; and she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth.

1. A great sign appeared in heaven = is problematic. First, no grammatical connection is indicated between verse one and Revelation 11:19. Second, John does not identify the literal referent of *the woman* who is described in symbolical language.

The relationship between Revelation 11:19 and 12:1 is a logical one. Having been instructed to prophesy against "many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings," John gives three reasons for God's prophetic program against the living wicked earth-dwellers (peoples, nations, and tongues). First, they dishonored his house of worship. Second, they abused His holy city. The third reason involves the persecution of the righteous by the wicked. The fourth reason John must prophesy again concerns the kings. Thus, in Revelation 12-13, the prophecy turns against the *kings*. John will focus on the kings who led the nations against the interests of God. The living wicked earth-dwellers refused to worship God, but chose to worship the Dragon and

his beast-king who are God's temporal enemies. The final outbreak of God's wrath is justified against the living wicked earth-dwellers and their kings because they are guilty.

In true apocalyptic fashion, John does not state any details explicitly that would give the wicked grounds to further persecute the people of God. Given the outcome, it would not be wise to trumpet too loudly the ultimate victory of the righteous over the wicked. Apocalyptic literature allows the prophet of God to trumpet loudly the ultimate victory of God and His people in a way that the wicked miss the obvious. Therefore, the woman and the child will not be explicitly identified. However, those who know Scripture will find the correct interpretation, easily.

A *great sign* signals a requirement for the reader to put on special glasses to see beyond the apocalyptic language. The literal event depicted is not the theologically significant event intended. The *sign* has deeper significance. There are three signs: (1) the woman who gives birth to a special child (Rev 12:1-2); (2) the Dragon who seeks to destroy the special child at birth (Rev 12:3-13:18); and (3) the seven angels who destroy the Dragon and his kingdoms (Rev 15-19).

The verb *appeared* is often used in the Old Testament to introduce an appearance of God (Gen 12:7); an appearance of an angel (Exod 3:2); and a prophetic vision (Dan 8:1). All three events are depicted in Revelation 12-20. First, a prophetic vision is given of a woman who bears a special child who will rule the nations (Rev 12:1-2). Then an angelic being is introduced who seeks to devour the special child to prevent his rule over the earth (Rev 12:3-13:18). Finally, God appears to put down the rebellion of the Dragon (Rev 15-20).

2. A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars = identifies what the first great sign is. The identity of the woman is not explicitly stated, which is consistent with the nature of apocalyptic genre. However, John gives more than enough information to make her identity known.

First, the woman has cosmic significance. She is clothed with the sun. She stands upon the moon. She wears a crown of twelve stars. Genesis 37:9-10 records that Joseph had a dream similar to the first vision of Revelation 12. The dream indicated that "the sun (Jacob) and the moon (Rachel) and eleven stars (Joseph's brothers) were bowing down" to Joseph. Jacob the father of Joseph states, "What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?" The woman is exalted among the sun, moon and stars.

Second, the woman gives birth to a significant child. A child "who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron." This is a direct allusion to Psalms 2:9, which indicates that this child is a king, a Son of God. Third, God divinely protects the woman for three and a half years from the Dragon. These three facts make the woman's identity clear. She can be none other than the unsaved remnant of Jews divinely elected by God to survive the Seventieth Week of Daniel.

Israel (the nation) is clearly not all divinely protected during the time of distress (Rev 7:1-8; Dan 12:1). Therefore, "the woman" cannot be every single member of the twelve tribes of Israel. Messianic Jews will be taken in the Rapture and will not need divine protection for three and a half years. Similarly, messianic Jews (in the historical sense) did not exist before the birth of Christ. Therefore, they could not have given birth to the Son. That leaves the unsaved remnant of Jews present in every generation. Depending on the emphasis, a list of the twelve tribes of Israel may or may not contain Levi, Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim. Thus, the twelve stars on the woman's head represent the twelve original tribes, minus Manasseh and Ephraim. The moon is Rachel, the mother of Judah who anchors the family as Jacob's first wife. The sun is Jacob who covers the twelve tribes.

The remnant of Israel is that elect group of Jews who experience God's mercy in every generation. Thus, the remnant is the woman who ultimately gave birth to the Son who will rule the world as prophesied by Jacob in Genesis 49:9.

3. She was with child; and she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth = bring us to the point of delivery. Conception and pregnancy is not in focus. This indicates that the author's interest in this story is summary in fashion.

Revelation 12:3

(1) Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, (2) a great red dragon (3) having seven heads and ten horns, and (4) on his heads were seven diadems.

1. Then another sign appeared in heaven = is the second of three great signs that provide the structure of Revelation 12-19. This sign features the antagonist—the composite dragon (seven satanically inspired kingdoms and ten kings) whose primary agenda will be the prevention of the temporal reign of the Son.

2. A great red dragon = is the focus of this second sign. Unlike the woman and the child who will remain without explicit identification. The great red dragon will be specifically identified. The Greek term *drakon* can be used to translate two Hebrew words. The first is the Hebrew word for Leviathan (Job 40:25) and the second is sea-monster (Exod 7:9-12). However, the context is clear that a literal monster is not intended. Rather, the great red dragon represents hostile kings and kingdoms that seek to prevent the rule of the woman's Son on earth. This is a composite dragon (seven kingdoms and ten kings) versus the dragon (Satan).

What does the great red dragon represent?

The great red dragon from heaven (Rev 12:3), the beast from the sea (Rev 13:1), and the scarlet beast (Rev 17:3) are described as having "heads, horns, and crowns." However, there are differences between the great red dragon, the beast, and the scarlet beast:

Scriptural Comparison

<u>Revelation 12</u>	<u>Revelation 13</u>	<u>Revelation 17</u>
Dragon from Heaven	Beast from the Sea	Beast from the Abyss
Appears in heaven	Arises out of the sea	Arises out of the bottomless pit
Seven heads / ten horns / seven crowns	Seven heads / ten horns / ten crowns	Seven heads / ten horns
Swept away 1/3 of the stars	Like leopard / bear / lion	Names of blasphemy
Stood before Woman to devour child	A blasphemous name	Carrying the great harlot
	Dragon (Satan) empowers	Seven heads / mountains / kings
	One head fatally wounded	Five kings fallen
	Head wound healed	One is
	World worships the beast	One is yet to come
	Speaks great things / blasphemies	Beast is of the seven kings
	Continues 42 months	Beast receives the kingdom
	Blasphemes God	The world marvels at him.
	Persecutes with the Saints	
	Has authority over the earth	
	The world worships him	

666 is the number of his
name

□

Each is presented as both a composite and a singular entity. Revelation 12 is confusing because the great red dragon from heaven is the personification of the dragon (Satan). The relationship between the two is such that to speak of one is to speak of the other.

3. Having seven heads and ten horns = is the specific composition of the great red dragon. Daniel 7 is helpful at this point concerning the interpretation of the heads and horns. It must be kept in mind that John is describing the composite dragon here.

Daniel indicates that a beast with ten horns would figure prominently in the eschatological end when the Son of Man comes. In Daniel 7, the ten horns represent ten kings (Dan 7:24) who rule at the same time. In Daniel 7, a beast can represent a kingdom or the king that rules over that kingdom. A horn can represent a king (Dan 7:24) or a kingdom (Dan 8:22). John sees a dragon with *seven heads*. The heads represent kingdoms. The composite red dragon also has *ten horns*. In both Daniel and the Revelation, horns can represent kings or the authority of kings. However, with regards to the composite dragon, the horns represent kings without kingdoms. This is why unlike the ten horns of the beast from the sea the ten horns of the dragon do not have crowns.

4. On his heads were seven diadems = indicates the authority of royalty. The composite dragon has seven heads because seven kingdoms had the primary satanically inspired intent to prevent the temporal reign of the Son. It is critical that the readers recognize this important detail. There are only seven kingdoms that constitute the satanically inspired conspiracy to destroy the Man-Child. All seven existed before the birth of the Child. Once the Child is born and caught up to heaven, the strategy to destroy Him at birth ends. The seven kingdoms of the composite dragon are Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Media, Persia, Greece and Rome.

The composite dragon pictures Satan's attempt to prevent the reign of the Son by using seven beast kingdoms: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Media, Persia, Greece and Rome. Each of these empires ruled the entire known world. Behind their world dominance was Satan with his agenda to prevent the temporal reign of the Son.

Revelation 12:4

(1) And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and (2) threw them to the earth. (3) And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, (4) so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.

1. And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven = suggests a very powerful dragon. Continuing his figurative description of the composite great red dragon, John indicates that the dragon caused a third of the stars of heaven to be thrown down to earth. This suggests a supernatural element to this beast. Who or what the stars are is not explicitly defined.

2. Threw them to the earth = has been interpreted by some to suggest that this refers to the fall of Satan and one-third of the angelic host. However, this conclusion is not supported by the text.

3. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth = focuses the primary objective of the composite great red dragon. Given that the child is caught up to heaven, we are safe to assume that the composite dragon is standing on the earth.

4. So that when she gave birth he might devour her child = indicates the purpose of the composite great red dragon's actions. Why the dragon seeks the death of the child is not indicated yet. There is clearly more to this story than is told because the dragon, as such, could devour both the child and the mother. Why must he wait until the child is born? It is important to understand that the composite great red dragon exists before the birth of the child. The heads

must wait for the birth of the child before they can destroy it.

Each dragon inspired empire attempted to destroy the Male-Son. This satanically inspired strategy dates back to the very beginning of Scripture. Genesis 3:15 indicates a struggle between the serpent and the woman. The woman's seed eventually will crush the head of the serpent. To prevent the seed from His ordained destiny, the serpent has attempt to destroy the seed/Male-Son.

Revelation 12:5

(1) And she gave birth to a son, a *male*, (2) who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and (3) her child was caught up to God and to His throne.

1. And she gave birth to a son, a male child = is interesting. The text says literally, a *male son*, which appears redundant and unnecessary. One cannot have a son without it being a male. The point seems to be that this is a special son.

2. Who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron = gives the purpose of this special child. That the composite great red dragon seeks to kill the child has already alerted the reader that this child is special. The indication that this child "is to rule the nations" explains why this child is the object of the dragon's attention. All authority will be subject to this child and those who resist will meet destruction. The nations seek to prevent the Son from reigning over the earth by killing him at birth.

This child will rule the all nations with a *rod of iron*. This is an allusion to Psalms 2:9. This is the second allusion to this passage in the Revelation. The first occurred in Revelation 2:27. There, overcomers are promised the authority to rule over the nations. The One making the promise is The Son of God. To rule with a *rod of iron* represents a strict demand of obedience. This ruler will not allow any rebellious or disobedience on the part of His kingdom constituents.

All the nations as a biblical phrase has a long history throughout Scripture. It appears more than sixty times in the Old Testament. It occurs five times in the Revelation (12:5; 14:8; 15:4; 18:3, 23). The phrase may or may not include the Jews, but it always represents all the Gentiles nations of the known world. These nations will be under the control of the Son. This explains why the composite dragon satanically inspired by the dragon (Satan) will seek to keep the Son from His destiny. This Son will replace the dragon as king of the earth and will demand the submission of all earthly authority to Himself.

3. Her child was caught up to God and to His throne = explains how the child escaped the death trap of the composite great red dragon. The "was caught up" is the same verb used to describe what will happen to the "dead in Christ" and those living when He comes in the air (1Thess 4:16). Since the great red dragon was in wait to kill the Son, the language communicates urgency—to snatch away. The fact that this child is caught up to God and to *His throne* heightens the significance of the child. *God's throne* throughout the Revelation indications the place of absolute power and authority. It is the central focus in heaven.

Some argue that this text should only be applied to Jesus in a secondary sense, since Jesus did in fact die on earth. The fact that this child is caught up to heaven (presumably) immediately after birth argues against a primary application to Christ, some would say. However, John is not given a strictly literal interpretation of the events connected with the birth, ministry and death of Christ. Rather, he is focusing on the satanic system that culminates in the eschaton with the worst persecution of God's people the world will ever know, which justifies God's wrath that follows.

Some would reject the interpretation that a time gap exists between Revelation 12:5 and 6. They do so at the expense of a literal face value interpretation of the text. The catching up of the Son and the protective custody of the woman that follows must involve some gap in time. Only by spiritualizing the text or playing down the textual details, while emphasizing textual generalities can one escape this conclusion. The woman has a future that is insured by God.

Revelation 12:6

(1) Then the woman fled into the wilderness (2) where she had a place prepared by God, (3) so that there she would be nourished (4) for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

1. Then the woman fled into the wilderness = indicates that the safety of the Son in heaven is followed by the safety of the woman in the wilderness. This confirms that the Son was caught up from the earth. The *wilderness* has a rich tradition as a place of safety from trouble as well as a place of temptation and testing. Unlike Jesus who went to the wilderness to be tempted and Israel who went to the wilderness to be tested, the woman flees to the wilderness to be "saved." First, she will be saved physically and then spiritually, as with Elijah whom God protected and fed in the wilderness for three and a half years (1 Kings 17:1-7; 19:3-4).

2. Where she had a place prepared by God = explains why the woman flees into the wilderness. We are not told how the woman knows that God has a place prepared for her. The notion of a prepared place is reminiscent of John 14:2-3.

3. So that there she would be nourished = indicates a result of the prepared place. Not only will the woman receive protection, but she will also receive nourishment (food and water) to sustain her life during the time of protective custody.

4. For one thousand two hundred and sixty days = is the exact amount of time the beast (Antichrist) is given authority to persecute the woman and her offspring (Rev 12:13-17). The woman (the remnant) will be protected from the persecution of the beast (Antichrist).

Revelation 12:7-8

(1) And there was war in heaven, (2) Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon (Satan). The dragon (Satan) and his angels waged war, and (3) they were not strong enough, and (4) there was no longer a place found for them in heaven.

1. And there was war in heaven = appears at first glance to be an intrusion into the narration of the woman and her Son's miraculous rescue from the composite great red dragon. However, when the reader understands that Revelation 12:1-6 focuses on the composite dragon (empire) and Revelation 12:7 and following focuses on the singular dragon (Satan) the problem is solved. The resumption of the woman's rescue in Revelation 12:13 also underscores this point. The text indicates a *war* started in heaven. A war usually consists of more than one battle. So here, for the war will begin in heaven with a decisive battle that will finish on earth at Armageddon.

This war is a cleansing war. First heaven will be cleansed of Satan. Then the earth will be cleansed of all evil doers—Satan and followers.

2. Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon (Satan) = defines the combatants of the battle in heaven. It is important that the reader understands that the Greek supports the conclusion that Michael initiates this battle. Once the Son is caught up to heaven all hope is lost that the composite dragon will devour the child. The battle is not the result of the great red dragon pursuing the child to heaven.

The importance of Michael to the eschatological end times cannot be over-stated. His voice will be heard at the Rapture (1 Thess 4:16). His actions will initiate the final unparalleled persecution of Israel (Dan 12:1). He initiates the battle that ignites the final conflict prior to the coming of the Son to rule all the nations (Rev 12:7). There is every possibility that he is the restrainer of 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7. The former three passages mentioned all deal with the beginning of the forty-two months; time, times and half a time; and, one thousand two hundred and sixty days, which mark the eschatological period just prior to the Lord's return at Armageddon.

3. They were not strong enough = pertains to Satan. That is, he and his angels were not strong enough to prevent Michael and his angels from carrying out their orders to cast Satan out of highest heavens.

4. There was no longer a place found for them in heaven = that is, they no longer had a purpose in highest heaven. This suggests that a very important point in the history of mankind

has indeed come about. Satan no longer has a purpose in the highest heaven.

Revelation 12:9

(1) And the great dragon was thrown down, (2) the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and (3) his angels were thrown down with him.

1. And the great dragon was thrown down = summarizes the outcome of the battle in heaven. Notice Satan is not the great red dragon. John has changed the referent at this point. This undoubtedly must have been the original order to Michael and his angels. At this point, we are not told where he is thrown down to.

2. The serpent of old = begins a detailed identification of the dragon. This is necessary to distinguish him from the composite dragon of Revelation 12:1-6. The serpent is known as the deceiver of Eve (2 Cor 11:3, Gen 3:1). However, the serpent has never been explicitly identified as Satan.

Two clauses will further explain exactly who this serpent is: First, he is described as he "who is called the devil and Satan." The devil is his Greek name. Satan is his Hebrew name. Second, the serpent is identified as he "who deceives the whole world." Deception is the major tool of Satan especially in connection with end times. Jesus warned believers, "See to it that no one misleads you (Matt 24:4)." The apostle Paul warned believers, "Let no one in any way deceive you (2 Thess 2:3a)." Both warnings occur in the context of end time discussions.

3. His angels were thrown down with him = makes clear that Satan is not allowed in heaven once it is purged. All the fallen ranks of the satanic order are limited to earth for a short time (three and a half years).

Revelation 12:10-11

(1) Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, (2) "Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, (3) for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, (4) he who accuses them before our God day and night. (5) And they overcame him (6) because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.

1. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying = as before, the speaker who proclaims loudly in heaven information relative to a previous event is not explicitly identified.

2. Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come = begins this praisefest. God and His Messiah are praised because of the historic importance of Satan's expulsion from heaven to the earth. The cleansing of heaven of satanic influence is the first step in the final process that will bring about the actualization of God's physical reign on the earth.

Salvation is not spoken of in a spiritual sense, but physical. God is praised because of His victory over Satan that brings about the cleansing of the heavens. *Power (dunamis)* of God in contrast to the weakness of Satan brings praise of God's power. The *kingdom (reign) of our God* is the third attribute praised in light of Satan's explosion from heaven. In our western mindset, kingdom is generally associated with a geographical domain. However, closer to the biblical sense is the idea of "reign" or "exercise of power and authority."

The authority of His Christ have come is the final element of this praisefest. This is the only place in the Revelation to speak of the authority of Christ. After His resurrection, the Lord Jesus declared, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." The expulsion of Satan from heaven will be an overt expression of the Lord's authority over heaven. The expulsion of Satan from the earth will be an overt expression of the Lord's authority over earth.

Some argue that this proclamation is in contradiction with the similar proclamation in Revelation 11:15. This, they argue, adds support to their claim that the book of Revelation either recapitulates or speaks of events as completed before they actually occur (proleptical).

However, such conclusions overlook the obvious. The proclamation in Revelation 11:15 concerns God's reign on earth. The proclamation in Revelation 12:10 concerns God's reign in heaven. God has always reigned in heaven. Therefore, in what sense has His reign in heaven come?

3. For the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down = explains another reason for the praisefest in heaven and the sense in which God's reign in heaven has come. *Accuser* is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word *satan*, which is transliterated in English. This explains why Satan no longer had a place (purpose) in heaven. Therefore, he was thrown down. There is a problem here. The phrase *our brethren* suggests that the loud voice in heaven are peers with those accused by Satan. It is clear that those accused by Satan are human for they face death. However, the issue is resolved when once it is understood that the loud voice in heaven must be human as well. There is nothing about the voice or what is said that would limit it to an angelic host. In other words, it could be the voice of a man or men.

4. He who accuses them before our God day and night = explains Satan's purpose in heaven. However, with his defeat, he lost his job. His *day* and *night* (it means continually) job of complaining to God about the righteous has ended.

5. And they overcame him = continues the explanation concerning why Satan is thrown down from heaven to earth. The pronoun *they* refers to the brethren on earth. The brethren conquered Satan. Three reasons are given as the basis of their victory.

First, *because of the blood of the Lamb*, they conquered Satan. The blood of the Lamb refers to His death. Because of the death of Jesus, the brethren conquered Satan. They believed that Jesus is Lord.

Second, *because of the word of their testimony* is the second reason the brethren conquered their accuser. Because of the word, namely their testimony to Jesus, the brethren were victorious. The brethren defeated Satan because they professed Jesus as Lord.

Third, [because] *they did not love their life even when faced with death* is the third reason the brethren were victorious over their accuser. Some have taken this clause to mean that the brethren were martyrs. However, it does not say they died, but that they were willing to die, if necessary. They would not renege concerning the Lordship of Christ. Instead, they resisted up to and if necessary, death. This is a wonderful testimony to the power and grace of God in the lives of those who truly know the Lord. The apostle Paul states, "no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:3)." They would not deny that Jesus is Lord.

Revelation 12:12

(1) For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. (2) Woe to the earth and the sea, (3) because the devil has come down to you, (4) having great wrath, (5) knowing that he has *only* a short time."

1. For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them = is a call for celebration in heaven by her residents. The reason they are to celebrate is twofold: (1) Satan purpose in heaven is over; and (2) the brethren on earth render his accusations baseless.

2. Woe to the earth and the sea = is the second of two results of Satan's expulsion from heaven. *Woe* indicates that a grave situation stands in the path of those trying to reach tomorrow. As with the above statement, both heaven and her inhabitants are to celebrate, in contrast the earth and the sea [and those who dwell in them] are to anticipate trouble.

3. Because the devil has come down to you = is the reason for the pronouncement of "woe." However, it is not the fact that he has come down that is critical.

4. Having great wrath = is the reason the earth and the sea [and those who dwell in them] should be sober. The term *wrath* (*thumos*) is "a state of intense anger, with the implication of passionate outbursts — 'anger, fury, wrath, rage (Louw-Nida, § 88.178).'" This same term is attributed to God in Revelation 15:1. The wrath of God mentioned in Revelation 15:1 is defined

by the bowl judgments of Revelation 16-19. It is therefore easy to understand why the loud voice in heaven warns the inhabitants of the earth and sea. Satan's outbursts of anger and rage may not equal God's rage in intensity and scope, but those who suffer it will be just as dead.

5. Knowing that he has *only* a short time = suggests a temporal limit between the cleansing of heaven and the cleansing of earth of satanic influence. It is the destiny of the devil along with his expulsion from heaven and his defeat by the sinning but victorious brethren that fuels Satan's rage.

The length of Satan's temporal limit is described as "a short time." According to Revelation 12:14 the woman will be protected from the dragon for time, times and half a time, which equals forty-two months or one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

This conclusively proves that the wrath that the followers of Christ will experience on the earth during the "short time" of Satan's anger outbursts is not the wrath of God. The overwhelming part of the time called "the great tribulation" is the wrath of Satan against God's elect.

Revelation 12:13

(1) And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, (2) he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male *child*.

1. And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth = speaks to the consequence of Satan's expulsion from heaven.

2. He persecuted the woman = is the first victim of Satan's wrath. However, the NASB's translation is a bit misleading at this point. The verb *to persecute* (*dioko*) is better translated here, *to pursue after*. The dragon's intent is certainly to persecute, but the woman will be delivered before he is able to accomplish his plans. He is pursuing the woman to persecute here.

Revelation 12:14

(1) But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, (2) so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, (3) where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, (4) from the presence of the serpent.

1. But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman = explains how the woman escapes the dragon. In Revelation 12:5, we were told that the woman fled into the wilderness, but we were not told how she fled, how she knew to flee, or how she knew where to flee. Those details are now explained. John states that "*the* two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman." Does John suggest that the method of escape is well-known to his readers—this is the importance of the article. This is clearly a figure of speech. There is no literal eagle here. However, Scripture speaks of an eagle of deliverance. The eagle metaphor of deliverance to safety is expanded in Deuteronomy 32:10-14. In this passage, God is compared to an eagle in His care for the Jews. However, in Exodus 19:4 God calls Himself an eagle. It states, "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself." God compares His deliverance of the Jews from Egypt to that of an eagle who carries her babies in safety when teaching them to fly. Closer examination of John's statement reveals that the woman is given "the two wings," which perhaps suggests the surety of the deliverance.

Notice that there is no difference between the agenda of the composite dragon and the dragon. The composite dragon is so identified with the dragon that one is able to speak of them interchangeably.

2. So that she could fly into the wilderness to her place = continues the metaphor of miraculous deliverance. With the eagle's wings, the woman is able to fly to safety. The exact literal way God will deliver His people is not indicated, however the eagle metaphor suggests that it will be supernatural much like the way God delivered the children from Egypt. The Jews walked out of Egypt under the divine protection of God. They had a pillar of fire between them and their

enemies.

3. Where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time = is clearly an allusion to Daniel 7:25. The time reference only occurs in the books of Revelation/Daniel and deals with the persecution of the Jewish people by the beast. Daniel does not indicate a miraculous deliverance by God, but does indicate that the people will survive to receive an eternal kingdom.

4. From the presence of the serpent = is the ultimate goal of God's miraculous deliverance of the woman/the remnant.

Revelation 12:15

(1) And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, (2) so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood.

1. And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman = indicates Satan's response to God's miraculous deliverance of the remnant. It also suggests something about the way God will deliver the people. It would make no sense to send water after the woman unless the woman is fleeing in such a matter that water could deter her escape. However, in keeping with the metaphor, the serpent poured water out of his mouth. This is obviously a figure of speech. Literal water is not intended here.

2. So that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood = indicates the intended outcome of the serpent's actions. Obviously, his purpose is to destroy the woman.

One cannot be dogmatic at this point, but it would seem that John is clearly relating this event to the most important deliverance event in the history of Israel. The Egypt/Israel conflict and God's special deliverance is the single most important event for the Jewish people in Old Testament history. God delivered the woman (Israel) by destroying the Egyptians with a flood. Exodus 15:12 specifically says, "The earth swallowed them (the Egyptians)." Rather, God will more than likely walk the people out of Jerusalem under His divine protection as Israel came out of Egypt. The serpent will send an army after the Jews, but will not be successful because of God's divine intervention.

Revelation 12:16

(1) But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth.

1. But the earth helped the woman = indicates the nature of the woman's miraculous escape. Like Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, the earth will swallow the woman's enemies (Num16:32-34). John has clearly modeled this deliverance after the deliverance from Egypt. This will be the second time that God used nature to defeat the enemies of the woman/Judah.

This also indicates that the dragon will lose a major army just prior to Antichrist's reign of terror.

Revelation 12:17

(1) So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and (2) went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

1. So the dragon was enraged with the woman = indicates the response of the dragon to the woman's miraculous escape and his loss of an army. *Was enraged* translates the Greek verb *orgizo*, to be furious.

2. Went off to make war with the rest of her children = indicates that the dragon, unable to persecute the woman, turns his attention to her children.

This is a critically important phrase. Who exactly are the children of the woman? The Greek literally says, "her seed." Since "seed" is normally spoken of in relation to a man rather than a woman, this perhaps is a clue that John is alluding to Genesis 3:15. There it is the seed of the

woman that will bruise the heel of the serpent. The apostle Paul states in Galatians 3:16 that the seed of the woman referred to Christ.

The correct identity of the offspring of the woman would perhaps have remained unclear, if not for the details John offers. Two relative clauses make their identity certain. First, the seed of the woman refers to those "who keep the commandments of God." This phrase is clearly a defining strait of those who are born again, i.e. Christians. It will be repeated again in Revelation 14:12. I John 5:3 states, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome." To keep God's commandments is the true mark of a believer. The second relative clause that defines the "seed" are those "[who] hold to the testimony of Jesus." This statement removes any doubt that believers in Jesus Christ are the offspring of the woman that the dragon seeks to persecute.

□

[Next Section: Chapter Thirteen - The Beginning of the End](#)

□

Revelation
COMMENTARY
WWW.REVELATIONCOMMENTARY.ORG

Questions? Comments?
Send us an email!

revelationcommentary.org
© Sola Scriptura
info@solagroup.org


SOLA SCRIPTURA

Produced and Developed by [Sola Scriptura](#)

□



□

[Previous Section: Chapter Twelve - The Beginning](#)

CHAPTER THIRTEEN - THE BEGINNING OF THE END

Revelation 13:1

(1) And the dragon stood on the sand of the (2) seashore. (3) Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, (4) having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and (5) on his heads were blasphemous names.

1. And the dragon stood on the sand = opens Revelation 13. Some translations include this verse in chapter 12. Other translations understand John to be the seer standing on the sand, thus the translation in the NKJV "And I stood." However, given the relationship between chapters 12 and 13, it is more probable that the dragon is standing on the seashore. Having failed to destroy the Male-Son at birth, he brings together the final Beast Empire that will attempt to prevent the reign of the Son by resisting His takeover of earth.

Chapter 13 continues the reasons John must prophesy against "peoples, nations, tongues and kings." He will now focus on the kings, particularly, the kings who will form the power base of the final restored Beast Empire.

2. Seashore = or sea as the Greek literally says.

3. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea = seems to be the reason the dragon is standing on the seashore. John has already referred to one beast in Revelation 11:7. There he indicated that that beast (ruler) comes up out of the abyss and finally is able to kill the prophetic witnesses of God. In Revelation 11:7 John says "*the* beast." Here, in Revelation 13:1, John says, "*a* beast." This has led some to conclude that John is not referring to the same entity as in Revelation 11:7. Revelation 11:7 refers to a beast (an individual) with whom the people were very familiar—the eschatological beast of prophecy who comes from the abyss. The people were familiar with his role, but they did not know his name just as we do not know his name, but are familiar with his role. Revelation 13:1 refers to a beast (a composite of all beast kings).

In Revelation 11:7, John is referring to the beast with whom his audience was familiar as to his eschatological role, not the particular individual himself. In Revelation 13:1 John has a different agenda, which controls his description. Like Revelation 12, John opens with a composite figure that parallels the individual. Like the composite dragon, the composite beast is composed of heads, horns and diadems. The composite beast is a personification of the final beast (Antichrist) as was the composite dragon of Satan.

However, there is a difference. The composite dragon had seven diadems on seven heads and ten horns. The horns of the dragon did not have diadems. Daniel 7:24 tells us, "As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom (fourth kingdom in Daniel and the seventh kingdom of the dragon) ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them...." The strategy of the ten-horn phase of the dragon is different from the strategy of the seven satanically inspired Beast Empires.

The composite beast has seven heads and ten horns with ten diadems. The emphasis of the composite dragon is the seven satanically inspired kingdoms whose primary intent was the prevention of the temporal reign of the Son by killing the Male-Son soon after birth. The primary emphasis of the composite beast is the ten kings that arise out of the final Beast Empire.

4. Having ten horns and seven heads and on his horns were ten diadems = is the same characteristics ascribed to the composite dragon in Revelation 12:3 with a different emphasis. Not only is the word order different, but this composite beast has ten diadems on the horns.

The heads represent empires. The horns represent kings. As in Daniel 7, the beasts (four king/kingdoms) and ten horns (ten kings) have eschatological significance. The beasts (kingdoms) follow one after the other, however, the ten horns (kings) rule at the same time.

Daniel 7:8 states,

I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots.

The ten-horn phase of the fourth Beast Empire is directly connected with the end-time scenario that eventuates into the kingdom of God. The composite beast of Revelation 13 pictures the second phase of the dragon's plan. The fourth Beast Empire of Daniel 7 (the seventh empire of the dragon) is part of the first phase. The fourth Beast Empire eventuates into ten horns/kings. This is the second phase, which is pictured in the Revelation as "the beast who rises from the sea." This explains why the composite beast has ten crowns on the ten horns. The kings are in focus and not the seven satanically inspired kingdoms that failed to prevent the rapture of the Male-Son to heaven after His birth.

5. On his heads were blasphemous names = is a new characteristic for the composite beast that is not included with the composite dragon. What the names are is not indicated, but each of the seven heads has a name. The names are blasphemous, which indicates that they violate the name of the one true God. Since the seven satanically inspired empires failed to prevent the rapture of the Male-Son to heaven the blasphemous names probably express the contempt they have for God.

Revelation 13:2

(1) And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his (its) feet were like those of a bear, and his (its) month like the mouth of a lion. (2) And the dragon gave him (it) his power and his throne and great authority.

1. And the beast which I saw = continues a description of the composite beast who comes from the sea. The Greek word *tharion* (beast) is neuter in gender; that is it is not a masculine beast or feminine beast. Therefore, all the pronouns that refer to it are neuter until we get to verse eight. That this beast is a composite is proven by this description. This beast is the sum total of the previous kingdoms hostile to the eternal rule of God. John says that the beast he saw "was like a leopard." He had feet as a bear and a mouth like a lion. These animal-like-characteristics are not literal but symbolical. They represent characteristics that the beast has. The leopard is known for its speed. The bear is known for its powerful feet to kill and the lion for its sound of terror. This beast is speedy. He is both powerful and has a sound of terror.

What John ascribes to this single composite beast, Daniel individualized to three beasts. Daniel 7:1-9 recounts a vision involving four king/kingdoms: A lion (Babylon), a bear (medo-Persia), a leopard (Greece), and an indescribable iron teeth beast (Rome). The biblical importance of these kings/kingdoms relates to Israel. The eschatological agenda of the composite beast involves the historical agenda of each of these previous kings/kingdoms—the prevention of the temporal reign of the Son. What Daniel saw individually, John sees in composite.

Absent from John's composite beast is an explicit reference to the indescribable fourth kingdom with feet of iron and clay. However, the ten horns with diadems indicate that Daniel's prophecy of 'ten horns' is finding fulfillment. Daniel's fourth beast empire with ten horns is John's composite beast with seven heads and ten horns with diadems. Daniel emphasized the fourth beast kingdom and John emphasizes the ten horns. Daniel emphasized the original beast kingdom. John emphasizes the restored beast kingdom, which is evidenced in the ten kings.

2. And the dragon gave him his power...throne and great authority = indicates the source of the composite beast's power. Literally, the Greek says, "And the dragon gave it his power...."

The dragon (singular) empowers the composite beast. All that the composite beast is, he owes to the dragon/Satan. Luke 4:6 states, "And the devil said to Him (Jesus), "I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish." What he promised to Jesus, he gives to the composite beast. On earth, there will be no equal to the composite beast.

This section is confusing because at first glance it appears that John is describing the conduct of the beast instead of the conduct of the composite beast. As well, it appears that what John ascribes to the composite beast is what actually happens to the beast. However, the composite beast and the beast/Antichrist are synonymous. After the beast/Antichrist subdues three of these kings, he and the remaining seven become one in purpose and intent.

Revelation 13:3-4

(1) *I saw* one of his (its) heads as if it had been slain, (2) and his (its) fatal wound was healed. (3) And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast; (4) they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and (5) they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him (it)?"

1. I saw one of his (its) heads as if it had been slain = is perhaps not the best translation of the original Greek. This translation might give the reader the impression that the head was not really slain. However, this is not the case. Literally, the Greek says, "and one of its heads as if it had been slain to death, but the wound of its death was healed." The phrase "as having been slain" is the same phrase used for the Lamb (Jesus) in Revelation 5:6. As Jesus was truly put to death, so will one of the heads of the composite beast. How the head was put to death is not indicated at this point.

2. His (its) fatal wound was healed = confirms that a literal death occurred. Literally, the Greek says, "but the wound of his death was healed." As the reader is no doubt aware, the Greek language is much more precise than the English translation. For example, the possessive pronoun *his* in the sentence, "the wound of his death was healed" does not refer to his head, but the beast. That is, the beast was healed. The issue is not the healing of the wound itself, but the fact that the composite beast lived after death.

3. And the whole earth was amazed *and followed* after the beast = further confirms that something supernatural happened to the composite beast. *The whole earth* is a figure of speech. It does not mean every single individual to the last man on the face of the earth. Rather, it means mankind in general. An overwhelming majority of the living earth-dwellers will be amazed by the composite beast's ability to come back to life after death. The reader will notice that the phrase *and followed* is in italics in the NASB. That's because it does not appear in the original Greek. The sense of the text is this: a majority of the people became followers of the composite beast following his restoration.

4. They worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast = explains the result of the people's amazement and commitment to the composite beast. The dragon gave the rule of earth to the beast and the people respond with worship to it.

5. They worshiped the beast = also receives worship from the people on the earth. He is worshiped for his sovereignty. They express their attitude by saying, "Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with it?" The rhetorical question suggests that no one (human) is like the composite beast. The second rhetorical question states, "who is able to wage war with it." Since the composite beast is restored from the dead who would wage war with it. An enemy that cannot be killed cannot be defeated. War is useless. Notice, "who is able to wage war with *it*?" This reflects the fact that the pronoun *it* is neuter in the original Greek text. The composite beast is referred to here and not the beast/king.

Revelation 13:5

(1) There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and (2) authority to act for forty-two months was given to him.

1. There was given to him (it) a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies = is a direct

allusion to Daniel 7:8, 20 where the little horn is given a mouth so that it can speak and say blasphemous things. However, here the composite beast has a mouth like a lion. That is, he is able to terrorize the people with its mouth. So the phrase, "was given to it a mouth" is a figure of speech. It means the composite beast is given something to say (Louw-Nida, § 33.105). Who gave the composite beast the things to say is not explicitly indicated. However, since the dragon gave the composite beast everything else, it is safe to assume that he gave it the blasphemous language as well.

2. Authority to act for forty-two months was given to him (it) = is the second of two gifts from the dragon to the composite beast. The dragon is only able to grant forty-two months because that is the limit God set upon him.

This is also taken directly from Daniel 7. The composite beast fulfills Danielic prophecy. John is clear that the rule of the composite beast, the rule of the beast-king from the abyss, the protective custody of the woman and the ministry of the two prophetic witnesses occur at the same time.

Revelation 13:6-7

(1) And he(it) opened his (its) month in blasphemies against God, (2) to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, *that is*, those who dwell in heaven. (3) It was also given to him (it) to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and (4) authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him (it).

1. And he opened his month in blasphemies against God = is the height of the composite beast's arrogance. Unfulfilled by the worship of men that the creator alone should receive, the composite beast hurls insults to God.

2. To blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, *that is*, those who dwell in heaven = explains the precise nature of the composite beast's blasphemous speech. To blaspheme God's name is to break the third commandment—"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain (Exod 20:7)." That is, to use God's name for evil purposes. To blaspheme God's tabernacle is to speak evil of God's temple. John clarifies what he means by adding, "those who dwell in heaven." God's tabernacle refers symbolically to God's holy ones (angels). What exactly is said about the angels is not explicitly stated, but it insults God.

3. It was also given to him (it) to make war with the saints and to overcome them = indicates that the saints will not be given a blanket protection from the composite beast. He will overcome or be victorious over the saints. The saints are previously defined as "the rest of the woman's children who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus."

4. Authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him (it) = defines the precise limits of the composite beast's authority. It is global.

Revelation 13:8

(1) All who dwell on the earth will worship him, (2) everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.

1. All who dwell on the earth will worship him = indicates a significant change. It is not evidenced in the English translation. The pronoun *him* is masculine. This is the first time the composite beast is referred to with a masculine pronoun. This indicates that the relationship between the kings and kingdoms that constitute the composite beast and the final ultimate beast is such that they can be spoken of interchangeably. One accomplishes the purpose of the other. Another significant change is the tense of the verbs from past time to future time.

2. Everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of the life of the Lamb who has been slain = defines the *all* of the previous clause. This verse is similar to Revelation 17:8. In both cases, those who do not worship the beast is clear—the elect. The elect will not worship the beast, which also means they will not take his mark. Thus, they are objects of his wrath.

Revelation 13:9-10

(1) If anyone has an ear, let him hear. (2) If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; (3) if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. (4) Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints.

1. If anyone has an ear, let him hear = begins a two-verse commentary on the conduct of the saints. This hearing formula so often heard in the gospels and concluding each of the prophecies concerning the seven churches of Asia helps establish the identity of the saints.

Scholars are somewhat agreed that this hearing formula is rooted in Isaiah 6:9-10. Isaiah's message to Judah regarded their unwillingness to hear, understand and repent of their idol worship. For this, God refused to give His word, lest it fall upon those who despise it. God, in His wisdom, saw some faithful among the wicked. Those who were faithful still very much needed God's word. Therefore, the Lord gave His word in parabolic sayings. This enabled those who were spiritually minded to be enlightened while those who were not remained in blindness. This is the significance of the hearing formula in the Gospels. It also serves as a textual indicator that figurative language is employed and the reader will need to see beyond the obvious.

The highly figurative language depicted in Revelation 13 requires the spiritually minded readers to see, hear and understand the significance for believers. Normally, the hearing formula follows the parabolic statement to which it refers. However, that is not the case in Revelation 13:9-10. Here the reader is alerted to the need for spiritual understanding before the parabolic statement is made.

2. If anyone *is destined* for captivity, to captivity he goes = is the first statement that the enlightened reader must accept. Having outlined the career of the composite dragon and beast, John has instructed the reader that saints will be the target of both. God has destined certain ones to captivity during the reign of the composite beast. The captivity will probably include severe persecution, but not necessarily death. Those so destined must seek no other route. It is God's perfect will.

3. If anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed = is the third if-statement and probably the most difficult to interpret. The difficulty is created by the very difficult Greek constructions in this verse.

The NASB translates the verse: "if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed."

The KJV says, "he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword."

The NIV says, "if anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed."

This author prefers the New International Version's translation because it naturally follows the previous statement. While some saints are destined for captivity, others are destined for martyrdom. The *sword* is the instrument of death by the State (Romans 13:4). God has destined certain ones to be martyrs by the state/government of Antichrist. This is God's will. Those destined to die will die. This is the sense of the text. That believers will die by the sword is confirmed in Revelation 20:4. Both captivity and death by beheading is a part of God's sovereign plan.

4. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints = completes the parabolic statements. This statement clarifies for anyone who might not understand how believers will face the persecution of the composite beast. For those God has destined to captivity—perseverance will win the day. For those God has destined to physical death—faith will win the day.

Revelation 13:11

(1) Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and (2) he had two horns like a lamb and (3) he spoke as a dragon.

1. Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth = begins a second unit concerning the beast empire. This is the only occasion where John will call this person a *beast*. He will later be identified as "the false prophet." Unlike the composite beast that arises from the sea, this beast comes from the earth. The significance of his earthly origin is not known.

2. He had two horns like a lamb = is a second characteristic of the second beast. It is generally known that lambs do not have horns. However, a ram does have horns and is the preferred translation here. Horns symbolically represent power and authority. Thus, this beast has power and authority. Two horns indicate above average.

3. He spoke as a dragon = indicates as with the composite beast that this second beast is also given a mouth "speaking arrogant words and blasphemies."

Revelation 13:12

(1) He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And (2) he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, (3) whose fatal wound was healed.

1. He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence = is the fourth characteristic of the second beast. This sentence is a bit misleading. One might think that the second beast only works in the physical presence of the first beast. However, the point is this. The second beast operates, having been empowered and authorized by the first beast.

2. He makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast = is the fifth characteristic of the second beast that is given. The second beast makes the living earth-dwellers worship the first beast.

3. Whose fatal wound was healed = identifies the composite beast.

Revelation 13:13

(1) He performs great signs, (2) so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men.

1. He performs great signs = is the sixth characteristic of the second beast. Notice that "great signs" is plural indicating that more than one sign is done. The second beast is able to do great or impressive miracles. How he does these miracles is not explicitly indicated.

2. So that he even makes fire come down out of heaven = indicates the limit of this beast. His ability to call down fire from heaven indicates the greatness of his power. He certainly has the ability to imitate Old Testament prophets. If not for his words, his actions alone would prove him authentic.

Revelation 13:14

(1) And he deceives those who dwell on the earth (2) because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, (3) telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast (4) who had the wound of the sword and has come to life.

1. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth = is the outcome of the second beast's campaign of impressive miracles. His miracles convince the living earth-dwellers to obey his commands.

2. Because of the signs which was given him to perform in the presence of the beast = explicitly indicates that the miracles convinced the living earth-dwellers to follow the second beast's commands. The first beast authorized (empowered) the second beast with the ability to do great miracles.

3. Telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast = is the outcome of the convincing miracles. The living earth-dwellers are instructed to make an image to the beast. *To the beast* indicates that the purpose of the image is to honor the beast. What the image is is not made explicit in this passage.

4. Who had the wound of the sword and has come to life = is the third attempt to identify the composite beast. Twice, the author has referred to the wound of the composite beast. However, this is the first time the instrument itself is indicated. The sword was used to cause the death of beast. The sword is the instrument of death in capital punishment.

It is difficult throughout chapter 13 to distinguish between the composite beast (kings) and the singular beast (Antichrist). Revelation 13:3 indicates that one of the heads of the beast was wounded to death. But here in Revelation 13:13, the beast itself was wounded. This only adds to the difficulty.

In the statue dream of Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar is told by Daniel that the toes of the statue would be iron and clay mixed (Dan 2:40-43). During the iron phase of the statue, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed with a stone cut of the mountain (Dan 2:44-45).

In the futuristic beast kingdoms of Daniel 7, we learn that a fourth beast kingdom, the most dreadful of all, with its feet would trample down other kingdoms. The fourth beast kingdom will eventuate into ten kings. During the ten-king phase of the fourth beast kingdom, a final king will arise and conquer three of the ten kings. This conquering king will then persecute the people of God for three and a half years. Absent from Daniel's account is any indication that the eleventh king is killed. This is a major point detailed in the Revelation, but absent from Daniel. The critical question at this point is this: when is the beast put to death and raised up? A second question concerns how long the two events – the death and restoration—are separated?

It is extremely difficult for this author to believe that Satan has the power to actually raise a man from the dead. It is argued by some that Antichrist will be killed and raised from the dead. However, this requires more power than either Satan or Antichrist has. That such a major point is absent from Daniel 7 is compelling. There is no biblical basis that supports the notion that Satan has the power to raise the dead. Why would Satan be content with the restoration of only one person? Why would Satan stop with the restoration of Antichrist? Why not raise all sinners? This would be a compelling reason to follow the dragon.

Since both the composite beast (Roman Empire) and the individual beast (Antichrist) come to life, it is better to understand that a kingdom is restored rather than resurrection from the dead. Given that Daniel 7 indicates explicitly that there is a relationship between the legs of iron and the toes mixed with iron and clay, a restored indescribable fourth beast empire in the form of ten toes makes sense.

Yet, Revelation 17 will make clear that the eighth beast/king will be restored from the dead. Therefore, both the king and his kingdom are restored from the dead. This will be Satan's greatest act of deception. How he will deceive the whole world into thinking that the beast/king has been restored from the dead is not clear.

Revelation 13:15

(1) And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, (2) so that the image of the beast would even speak and (3) cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

1. And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast = signals another significant component of the second beast's job description. Whom the second beast receives the ability from to give breath to the image of the first beast is not explicitly stated. Neither is it explained how such a thing could happen. The impossibility of humans or angelic beings giving life to inanimate objects makes a literal intent highly unlikely in this text. That some type of demonic hocus pocus is utilized is self evident. This will be a second greatly deceiving event connected with the beast/king.

2. So that the image of the beast would even speak = seems to be one goal of the second beast's efforts. The image speaks. Whether this is the only human quality vested in the image is not explicit. Whether the image walk about, sit, or engage in any other human activities is not indicated. There is no reason to reject the notion that the speech of the image is the same as

that of the first and second beast i.e. blasphemous.

3. Cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed = is a difficult clause to understand. Logically, the image of the beast both speaks and causes the non-worshippers to be put to death. However, in this case, one would expect the clause to say, "and it causes as many as do not worship it to be killed." Another way to translate this verse is this: "and he (the second beast) causes as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed." This makes the better sense of the verse. In this case, the image does not give the order of execution, but the second beast does.

Revelation 13:16-17

(1) And he causes all, (2) the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, (3) to be given a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads and (4) *he provides* that no one will be able to buy or to sell, (5) except the one who has the mark, (6) *either* the name of the beast or the number of his name.

1. And he causes all = continues the job description of the second beast. Most agree that the *he* here refers to the second beast. The *all* refers to the inhabitants of the earth.

2. The small and the great...the slaves = defines the perimeters of the *all*. These inclusive lists indicate that no segment of society will escape the notice of the beast.

3. To be given a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads = indicates the place of the mark. Clearly, the intent is for the mark to be easily seen.

4. *He provides* that no one will be able to buy or to sell = is the purpose of the mark. Economic sanctions will be a major issue during the persecution by the beast of the people of God.

5. Except the one who has the mark = limits who can purchase food. Starvation or worship of the beast will be the only alternatives for those who inhabit the earth.

6. The name of the beast or the number of his name = indicates what the specific mark will be.

Revelation 13:18

(1) Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.

1. Of all the verses in the Revelation, this is the most difficult to understand. The wild speculative articles written over the centuries can easily document that this is the case. There is no agreement among scholars concerning the meaning of this verse. I am content to leave it as it is. However, I am more convinced by this verse that Satan will pull off his greatest deception in connection with the eschatological beast/king.

The apostle Paul writes in II Thessalonians 2:8-12,

And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

Deception, the lie, and false wonders indicate unparalleled deception.

□

[Next Section: Chapter Fourteen - The End of the Beginning](#)



**Questions? Comments?
Send us an email!**

revelationcommentary.org
© Sola Scriptura
info@solagroup.org



Produced and Developed by [Sola Scriptura](#)





□

Previous Section: Chapter Thirteen - The Beginning of the End

CHAPTER FOURTEEN - THE END OF THE BEGINNING

Revelation 14:1

(1) Then I looked, and behold, (2) the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and (3) with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, (4) having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.

1. Then I looked, and behold = indicates a new vision is about to be narrated. The relationship between chapters 12-13 and chapter 14 is a difficult one to understand and explain unless the reader understands Revelation 10:11. Revelation 10:11 introduced a new prophetic commission for John. The first ten chapters of the Revelation chronologically moved from the first century through the end of Daniel's Seventieth Week. With the announcement that God's delay is ended following the sixth trumpet, the times of the Gentiles is completed. However, Daniel 12:11 indicates that a thirty-day period will follow the conclusion of the Seventieth Week of Daniel. It is with this unique period that Revelation 11-19 is concerned.

John, instructed to prophesy "again against many peoples, and nations and tongues and kings" in Revelation 10:11, does just that. After explaining why God is against peoples, nations, tongues and kings (Rev 11-13), John begins the final destruction of the beast with a preview. Revelation 14 is a preview of the destruction God has planned for the beast/king. In summary fashion, John highlights God's judgment against the living earth-dwellers (Revelation 14) prior to a detailed description of God's judgment against the beast, his kingdom and those who take his mark (Revelation 15-19). There are several loose ends, which must be tied up before the final blast of God's wrath is detailed. This is the purpose of Revelation 14.

2. The Lamb was standing on Mount Zion = begins the first summary episode reported in Revelation 14. *The Lamb* (Jesus Christ) is seen standing. This is not the enthronement of the Lamb, but the continuing deliverance of God's people on earth. *Mount Zion* is the earthly city of God which will be destroyed as highlighted in the seventh bowl judgment (Rev 16:17-21) and detailed in Revelation 18. Verse 2 makes clear that John is on the earth.

3. With Him a hundred and forty-four thousand = alludes back to Revelation 7:4. There, John refers to 144,000 Jews given divine protection from the trumpet judgments. Any doubt that John is referring to the same group could have been removed had John used the article (the) of previous reference. The absence of the article has lead some to conclude that two separate groups are intended. However, given the description that follows all doubt is removed. The purpose of this short session is to demonstrate the faithfulness of God. Those sealed were protected. The sealing protection has eventuated into their salvation. The 144,000 do not represent the entire congregation of believers (Jewish and Gentile). This group must be limited to Jews only.

Unlike the marked of the beast whom God will destroy, the marked of God will be delivered.

4. Having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads = clearly refers back to Revelation 7:3-8. Prior to this, the specific nature of the seal of God was not defined. However, we now know that the seal was in fact the name of the Lamb and His Father. This, of course, lends itself to debate. The length required to write out both the name of the Lord and His Father would make such a mark impossible. Some have suggested an abbreviation of the names be intended. Those who think in these terms forget that English is not God's first language. If written in Hebrew, without vowels, both the name of God the Father and His Son

would fit on the foreheads of this select group.

The intent of the text seems to be to contrast the marked of God and the marked of the beast. God is able to protect His marked people, but the beast is unable to protect his.

Revelation 14:2

(1) And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like *the sound* of harpists playing on their harps.

1. And I heard a voice (sound) from heaven = places John squarely on the earth. *Phonon* is better translated *sound* here. John hears a heavenly choir that is both loud and musically harmonious. This choir is not the 144,000. They must learn the song of the choir.

Revelation 14:3

(1) And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and (2) no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand (3) who had been purchased from the earth.

1. And they sang a new song = refers to the harpists. What this new song is is not explicitly indicated. One can only speculate.

2. No one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand = indicates that John is not a part of the 144,000. This is the only case in the Revelation where the lyrics of a song are not given. John explains that the reason he does not give us the words is that only the 144,000 can learn the song. Since the choir in heaven obviously knows the song, it is clear that John means that only 144,000 on the earth are able to learn the song.

3. Who had been purchased from the earth = contains the same word used in Revelation 5:9 for the universal purchase of the redeemed. Here the term obviously has a religious sense, i.e. salvation. *The earth* refers to the geographical nature of the redeemed. Taken from the twelve tribes of Israel, these redeemed folk are God's first fruits of Israel's national salvation.

Revelation 14:4

(1) These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. (2) There are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. (3) These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb. (4) And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless.

1. These are the ones (men) who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste = is the first of four descriptive clauses that define who the 144,000 are. *Molunein* (literally, to make dirty) is used in a figurative sense here to mean to defile or stain (Louw-Nida, § 53.34). Louw and Nida add the following comment, "to cause something to be ceremonially impure, with the implication of serious defilement." John is clearly focusing on the ritual purity of this group. The implication here is that these men have never had sexual intercourse. John does not state why these men adopted celibacy as a lifestyle. However, Jesus indicates in Matthew 19:12 that some men make "themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven." Obviously, since these are men and not boys, the decision to be celibate must have been made before Daniel's Seventieth Week began. This explains why 144,000 are called bond-servants of God in Revelation 7:3. This is an excellent sign to watch for in Israel. Such a large group of men committing themselves to God in this way will be hard to miss.

Some have suggested that spiritual celibacy be intended here. That is, the 144,000 remained faithful to the Lord and did not commit spiritual immorality with the woman presented in Revelation 17-18. However, the text refers to *women* and not *the woman*. *For they have kept themselves chaste* further defines this unique group. Literally, the Greeks says, *For they are virgins* (parthenoi). *Parthenoi* usually refers to women exclusively. Here it refers to men only. These men have not engaged in sexual intercourse. They are Jewish celibates. Some have attempted to make "the women" refer to "the woman" of Revelation 17. However, this is unlikely. There is both a ritual and moral purity ascribed to the 144,000.

2. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes = is the second ascription given the 144,000. For those who attempt to identify the 144,000 as a metaphor for all true saints, they do so at the sacrifice of the literal meaning of the text. They choose what they will and will not emphasize to their advantage. For example, the notion of following Christ as a disciple is a central motif of the Gospels and the apostle Paul. A connection between the Revelation and the Gospels or Paul is usually rejected out of hand. However, many interpreters will see a connection here because it allows a figurative interpretation to be forced on this text. In reality, the 144,000 are Jewish celibates who, now saved, follow the Lamb wherever He leads them. Where the Lamb will lead this group is not explicitly stated.

3. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb = is the third defining strait given in this passage. God's purpose for the 144,000 is clearly stated. They were purchased or saved "from among men as first fruits." The term *first fruits* occurs nine times in the New Testament (Rom 8:23; 11:16; 16:5; 1 Cor 15:20, 23; 16:15; 2 Thess 2:13; Ja 1:18; Rev 14:4). In Romans 16:5, 1 Corinthians 16:15, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, and James 1:18 *first fruits* clearly refers to the first initial group of converts to Christianity with more to come afterwards.

This is the most logical and reasonable sense here. Since there are only 12,000 Jews from each tribe of Israel and they are specially identified as "first fruits," naturally the salvation of more Jews will follow their conversion. We are not told when the salvation of the 144,000 occurred. However, we know it occurs between their sealing and their standing on Mount Zion with the Lamb. The salvation of the 144,000 guarantees the salvation of the nation of Israel, which must shortly follow this scene given the destruction of Jerusalem detailed in the seventh bowl (Rev 16:19).

4. And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless = is the fourth and final descriptive statement that identifies who the 144,000 are. The 144,000 are morally pure. Literally, the Greek says, "in their mouth is found no lie." A similar statement occurs in Zephaniah 3:13. Speaking of the remnant of Israel, Zephaniah states, "The remnant of Israel will...tell no lies, nor will a deceitful tongue be found in their mouths...." These are certainly the first fruits of the remnant of Israel that survive the Day of the Lord. *These are blameless* is the final descriptive item attached to the 144,000. *Blameless* is used throughout the New Testament to describe a faithful follower of Jesus Christ who exhibits moral purity (Eph 1:4; 5:27; Col 1:22; Phil 2:15).

Revelation 14:6-7

(1) And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, (2) having an eternal gospel (3) to preach to those who live on the earth, (4) and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; and (5) he said with a loud voice, (6) "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters."

1. And I saw another angel flying in midheaven = begins the second short story about a flying angel preaching in the sky. John indicates that this is "another angel flying in midheaven." *Another* requires that an angel preceded this reference. This supports our conclusion that "the eagle" of Revelation 8:13 is in fact an angel. Revelation 8:13 is the only other explicit reference to "flying in midheaven" before Revelation 14. Added to this fact is the reference in Revelation 14:8, "And another angel, a second one, followed...." Clearly, the angel of Revelation 14:6 is the first in a series.

Is this the first contradiction in Scripture? God forbid! How the angel is able to fly in the midheaven is not explicitly stated. Scripture nowhere indicates that angels have wings. This is the third angelic announcement given in midheaven. The first announcement occurred in Revelation 8:13. Revelation 8:13 states, "Then I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven...." The figure of speech that describes the actions of an angel as being that of an eagle is here stated explicitly. This is the third angel John sees moving horizontally in midheaven rather than the typical descending/ascending movement of angels described in Revelation 10:1.

2. Having an eternal gospel = begins a description of the task of the horizontal moving angelic being. He has in his possession "an eternal gospel." The adjective *eternal* (aionion) suggests

a message of long standing. *Euaggelion* (gospel) is normally articular (the gospel), but here it does not have the article. This is not the gospel of Christ (death, burial and resurrection of Jesus for sin), but a message of good news. The content of this message will be defined in verse 7.

3. To preach to those who live on the earth = indicates the purpose of the flying angel's possession of the eternal message. The angel proclaims. The audience of the flying angel is expressed in two ways. First, *to those who live (sit) on the earth* is a slight variation of the technical phrasing *those who dwell upon the earth* that is used nine times in the Revelation. The technical phrasing emphasizes the hostile nature of the audience to God and His people. *Those who sit on the earth* emphasize the nature of the audience. These people are earthy; that is, they see this earth as their permanent home. This will be the clearest attempt on God's part to communicate to mankind their need to repent before His final installment of wrath falls upon the earth during the thirty-day period that follows the Seventieth Week of Daniel.

4. And to every nation and tribe and tongue and people = is the second descriptive phrase that defines the audience of the flying angel who proclaims the eternal message. The *and* that begins this phrase should be translated *even* because it gives additional information about the earthy people. The phrase *every nation and tribe and tongue and people* appears with variations throughout the Revelation. It can refer to saved (Rev 5:9) or lost (Rev 14:6) people. This is the final universal call to lost humanity to recognize God's sovereignty over the earth.

5. He said with a loud voice = is characteristic of proclamations in the heavens. At issue here is whether what follows is the content of the "message" or is an additional sermon of the flying angel. We believe that what follows expresses the content of the flying angel's message. The Greek literally says, "saying with a loud voice." There is no break in the thought unit.

6. Fear God = is the content of the flying angel's message. The flying angel calls upon those who sit on the earth "to fear God." *Fear* or *respect for God* is an often called for response on behalf of mankind to the true God of heaven. Genesis 22:12 identifies Abraham as a fearer of God. *Fearers of God* is the future disposition of Israel according to Jeremiah 32:40. Psalm 111:10 declares that, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Luke describes Gentiles who looked favorably upon Judaism as God-fearers (Acts 10:2; 13:16). It is clear that being a fearer of God does not make one a believer in the New Testament sense. However, it is the beginning of wisdom. It is the starting point for those who would go on to call out to God for eternal salvation.

Give Him glory is the second action commanded by the flying angel. This command is similar to the actions of the hostile earth-dwellers in Revelation 11:13. There we saw that "to give God glory" is to recognize His sovereignty. *Because the hour of His judgment has come* is the stated reason for the flying angel's admonition. Unlike the "Day of Judgment," which suggests a longer period of time, "the hour of judgment" suggests a shorter period. John is not suggesting here that this is the beginning of God's wrath, but the end.

The primary question at this point in the chronology of the book of Revelation concerns the purpose of this call to soberness. One would normally expect such a call to occur prior to the beginning of God's wrath. To understand the placement of this message at this point in the Revelation we must look at the Gospel of Matthew. In Matthew 24:14, the Lord Jesus prophetically indicated that a universal proclamation would immediately precede the end of the age. The Lord stated, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come."

Many have mistakenly identified "the gospel of the kingdom" as "the gospel of Christ." This has led some to preach that the gospel of Christ must be preached to the whole world before the Lord Jesus could return. The apostle Paul declared in Galatians 1:7 that there is only one gospel of Christ. That is, there is only one salvation by grace through faith for the forgiveness of sin. However, the gospel of the kingdom does not concern the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. A simple chronology of the Gospel of Matthew will demonstrate this.

Matthew 4:17 states, "From that time Jesus began to preach and say, 'Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" Accordingly, Matthew 3:2 indicates that this is the same message

preached by John the Baptist. Matthew 4:23 declares, "Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom...(similarly Matthew 9:35)." However, Matthew 16:21 indicates a change in message for Jesus. Matthew writes, "From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day." This clearly marks a new message for Jesus. It is the heart of the gospel of Christ; i.e., the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus for the sin. That this is a new message that Jesus had not preached before is confirmed by Peter's response. Notice, "Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.'" This can hardly be the response of a man having heard this message repeatedly.

The gospel of Christ is a message of grace. The gospel of the kingdom is a message of wrath. John the Baptist declared, "who warned you to flee from the wrath to come (Matt 3:7)." He also stated that Jesus would baptize "the Holy Spirit and fire." This is spoken in a context of divine judgment against the wicked (Matt 3:11-12). Matthew 24:14 indicates that God will declare to the whole world His intent. He is going to judge and remove everyone that is unlike Himself (both human and angelic) from the earth. The universal proclamation will remove any possible excuse by those found wanting. Revelation 16:7 describes the fulfillment of Matthew 24:14.

Revelation 14:7b records the third and final action that should be taken by the earthy inhabitants to the imminent outbreak of God's final wrath. *Worship Him* describes the result of fear and recognition of God's sovereignty. The sovereignty of God is emphasized in the phrase, "who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters." This underscores the earthy people who think that the earth is permanent. Rather, God is permanent. These people must move from earth sitters to prostrate worshippers before God.

Revelation 14:8

(1) And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, (2) "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, (3) she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality.

1. And another angel, a second one = indicates the second angel in this series who moves horizontally while declaring a message to the earth-sitters. Taken with Revelation 8:13, this is the third flying angel in the midst of heaven.

2. Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great = is the central message of this flying angel. Spoken of in the past tense suggests that the author sees the event as so certain that he can represent it as done. *Babylon* can be used one of two ways here: (1) literally and (2) figuratively. Some futurists have argued for the literal city of Babylon. Preterists have argued for Jerusalem. Others argue for Rome. This issue will be discussed in Revelation 17 and 18 at great length.

3. She who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality = seems to be the primary complaint against "Babylon." *She had made to drink* reflects a perfect tense influence on the verb *potizo* (to give to drink). John describes what "Babylon" has done. The nations were compelled to drink by "Babylon." What is it that Babylon compelled the nations to drink? *Of the wine of the passion of her immorality* is a difficult phrase to understand. This is not literal, but figurative language. Considering the grammatical particulars, this clause could be translated, "She made all the nations drink some of the wine that leads to passion for immorality with her." In other words, Babylon made the nations drink her wine. The wine causes the nations to lust for intercourse with her. This is all figurative language. The woman is not a real woman. The wine is not real wine. Intercourse is not engaging in sexual intercourse. What this literally means will be detailed in Revelation 17-18.

Revelation 14:9-10

(1) Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, (2) "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and (3) receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand (4) he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, (5) which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; (6) and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

1. Then another angel, a third one, followed them = indicates the third and final angel in a series who moves horizontally in the sky while proclaiming a message for the earthy people

below.

The occurrences of this message at this point in the chronology of the Revelation presents a problem. This has led some to conclude that the material in Revelation 14 occurs before or during the middle of the Seventieth Week of Daniel. After all, they reason, it would make no sense to give this warning after the majority of the world has already taken the mark or worshiped the beast and his image. However, this view fails to appreciate the fact that this pericope is directed to the saints and not the wicked. This point will be made forcefully in Revelation 14:12.

2. If anyone worships the beast and his image = is the first part of a first class condition. It could be translated, "if (for the sake of argument) anyone worships the beast and his image...." There is no doubt that people will take the mark and worship the beast. So the statement is not made because of any doubt that people will engage in these actions. Rather, the point is to emphasize the consequences of doing so.

One must remember that at this point in the sequence of end time events, the Seventieth Week of Daniel is either over or within days of completion. Israel is either saved or soon to be saved and put in protective custody in Azal (Ze 14:4-5). However, *the sheep* of the "sheep and goat judgment" are still on the earth. Many of the sheep will be relatively new converts, converts who will not have had the opportunity to be disciplined. The intensification of God's wrath will bring a renewed effort on the part of Antichrist and his followers to solidify his base upon the earth. As Antichrist gathers his armies to battle at Armageddon, the pressure to join his ranks will greatly increase. We know there will be people who will not have taken his mark upon the earth because of the sheep from "the sheep and goat judgment" that follows Armageddon. This warning is for those who are fighting to be found faithful at the Lord's coming at Armageddon.

3. And receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand = is the second part of this first class condition. It is not that a person might take the mark but not worship, or worship and not take the mark. Those who worship the beast or take his mark are committed to him. There will not be those trying to deceive the beast by acting on the outside, but refraining in their hearts.

4. He also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God = is the consequences of worshiping or receiving the mark of the beast. Using figurative language that parallels that of Babylon's actions, God's wrath will fall on those who worship the beast and take his mark.

5. Which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger = details the nature of God's wrath. God's wrath will come upon the beast-marked worshipers with full strength. Unlike the Greeks who mixed their wine with water to soften its potency, God's wrath will come in full strength, i.e. undiluted.

6. And he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb = is the second punishment promised to beast-marked worshipers. With language reminiscent of the lake of fire, which is the final destiny of the damned, the beast-marked worshipers are promised severe punishment.

Revelation 14:11

(1) And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; (2) they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

1. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever = indicates that the punishment of the beast marked worshipers will be eternal in nature.

2. They have no rest day and night = is a figure of speech, which emphasizes the eternal nature of the punishment of the beast-marked worshipers.

Revelation 14:12

(1) Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.

1. Here is the perseverance of the saints = begins a difficult sentence to translate. This verse is

the key to why this announcement occurs at this point in the chronology of the Revelation. The reader should remember that we are within days of the final outpouring of the wrath of God—the bowl judgments. The battle of Armageddon is probably four to five weeks away, which adds to the importance of this warning.

Literally, this verse says, "Here is the perseverance of the saints: the ones who keep the commandments of God and (remain) faithful to Jesus." This statement indicates the motive of Revelation 14:9-12. While the content is focused against the wicked, the purpose is not to warn the wicked, but to encourage the faithful. With the salvation of Israel just days before and the sheep and goat judgment to occur several weeks after, God encourages His sheep to remain faithful. God's punishment of the wicked beast-marked worshipers serves as warning to the faithful. God punishes wickedness. What God will do to His unfaithful followers is not indicated at this point? However, it is not worth finding out.

Revelation 14:13

(1) And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, (2) "Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!'" (3) "Yes," says the Spirit, (4) "so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them."

1. And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, = is marked off from verse 12 in NASB, but it completes the thought of verse 12. Again, the voice from heaven is not explicitly identified.

2. Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on = is the second of seven beatitudes found in the Revelation. The first one occurs in Revelation 1:3. A drought occurs up until Revelation 14:13. Then, six beatitudes fall rather quickly. *The dead who die in the Lord* identifies the focus of this blessing. These are obviously believers. In context, their lives are taken from them—martyrs.

This is an unexpected remark at this point in our chronology of the book of Revelation. Just days away from the beginning of the final wrath of God, we would expect most believers to be dead or in protected custody. Where then are there believers to take advantage of this blessing? The sheep and goat judgment of Matthew 25:31ff makes clear that there will be sheep (believers) on earth when the Lord returns immediately following Armageddon. Matthew 25:32 indicates that "all the nations will be gathered before Him...." Out of these nations will come the sheep (believers).

The dead die *in the Lord* (en kurio). *In the Lord* is a favorite and exclusive phrase of the apostle Paul occurring more than 40 times in his writings. This is the only exception outside the writings of Paul. This phrase in Paul's writings speaks of the special relationship believers have with the Lord Jesus. The critical question at this point is this: does John mean the same thing that Paul means by the use of the phrase, "in Christ"? Pretribulationists among others naturally say, "no"! Dispensational pretribulationists limit the "in Christ" formula to New Testament believers only. In their thinking, "in Christ" describes church age believers only. Similarly, since the church age ends with the Rapture and since the Rapture occurs before Revelation 4, any NT language appearing after Revelation 4 is generic in reference, pretribulationists would say.

It is clear that Paul developed a new descriptive phrase to explain the NT believers' relationship to Christ. However, it is not correct to argue that since NT descriptive language does not appear in the OT, it does not apply to OT believers. It is true that the death and resurrection of Christ signaled a unique turn in God's program with man. However, the application of God's special work in Christ cannot be limited to NT believers.

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul presents Christ and Adam as antithetical representatives of mankind. Christ is the heavenly man. Adam is the earthly man. Christ is the Spirit-driven man. Adam is the flesh-driven man. The actions of the representatives have bearings on the represented. Clearly, the fate of those represented depends on the decision and actions of the representatives. Adam condemned the represented. Christ saves the represented. Paul illustrates the point by explaining the antithetical outcomes of death and resurrection. The believer's solidarity with Christ is a historical reality. We shall be raised because our representative (Christ) has been raised.

In Romans, the apostle Paul again refers to Christ and Adam as representatives. The fate of Adam's descendants rests on his disobedience. The outcome of Adam's disobedience is sin in the world, death, judgment and condemnation. The outcome of those who believe in Christ is grace in the world, life, justification and righteousness. In Romans, the death of Christ is the turning point. However, this does not mean that the application of Christ's death is limited to those who believe after the event. If the fruit of Adam's choice contaminates every man, women, boy and girl born on the earth throughout human history, then Christ's death can apply to all those who believe throughout human history. Before or after the cross is irrelevant.

Galatians 3:6-14 argues that Abraham is "the believer." Yet, no one in the OT is called a "believer" in the NT sense! In Galatians 3:8, Paul states, "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'All the nations will be blessed in you.'" As in this case, Paul calls "all the nations will be blessed in you," the gospel. This signals that Paul may apply NT names and concepts to OT ideas in unique ways. We should be careful not to say more than Scripture says. Abraham is the model of our faith. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law...in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." These folk referred to in Revelation 14:13 are NT believers saved after the Rapture, but before Armageddon.

The latter part of Revelation 14:13 adds the qualifier, "from now on." There is debate as to whether this phrase ends the first sentence or begins the second sentence. Because of the Greek particulars, we are inclined to support the conclusion that "from now on" begins the second sentence.

3. From now on, says the Spirit = indicates that the message comes from the Spirit. Those who die are immediately blessed.

4. So that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them = gives us the content of the Spirit's declaration. The rest of the believers follow the completion of his divinely appointed task on earth. The permanent record of the works of believers on earth is maintained. The nature of the suffering believers will experience during the final days of the Day of the Lord warrants special attention for them. It is not that others who have died before this point are not resting as well. This is an encouragement to those living at this very difficult time to remain faithful. No doubt many "sheep" will die during the thirty-day period following the Seventieth Week of Daniel as Antichrist attempts to put together his final army to prevent the reign of the Male-Son on earth (Rev 20:4).

Revelation 14:14

(1) Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and (2) sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, (3) having a golden crown on His head and (4) a sharp sickle in His hand.

1. Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud = introduces a fourth event. It is not introduced by a horizontal moving angelic being.

The purpose of Revelation 14:14-20 is to preview the final judgment of God against the wicked earth-dwellers. This section will be expanded in chapters 15-19. Revelation 15-16 will expand Revelation 14:14-20. Revelation 17-18 will expand Revelation 14:8-13. Revelation 20 expands Revelation 14:6-7.

Clouds are a transportation mechanism used to carry heavenly individuals various places in heaven and on earth.

2. Sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man = identifies the rider of heaven's unique transportation. *One like a son of man* is clearly reminiscent of Daniel 7:13. However, this is not Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus would hardly need an angelic exhortation to begin the earthly harvest (Rev 14:15). The one thing that can be dogmatically asserted is the fact that this is a unique heavenly being.

3. Having a golden crown on His head = is one indication of the uniqueness of this person. A

golden crown is worn by the each of the twenty-four elders as mentioned in Revelation 4:4 and 10. Revelation 6:2 indicates that the rider on a white horse wears a golden crown. Revelation 9:7 depicts the locust cavalry wearing golden crowns. Golden crowns obviously depict authority and status.

4. A sharp sickle in His hand = is the second descriptive item enumerated by John. A *sickle* is an ancient instrument of the harvest. A *sharp sickle* suggests the beginning of the harvest with an instrument in prime condition.

Revelation 14:15

(1) And another angel came out of the temple, (2) crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, (3) "Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, (4) because the harvest of the earth is ripe."

1. And another angel came out of the temple = supports the conclusion that the rider on the white cloud is an angelic being. *Another angel* suggests a previous angel. The immediate context suggests that the rider is the focus. This angel's job is to deliver a message.

2. Crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud = expresses the recipient of the angel's message. Emerging from the temple, this angel undoubtedly is under the authority of God. The fact that an angel commands the cloud-rider to begin argues against the identity of the rider as the Lord Jesus. That the aspect of sitting on the cloud is emphasized suggests that the identity of the cloud-rider is not paramount. The Lord Jesus stated in Matthew 13:39 that "the reapers are angels" at the end of the age. This argues strongly that the identity of the rider is an angelic being.

3. Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come = is the content of the angel's message to the cloud-rider. The command to put in the sickle is an allusion to Joel 3:13. Joel 3:13 states, "Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread, for the wine press is full; the vats overflow, for their wickedness is great." Joel 3:13 combines both the wheat and wine harvests. However, they are separated into two events in the Revelation. The first harvest mentioned is the wheat harvest. The reason the sickle can be put forth is that "the hour to reap has come." That God is in control of this situation is suggested by the fact that "the hour" or time of harvest has arrived.

4. Because the harvest of the earth is ripe = explains why the time of harvest begins at this point. A *ripe* earth continues the metaphor of the wheat harvest. Literally, wickedness has run its course and demands punishment. As indicated in Joel 3:13, wickedness overflows.

Revelation 14:16

(1) And He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and (2) the earth was reaped.

1. And He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth = may indicate the nature of this harvest. The reader should ignore the interpretive decision made by the translators of the NASB. The fact that they capitalized *He* indicates their opinion that the one sitting on the cloud is a Divine Being. It is a heavenly being, but there is nothing in the text that demands that the cloud-rider is Jesus Christ.

2. The earth was reaped = is generalized. There is no clear indication what is reaped. The fact that the wheat harvest is followed by the grape harvest similar to Joel 3:13 argues for the conclusion that this is a preview of the bowl judgments to be unleashed in Revelation 15-16.

Revelation 14:17

(1) And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle.

1. And another angel came out of the temple = indicates a second angelic being with a sharp sickle. That this angel came out of the temple indicates that the cloud-rider mentioned in Revelation 14:14 also came out of the temple. This argues against the cloud-rider's identity as that of Jesus. This angelic being also has a "sharp sickle," in good condition for a harvest.

Revelation 14:18

(1) Then another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying (2) "Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, (3) because her grapes are ripe."

1. Then another angel, the one who has power over fire = expresses similarity with the wheat harvest. The first angel who commanded the cloud-rider to harvest the earth is not uniquely identified as with this second angel. This angel "has authority over fire." Exactly what this angel does is not explicitly stated. Here he simply instructs the second sickle-carrying angel to harvest the earth.

2. Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth = expresses the second harvest depicted from Joel 3:13. This is the grape harvest. The metaphor is carried forward, but the literal idea is that the wicked get their deserved punishment.

Revelation 14:19

(1) So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered *the clusters from* the vine of the earth, and (2) threw them into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

1. So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered *the clusters from* the vine of the earth = continues the metaphor of the vintage harvest. This is clearly a summary statement. It would be impossible for one angel to reap the whole earth in a single swing. This angel's job is to gather the wicked of the earth.

2. Threw them into the great winepress of the wrath of God = defines the goal of the angel's harvesting. The angel gathers the wicked to a place where God's wrath will be administered. This overview will be expanded in Revelation 16:12-16 (the sixth bowl) and Revelation 19 (the actual battle of Armageddon). As in Joel 3:13, the vintage harvest depicts the eschatological harvest of the wicked. A winepress is the place where the grapes were pressed to separate the juice from the pulp. God's literal winepress will be on the plains of Magedo.

Revelation 14:20

(1) And the wine press was trodden outside the city, (2) and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.

1. And the wine press was trodden outside the city = indicates the place of God's punishment of the wicked. The Greek indicates that *outside the city* is God's place of punishment. This can be no other city but Jerusalem. The exact location of God's judgment will be specified in Revelation 16:16.

2. Blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles = describes the outcome of God's wrath. That this description is figurative can be stated with certainty. The figurative language of a winepress naturally supports the concept of flowing juice. Blood running three to four feet deep for a distance of two hundred miles even with figurative language indicates a great slaughter.

□

[Next Section: Chapter Fifteen - Prelude to Bowl Judgments](#)

□

Revelation
COMMENTARY
WWW.REVELATIONCOMMENTARY.ORG

**Questions? Comments?
Send us an email!**

revelationcommentary.org
© Sola Scriptura
info@solagroup.org



Produced and Developed by [Sola Scriptura](#)





□

Previous Section: Chapter Fourteen - The End of the Beginning

CHAPTER FIFTEEN - PRELUDE TO BOWL JUDGMENTS

Revelation 15:1

(1) Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, (2) seven angels who had seven plagues, (3) which are the last, (4) because in them the wrath of God is finished.

1. Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous = is the third and final heavenly sign that marks this section of the Revelation. This sign follows the first two signs indicated in Revelation 12:1 and 3. This suggests that while Revelation 12:1-6 retrogresses in the historical chronology of the end time events. Revelation 12-13 is not a parenthesis in a purely technical sense. The purpose of the retrogression is clear. It provides the backdrop for the wrath of God in its final form. The woman, the dragon, the beast, and God highlight the four major players of the eschatological end. The woman and her offspring are the object of the dragon's wrath. The dragon and his supporters are the object of God's wrath.

2. Seven angels who had seven plagues = like the two previous heavenly signs offers a summary of the sign before a detailed outline is presented. As the rest of this chapter demonstrates, there is a process involved in how these seven angels will operate. Revelation 15:6 indicates that the seven angels emerge from the temple, which supports the notion that Revelation 15:1 is a summary statement. We are not told the nature of the seven plagues the seven angels have. This also supports the summary nature of Revelation 15:1. Like the trumpet judgments (Rev 9:20), the final expression of God's wrath is characterized as "plagues."

3. *Which are the last* = defines the limits and nature of these plagues. *Last* connects the seven plagues with the trumpet judgments of Revelation 8-11. There is no basis to connect the seven seals with the trumpet and bowls as wrath of God. Equally *last* suggests something previously. Therefore, there is no basis for those who attempt to define the bowls as the wrath of God, but not the trumpets. Ample evidence demonstrates the opposite is true. Revelation 22:18 states, "...God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book...." The plagues of this book are defined in Revelation 16:1 and 9:20.

4. Because in them the wrath of God is finished = completes the summary description of the third and final heavenly sign. *The wrath of God* as it is expressed in the Greek occurs about forty times in various formats in the Old Testament. The eschatological wrath of God against the nations is clearly the focus of this text. 1 Thessalonians 1:10 makes clear that faith in Christ delivers one from the eschatological wrath of God. It is therefore clear that those who suffer God's wrath do not have a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Revelation 15:2

(1) And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and (2) those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name, (3) standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God.

1. And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire = begins this important detailed explanation of the final expression of God's wrath against the dragon and his followers. John is clearly attempting to explain with figurative language what he sees. There is no literal sea or fire. This is figurative. However, what the literal referent is will be more difficult to explain. The second half of this verse explains that the victorious people described are *standing on the sea*

of glass. Therefore, the sea of glass is a literal physical service that can support a standing person. This description of *a sea of glass* also occurred in the description of the throne room of God in Revelation 4.

2. Those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name = indicates the primary focus of this pericope. The three primary obstacles to faithfulness on the part of believers are highlighted. The beast, his image and his mark are the *beasts* that believers must contend with here. These people were victorious. The exact nature of their victory is not clear.

3. Standing on a sea of glass, holding harps of God = concludes the initial vision portion seen by John concerning the audience before God. The importance of music before God is heightened by the presence of *harps of God*.

Revelation 15:3-4

(1) And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, (2) and the song of the Lamb, saying, (3) "Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; (4) righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations! (5) Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? (6) For You alone are holy; for all the nations will come and worship before You, (7) for your righteous acts have been revealed."

1. And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God = details a song of the overcomers before the throne of God. It is clear that the great man of God of Pentateuch fame is the subject of this portion. The song that follows in Verses 3b-4 does not accord explicitly with any song of Moses mentioned in the Old Testament (Exod 15:1-18, Deut 31:30-32:43, Ps 90). It might be that the words of the song of Moses are not recorded here.

2. And the song of the Lamb = indicates either a second song or a song that accords to both Moses and the Lamb. We have no explicit knowledge of such a song. It might be that the song recorded in verses 3b-4 is the song of the Lamb and this is the first time it is introduced to the world at large.

3. Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty = indicates the first subject of the song—God the Father.

4. Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations = maybe a reference to Jesus Christ. However, it is probably a reference to God the Father.

5. Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name = are two rhetorical questions that expose the might and power of God. It simply cannot be resisted. Yet, in the bowl judgments to follow the beast-marked worshipers will resist. Therefore, the point here is this: God is worthy of all glory, even if He does not get it.

6. For You alone are holy; for all the nations will come and worship before You = suggests another reason that God alone deserves all praise and worship. Clearly, God is in control, but He has not finished His agenda because the nations have not arrived for God's universal praise service.

7. For your righteous acts have been revealed = indicates the reason the nations will gather.

Revelation 15:5-6

(1) After these things I looked, and (2) the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened, and (3) the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, (4) clothed in linen, clean *and* bright, and girded around their chests with golden sashes.

1. After these things I looked = indicates a new vision sequence.

2. The temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened = introduces the judgment of God that will follow in the form of seven bowl judgments. We cannot with certainty identify *the tabernacle of testimony*. However, it appears that the purpose of this place is to assure the reader that the wrath of God about fall is justified and verifiable. Who opened the doors of

heaven's temple is not stated. However, the reason the doors are opened is to allow the seven plague-carrying angels to exit.

3. The seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple = indicates the emergence of the seven angels who execute the wrath of God. The exact nature of the wrath is not yet indicated.

4. Clothed in linen, clean *and* bright, and girded around their chests with golden sashes = describes dress of the seven bowl-carrying angels. The particular Greek term for linen, *linon*, occurs only here in the Revelation. Whether this suggests that the dress of these seven angels is different from others in the book of Revelation who also wear linen dress is not clear. The *golden sashes* underscore the special status of these seven angels.

Revelation 15:7

(1) Then one of the four living creatures (2) gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever.

1. Then one of the four living creatures = indicates that a person closer to the throne of God commissions the seven bowl-carrying angels.

2. Gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God = is the first indication of the nature of God's wrath about to be unleashed on the earth. The particular *bowl/s* given to the angels suggest a shallow surface, which indicates quick delivery of content.

Revelation 15:8

(1) And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and (2) no one was able to enter the temple (3) until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.

1. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power = suggests that the temple in heaven is the scene from which the final wrath of God will be executed upon the living earth-dwellers. *Smoke* is a biblical motif that appears in context with manifestations of God throughout the Bible (Lev 16:12-13; Exod 19:18, 40:34-35; Isa 6:4). What is the purpose of God's presence in His temple at this point in the chronology of the Revelation?

2. No one was able to enter the temple = is a common response to the manifestation of God's glory. Exodus 40:16-38 recounts that Moses was unable to enter the "tent of meeting" because the cloud of God's glory filled it. I Kings 8:1-66 details the dedication of Solomon's temple, which resulted in the filling of the temple with the glory of God such that the priests could not enter it. Why no one is able to enter God's temple is not explained. However, in context since the final expression of God's wrath is going forth, there is no need to enter. There is no intercession at this point and there is no appeal.

3. Until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished = sets the limits of God's unapproachableness.

□

[Next Section: Chapter Sixteen - Bowl Judgments 1-7](#)

□



**Questions? Comments?
Send us an email!**

revelationcommentary.org
© Sola Scriptura
info@solagroup.org



Produced and Developed by [Sola Scriptura](#)





□

Previous Section: Chapter Fifteen - Prelude to Bowl Judgments

CHAPTER SIXTEEN - BOWL JUDGMENTS

Revelation 16:1

(1) Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, (2) "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."

1. Then I heard a loud voice from the temple = seems to imply that God gives this command. If no one could enter the temple, it would seem logical that no one would be able to remain in the temple either. Therefore, the only person in the temple is God Himself.
2. Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God = is the instruction given by the voice from the temple. This indicates that God strictly controls the timing of the execution of the final phase of His wrath.

Revelation 16:2

(1) So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth; and (2) it became a loathsome and malignant sore (3) on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image.

1. So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth = signals the beginning of the final phase of God's wrath.
2. It became a loathsome and malignant sore = indicates the impact of the first bowl. Similar to the boils upon the Egyptians during the great exodus, God will again send sores. The plague of sores on the Egyptians was the first plague to actually threaten the life of the Egyptians. However, there is no indication that life is threatened by the sores. The purpose of the sores seems to be unparalleled suffering.
3. On the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image = clearly indicates who is the target of the first bowl judgment. The beast-marked worshipers are the target of the first bowl judgment. The Greek says literally, "upon the men." Clearly, "men" is used in a generic sense. For women and children are not excluded from the punishment of God for taking the mark.

Revelation 16:3

(1) The second *angel* poured out his bowl into the sea, and (2) it became blood like *that* of a dead man; and (3) every living thing in the sea died.

1. The second *angel* poured out his bowl into the sea = moves from man to nature. The whole of salt-water sources is the object of the second bowl.
2. It became blood like *that* of a dead man = is the impact of the second bowl. A figure of speech is employed. The blood of a dead man is no longer capable of supporting life. Blood is the aspect of the dead that cannot be used for transplant or transfusion purposes.
3. Every living thing in the sea died = is the outcome of the bowl.

Revelation 16:4-7

(1) Then the third *angel* poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and (2) they became blood. (3) And I heard the angel of the waters saying, (4) "Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, (5) because You judged these things; (6) for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and (7) You have given them blood to drink. (8) They deserve it." (9) And I heard the altar saying, (10) "Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments."

1. Then the third *angel* poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters = constitutes the third bowl judgment. All fresh-water sources are afflicted.
 2. They became blood = is outcome of the third bowl. As with salt-water sources, water becomes blood. We are not told that all life died as in the case of the salt-water, but that is the natural conclusion.
 3. And I heard the angel of the waters saying = indicates a commentary to follow concerning God's purpose in the second and third bowl judgment. What the job description is of *the angel of the waters* is not detailed.
 4. Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One = is a praise report of the angel of the waters. Given the nature of the judgment falling on the earth, the heavenly host (elders, living creatures and angels) are constantly reminding us that God's actions are righteous, just and holy.
 5. Because You judged these things = indicates the angelic attitude toward the actions of God. In other words, if God had not judged these things, He would be in contradiction of His own nature. "These things" in context refers to the previous (bowls two and three) judgments.
 6. For they poured out the blood of saints and prophets = is important. *For* is better translated *because*. The angelic being gives us the reason for the previous bowl judgments. The subject of this clause must be "the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image." These are the only people mentioned in the previous bowl judgments. *To shed blood* means to murder. The beast-marked worshipers who by association are a part of the beast of Revelation 13 are directly responsible for the death of the saints. *Saints* and *prophets* have been described as killed in the book of Revelation, particular the prophetic witnesses of Revelation 11 and the martyrs of Revelation 6:9-11.
 7. You have given them blood to drink = defines the audience of God's wrath. "Them" refers to the beast-marked worshipers who are responsible for the death of God's people addressed in Revelation 16:2. By turning the waters of the earth to blood, the beast-marked worshipers will drink blood since they have poured out the blood of God's people. Now people do drink blood, but never of the dead. Bowl 2 indicates that the blood is "like *that* of a dead man."
- The author obviously intends a difference. Otherwise, there would no need to distinguish between the blood of the living and the blood of the dead. The blood of the living flows warm and oxygenated. The blood of the dead does not flow and is not oxygenated.
8. They deserve it = expresses the righteous attitude of the angelic being. The wicked are as worthy of God's wrath as the Sardisians are worthy to walk with God in white (Rev 3:4).
 9. And I heard the altar saying = is a peculiar statement. One does not normally expect an altar to speak. However, in apocalyptic literature anything is possible. Yet, Revelation 15 seems to indicate that the temple of God is empty at this moment.
 10. "Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments = affirms again that a just God executes a just judgment.

Revelation 16:8

(1) The fourth *angel* poured out his bowl upon the sun, and (2) it was given to it to scorch men with fire.

1. The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun = expresses the agent of God's wrath. The sun has been used twice before in God's program of the end. It was temporarily darkened at the sixth seal. A third of the sun darkened by the fourth trumpet. This judgment with the aid of

the sun does not contradict the two previous references to the sun. The heat of the sun is the issue at this point. Previously the issue had been its light.

2. It was given to it to scorch men with fire = is the purpose of the heat of the sun. *Oi anthropoi* (the men) were burned. As in Revelation 16:2, a generic reference is intended here. Men, women, and children all suffer at this point.

Revelation 16:9

(1) Men were scorched with fierce heat; and (2) they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and (3) they did not repent so as to give Him glory.

1. Men were scorched with fierce heat = introduces a comment on the fourth bowl of wrath. The idea here is not burned up, but scorched or caused to suffer because of the heat. This coupled with the absence of water is suffering at its best. Again, the sufferers are identified as *oi anthropoi*, a generic reference to men, women and children.

2. They blasphemed the name of God = is not explicitly defined. This indicates that the third commandment is broken. God's name is taken in vain by men.

3. They did not repent so as to give Him glory = is an editorial comment unparalleled in the Revelation--unparalleled in the sense that the worst expression of God's wrath does not bring repentance of the wicked.

Revelation 16:10-11

(1) Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and (2) his kingdom became darkened; and (3) they gnawed their tongues because of pain, and (4) they blasphemed the God of heaven (5) because of their pains and their sores and (6) they did not repent of their deeds.

1. Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast = focuses the fifth bowl. *The throne of the beast* was mentioned in Revelation 13:2. The beast received it from the dragon. *The throne of the beast* is a figure of speech. It represents the sovereignty of the beast much as "the White House" represents the sovereignty of the United States.

2. His kingdom became darkened = is the second aspect of the goal of the fifth bowl. It is not clear, whether this darkness is literal or figurative. Literal darkness or judgment produces suffering for the living beast-marked earth-dwellers.

3. They gnawed their tongues because of the pain = is the first indicated reaction of the beast and all those who follow him. It is not explicitly indicated why or how the darkness causes pain for the beast and his followers. The biting of the tongue suggests great pain.

4. They blasphemed the God of heaven = is the second response of the beast and his followers. This is the second time the wicked take God's name in vain.

5. Because of their pains and their sores = indicates a cumulative impact to the bowl judgments. The sores came about in connection with the first bowl and pain is connected with the fifth bowl.

6. They did not repent of their deeds = caps the fifth bowl judgment. At this point, the reader is told that repentance is not an outcome of the judgment of God.

Revelation 16:12

(1) The sixth *angel* poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, (2) so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east.

1. The sixth *angel* poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates = which is reminiscent of the sixth trumpet judgment. A cruel army arose from the great river region to kill a third of mankind. The Euphrates river is called "the great river" in Genesis 15:18. The importance of the river becomes apparent as the text unfolds. It dried up. Unparalleled in ancient times was

the drying up of the Euphrates River.

2. So that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east = indicates the purpose of the unparalleled event. God prepares *the way* for the kings of the east. That there are *kings* and not a king suggests individual nations still exist at this time. At what point these kings form their coalition is not indicated. The important point to remember is that God prepares the way for the kings.

Interestingly, at the beginning of the twentieth Century, the majority of the nations of the world were monarchies. However, by the end of the Century only a minority of monarchies has survived. Several kings or their sons are in exile. Russia, China, Iraq, Cambodia, Afghanistan, Laos, and Iran are or were monarchies. The reversion to monarchies by many nations to the East of Israel past the Euphrates River is a good sign to watch for when looking for the final phase of human history as we know it.

Other nations East of Israel that have or were monarchies will cease to exist. That is, Japan, Indonesia, and other Island nations are destroyed at the seventh bowl (Rev 16:20).

Revelation 16:13-14

(1) And I saw *coming* out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; (2) for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, (3) which go out to the kings of the whole world, (4) to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.

1. And I saw coming out of the mouth...dragon...beast...false prophet...three unclean spirits like frogs = suggests the role of the dragon, beast and false prophet. They send demonic spirits to influence the kings of the earth. We are not told in what way the unclean spirits resemble frogs.

2. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs = clarifies what the "unclean spirits" are. They are demons. These demons perform signs or do miracles. It is clear that the demonic spirits must put forth an all out effort to accomplish their objective.

3. Which go out to the kings of the whole world = moves beyond the initial discussion in Revelation 16:12. There, only the kings of the east are in focus. Here, the kings of the whole world are mentioned. Whether two groups of kings are intended is not clear. Why would God only prepare the kings' way from the east? What makes the kings from the east special? These are questions not answered by the text.

4. To gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty = explains the purpose of the demonic activity. By the article *the*, we know that this is the eschatological battle between God and the wicked. This battle concludes the eschatological Day of the Lord.

Revelation 16:15

(1) "Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame."

1. Behold, I am coming like a thief = is often associated with the coming of the eschatological Day of the Lord (2 Peter 3:10).

Given a literal interpretation of the trumpet and bowl judgments, it is beyond comprehension that any man on earth would continue to resist God's rule and authority. Revelation 16:14 indicates that Satan/Antichrist/False Prophet will utilize demonic deception to gather "the kings of the whole world" "for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty." It is in this context that the Lord Jesus offers one of His clearest warnings. He states, "Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame." Incorrectly some have taken the reference, "Behold, I am coming like a thief" to refer to the Rapture. However, this conclusion fails to appreciate not only the context, but also the historical usage of this phrase.

Jesus states in John 10:10, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy...." This is the purpose of a thief. However, there is another issue related to the coming of a thief. This concerns his *modus operandi* (how he operates). That is, a thief comes suddenly and unexpectedly. The apostle Paul indicates "that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night (1 Thess. 5:2)." Paul indicates that in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 the point of the figure of speech is "suddenness." Therefore, the question concerning Revelation 16:15 is this: is the point that the Lord makes in Revelation 16:15 one of purpose or *modus operandi*? On the other hand, it could be both. A closer examination will reveal the correct answer.

The image of a man having disrobed and fallen asleep who is then caught sleeping, awakened by surprise and forced to parade about naked is clear. The question concerns its meaning. Alfred Edersheim is helpful at this point. In his book *The Temple, Its Ministries and Service*, he writes,

Perhaps one of the most striking instances of this kind is afforded by the words quoted at the head of this chapter—'Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments.' They literally describe, as we learn from the Rabbis, the punishment awarded to the Temple-guards if found asleep at their posts; and the Rabbinical account of it is curiously confirmed by the somewhat naive confession of one of their number, that on a certain occasion his own maternal uncle had actually undergone the punishment of having his clothes set on fire by the captain of the Temple as he went his rounds at night...During the night the 'captain of the Temple' made his rounds. On his approach the guards had to rise and salute him in a particular manner. Any guard found asleep when on duty was beaten, or his garments were set on fire—a punishment, as we know, actually awarded. (A. Edersheim, *The Temple, Its Ministries and Service*)

The point is obvious: the Lord will suddenly appear and the unprepared will suffer a great disaster. In the context of the sixth bowl, which gathers "the kings of the whole world" "for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty" this is clearly a warning—stay away. This is the only way to prevent a disaster at Armageddon for "the kings of the whole world." If they come to the battle, they will die.

Revelation 16:16

(1) And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon.

1. The place of "the war of great day of God, the Almighty" is called in Hebrew *Har-Magedon*. This is the only place in the Bible where the word occurs. John's indication that the place bears a Hebrew name immediately sends us to the Old Testament. Scholars, in no way, agree concerning the meaning of or the place called *Armageddon*. The first step in arriving at the correct meaning is to recognize that a literal geographical location is intended. There is nothing in the grammar or context to prove otherwise. The second step in arriving at the correct meaning is to recognize that John's audience was familiar with the term. John instructs the reader that Har-Magedon is a Hebrew name. As such, it is composed of two words. The Hebrew word can be translated either a hill or mountain. Megiddon "was an ancient city located on a plain in the southwest portion of the Valley of Jezreel (Jewish name) or Esdraelon (Greek name)." (Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, page 898)

Two great mountains stand to the northeast and southeast of the hill of Megiddo: Mt. Tabor and Mt. Gilboa. Between these two mountains run the valley of Jezreel, which is fifteen miles wide at its widest point. It will be the place of God's great slaughter of the nations depicted in Revelation 19:11-21.

Revelation 16:17

(1) Then the seventh *angel* poured out his bowl upon the air, and (2) a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done."

1. Then the seventh *angel* poured out his bowl upon the air = introduces the final bowl judgment. The seventh and final bowl-carrying angel punishes the air. The earth (land), water, fire and air are the four elements that are the objects of God's wrath.

2. A loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done." = repeats an often heard motif—a loud voice. Since the temple is empty, this voice must be God, Himself. That God would pronounce, "It is done," at this point in the narrative is confusing to some. However, it must be kept in mind that bowls six and seven are given in summary fashion. They will be expanded in great detail in Revelation 17-19 where the destruction of the city and kingdom of the beast will be presented in detail.

Revelation 16:18

(1) And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and (2) there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake *was it*, and so mighty.

1. And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder = begins a listing of the outcome of the seventh angel's bowl. Having poured his bowl upon the air, lightning and thunder rock the air.

2. There was a great earthquake = is the third great outcome of the seventh angel's bowl—a great earthquake. However, unlike the previous earthquakes, this one is unparalleled in all of human history. This earthquake cannot be compared or thought to be one of the other earthquakes that has occurred in the Revelation. Those who attempt to make this point ignore the textual details. The author makes clear with the intensive nature of this earthquake that it is unparalleled.

Revelation 16:19

(1) The great city was split into three parts, and (2) the cities of the nations fell. (3) Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath.

1. The great city was split into three parts = signals the first effect of the unparalleled earthquake. Scholars do not agree on the identity of "the great city." However, the context is clear. Jerusalem is "the great city." Jerusalem is explicitly identified in Revelation 11:8 as "the great city." Why the city is split into three parts is not stated. However, Zechariah 13:8 declares, "It will come about in all the land [of Israel], declares the Lord, that two parts in it will be cut off and perish; but the third will be left in it." This accords with the destruction of "the great city" indicated in Revelation 16:19. Also, Zechariah 14:2 indicates that God will leave a segment of His people in Jerusalem when the nations gather to destroy it. Zechariah 14:5 states that God will empty Jerusalem of his people just prior to His arrival with His angels for the battle of Armageddon. The destruction of Jerusalem will be highlighted in Revelation 17-18.

2. The cities of the nations fell = is the second proof that "the great city" refers to Jerusalem. "The cities of the nations" (Gentiles) is in contrast to "the great city (Jews)." The punishment of Jerusalem is not as severe as the punishment of the cities of the Gentile nations.

3. Babylon the great was remembered before God = is the third entity to suffer as result of the unparalleled earthquake. Who or what "Babylon the great" refers to has not been explicitly defined. This is the second reference to it in the Revelation. Whatever it is, God will pour out the worst expression of His wrath the world will ever know upon it.

Revelation 16:20

(1) And every island fled away, and (2) the mountains were not found.

1. And every island fled away = continues the impact of the seventh bowl. *To flee away* in the NASB suggests more than merely "moved out of their places." Exactly what happens to the islands cannot be dogmatically stated at this point. That the islands cease to exist is perhaps the sense.

2. The mountains were not found = makes an opposite conclusion possible with regards to the mountains. The Greek literally says that the mountains "were not found." That is, they disappeared. John uses two different verbs to describe what happens to the islands and what

happens to the mountains. If the same thing happens to the islands that happens to the mountains we would expect John to have said, "the island and mountains fled or were not found."

Revelation 16:21

And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe.

□

[Next Section: Chapter Seventeen - The Great Harlot](#)

□

Revelation
COMMENTARY
WWW.REVELATIONCOMMENTARY.ORG

Questions? Comments?
Send us an email!

revelationcommentary.org

© Sola Scriptura

info@solagroup.org


SOLA SCRIPTURA

Produced and Developed by [Sola Scriptura](#)

□



□

Previous Section: Chapter Sixteen - Bowl Judgments 1-7

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN - THE GREAT HARLOT

In this writer's opinion, Revelation 17 is the most difficult chapter in the whole of the Revelation. This, in no sense, is my final word on this chapter. It, no doubt, will undergo many changes as we prayerfully reflect and study it in the future. I seek to understand the text in its most normal, natural and customary sense. Thus, I tend to shy away from views, which do not have direct textual support. Therefore, views which do not have explicit biblical support are ignored.

Revelation 17:1-2

(1) Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me saying, (2) "Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot (3) who sits on many waters, (4) with whom the kings of the earth committed acts of immorality, and (5) those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality."

1. Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me = connects us back with Revelation 15-16. This interpretive expansion follows the truncated seventh and final bowl judgment, which devastated Jerusalem and the Gentiles cities. We are not told which one of the seven bowl-carrying angels is helping John, but one might guess that the angel carrying the bowl interprets that particular bowl. Since the seventh bowl-carrying angel unleashed the devastation that destroyed the cities of the world, we naturally suspect that this same angel now details the destruction for John of the capital of Antichrist's satanically empowered city.

2. Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot = indicates the purpose of the angel's interpretive expansion. This is one of eight occurrences of the verb "to show" in the Revelation that also involves an interpreting angel (1:1; 4:1; 17:1; 21:9, 10; 22:1, 6, 8). *The judgment* is the issue of chapter 17. *The great harlot* is the subject of this judgment. This is "the" judgment of the harlot. She may have been judged in the past, but this is her ultimate and final judgment. This exact phrase also occurs in Revelation 19:2. There *the great harlot* is the object of God's wrath for the death of His bondservants.

This ties us back to Revelation 6:10. The fifth seal martyrs requested divine insight concerning God's judgment of the living earth-dwellers who were responsible for their deaths. The same term *avenge* used in Revelation 6:10 occurs in Revelation 19:2. The living earth-dwellers are the instrument of the martyrs' death, but the woman is the sponsor. The living earth-dwellers are drunk with the wine of her fornication. Matthew 23:37 states, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her." Notice: the city is called "her." Notice: the city is responsible for the death of God's prophets. Notice: the city is a person.

John indicates that this is *the* great harlot. One could say that this is the "mother" of all harlots. This naturally leads to a question. What entity would be considered the mother of all harlots in a biblical sense?

Isaiah 1:21 calls Jerusalem a harlot. Isaiah 23:13-18 depicts Tyre as a harlot. Nahum 3:4 declares Nineveh a harlot. The nation Israel is repeatedly accused by the prophets of being a harlot (Jer 3:6-10; Ezek 16:15-22; Hos 4:12-13). It should not escape the reader's attention that these references apply to cities or nations. It is apparent why Jerusalem and Israel would be harlots in the biblical sense. They both engaged in conduct contrary to their vow of commitment to the one true God. In Jerusalem and Israel could be heard the worship of gods who neither speak, move nor bless. We also can understand why the prophet Nahum declares

Nineveh (a city) a harlot as well. One hundred years before, the prophet Jonah had preached and affected repentance on behalf of those living in Nineveh. Key question: why did God send Jonah to Nineveh in the first place? Their promise of faithfulness to the God of Israel postponed His wrath. However, by the time of the prophet Nahum, the people of Nineveh had returned to their sinful ways. This is the basis of Nineveh's harlotry and subsequent judgment.

Isaiah's depiction of Tyre as a harlot is bit more difficult to explain in biblical terms. Did the people of Tyre ever have a faithful relationship to the God of the Bible? In other words, in what sense is Tyre a harlot in the biblical sense of violating their vow to God? There is no explicit statement in Scripture that Tyre was numbered among the people of God. However, there is evidence that Huram, king of Tyre, and by extension the people of Tyre, had a deep knowledge of God (II Chr 2:11-16). No one is certain why the king of Tyre is personified as Satan in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28. However, in some sense, the king of Tyre had dealings with God, which made him liable. Thus, it can be argued that Tyre had a responsibility to be faithful to the Lord. It is obvious that a harlot in the biblical sense must at one time been faithful to the Lord.

Again, the question: what entity is most befitting the title "the mother of harlots?"

3. Who sits on many waters = defines the particular harlot. The phrase *many waters* is defined in Revelation 17:15 as "peoples and crowds and nations and languages." The great harlot is seated upon multitudes. *To be seated* suggests rule. This harlot rules over multitudes upon the earth.

4. With whom the kings of the earth committed acts of immorality = indicates that John is fulfilling his commission given in Revelation 10:11 to prophesy against "kings." "The kings of the earth" are accused of *fornication* with the great harlot. Under the metaphor of sexual immorality, John declares that the kings of the earth and the great harlot have committed acts, which betray the harlot's commitment. Four times in the Revelation (17:2, 18:3, 18:9, 19:2) the immoral relations of the harlot are referenced. What is the harlot actually accused of? Revelation 19:2 states, "the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality." *To corrupt* (phtheiro) in the Greek in this case means, "to cause the moral ruin of" someone. It is clear that John is using metaphorical language. Sex between a man and woman is not the literal referent here. The great harlot is causing the moral ruin of the kings of the earth by leading the call for them to commit and follow the beast.

5. Those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality = is the second group greatly influenced by the great harlot. We have seen repeatedly throughout the Revelation that "those who dwell on the earth" is a technical phrase that refers to the people on the earth who are hostile to God and His people. The Greek is not precisely identical to the other occurrences, but the meaning is the same. The harlot and the kings' fornication intoxicates the living earth-dwellers. The action of the harlot and the kings is so powerful that the people are swept away by it. It is important to notice that the kings willingly join themselves to the harlot, but the people are made drunk by her actions, which suggests compulsion on the part of the harlot.

Revelation 17:3

(1) And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and (2) I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, (3) full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns.

1. And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness = indicates that John is continuing to receive divine revelation by the Spirit of God with angelic agency. It is not clear if the wilderness opposite Israel is the focus of the prophecy or not.

2. I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast = begins a description of the woman alluded to in Revelation 17:1. This time she is seated on "a scarlet beast." We saw a similar beast come up from the sea in Revelation 13:1—the dragon. This beast, similar to the dragon and the beast from the sea, is first presented as a composite and then as an individual.

3. Full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns = are the first two characteristics of the scarlet beast, which argue for the conclusion that this beast is a

composite. It has the similar characteristics as the red dragon and the beast from the sea. *Full of blasphemous names* is a description taken from the sea-beast of Revelation 13. *Having seven heads and ten horns* is taken verbatim from the description of the scarlet dragon of Revelation 12:3. That the woman is sitting on the scarlet beast suggests that she has joined with the beast in his agenda. This constitutes her harlotry.

Revelation 17:4-5

(1) The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and (2) adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, (3) having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality, and (4) on her forehead a name was written, a mystery, (5) "Babylon the great, the mother of Harlots and of the abominations of the earth."

1. The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet = begins a general description of the great harlot alluded to in Revelation 17:1. *Purple* has a rich history in the Scriptures as a symbol of status. It was often worn by royalty (Esth 8:15; Lam 4:5; Dan 5:7). *Scarlet* suggests wealth (1 Sam 1:24; Prov 31:21; Jer 4:30). This description suggests that the great harlot has attained wealth and status, which is reflected, in her unique position with the composite scarlet beast.

2. Adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls = reflects the wealth of the great harlot.

3. Having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality = continues the description of the great harlot. The *gold cup* symbolizes her wealth. The woman engages in disgusting acts. What exactly the woman does is not explicitly stated, but is represented by the metaphorical language employed in this verse. In context, since commitment and personal worship is the desire of both the dragon and the sea-beast, the woman must encourage the kings of the earth to follow the composite scarlet beast and worship it. Her involvement in leading the world to worship and support the composite scarlet beast is what makes her a harlot.

4. On her forehead a name was written, a mystery = indicates that the woman (the great harlot) has submitted to the desire of the composite scarlet beast. As God marked the 144,000 with His name and the sea-beast marked his followers with his name, so this woman is marked. Who marked the great harlot is not indicated. However, it is unlikely that she marked herself. The name is derogatory and unflattering. The woman certainly does not see herself as a whore. This is John's depiction of the woman. Perhaps John sees the name super imposed on the woman.

The fact that the name is a *mystery* supports this conclusion. This implies that the name is symbolical and will need interpretation. This is how the term has previously been used in the Revelation (1:20; 16:7; and 17:7). The name is not literal.

5. Babylon the great, the mother of Harlots and of the abominations of the earth = indicates the key to understanding this extended metaphor. Who or what is *Babylon*? Historically, there have been three possibilities: Rome, Jerusalem or the ancient city of Babylon. This harlot is tagged *the mother of harlots*. The idea suggested by this phrase is that this harlot is the worst the world has ever seen. This argues strongly that *harlot* here is used in a biblical sense. That is, this harlot had a right relationship to God, which she has violated. This is the only way the superlative idea can be maintained here.

The fact that the term *Babylon* is a part of the phrase that includes the term *mystery* argues against a literal interpretation at this point. The ancient city of Babylon is not the author's intended meaning at this point. To say that Babylon refers to the ancient city of Babylon completely ignores the context and the nature of apocalyptic literature. To explicitly name this ancient city as the future recipient of God's wrath because of its dealings with God's holy people contradicts the nature of apocalyptic literature. The city would know of its future judgment and attempt to punish the people of God prematurely.

There is no biblical evidence that ancient Babylon had a right relationship with the true God of heaven. There is no sense in which ancient Babylon is a "harlot" with respect to the true God in heaven. Moral, political or religious harlotry demands a previous right relationship with the one true God.

Revelation 17:6

(1) And I saw the woman drunk (2) with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. (3) When I saw her, I wondered greatly.

1. And I saw the woman drunk = continues the metaphor. This is not literal drunkenness, but figurative. The motif of "drunk with blood" occurred in Ezekiel 39:18-19. There, God indicates that the birds will "drink blood until you are drunk." The idea seems to be that the birds will eat and drink to satisfaction. Thus, the slaughter will be great.

2. With the blood of the saints and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus = lists the objects of the woman's wrath. It is not altogether clear whether John intends one group or two. At first glance, it appears that two groups are intended. Regardless, the great harlot is responsible for the murder of those committed to Jesus Christ, which means NT type believers. The woman is drunk with the blood (life) of the saints. The world is drunk with the wine of the woman's fornication.

3. When I saw her, I wondered greatly = indicates that the sight of the woman perplexed John. This indicates that John saw a woman, but that the woman was not the literal referent. At this point, John does not know what the woman represents. This argues against the identification of the woman as that of Babylon.

Revelation 17:7

(1) And the angel said to me, "Why do you wonder? (2) I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.

1. And the angel said to me, "Why do you wonder?" = points to the significance of this vision. Having already seen the composite dragon and the composite sea-beast, John is perplexed by the woman. This indicates that the sight of the composite scarlet beast is not significantly distinct from the two previous composite images. However, the woman demands explanation.

2. I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns = echoes our previous thought. The angel begins an explanation concerning the identity of the woman. Notice that the beast is carrying the woman. The relationship between the woman and beast is mutually beneficial.

Revelation 17:8

(1) The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. (2) And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, (3) will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.

1. The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction = begins an identification of the composite scarlet beast. The clause *that you saw* (past tense) indicates that John is no longer looking at the woman and the beast. First, he saw them and now he will receive understanding. The beast *was and is not*. This is another way of speaking of the death of the beast. The beast *is about to come up out of the abyss*. This clause echoes Revelation 11:7 and suggests restoration to life after death. The beast *go[es] to destruction*. The ultimate destiny of the composite scarlet beast is destruction—the lake of fire (Rev 19:20).

The obvious question is whether the composite scarlet beast is an individual or group. Since the scarlet beast dies and is resurrected, it is highly unlikely that a person is intended. No one other than God has the power to raise the dead. There is no evidence that God is going to give Satan this power. There is no evidence in Daniel 2 or 7 that an eschatological person will rise from the dead and lead mankind in revolt against God. The ten-toed kingdoms/kings arise out of the Roman Empire. These facts taken together make a compelling case that the scarlet beast is a kingdom and not an individual. Daniel predicated that Rome would be the final kingdom, which would eventuate into a ten-king/kingdom federation that One like a Son of Man will destroy. John's vision harmonizes with such a conclusion.

2. And those who dwell on the earth = is a technical term (means the same thing each time it is used) that occurs nine times in the Revelation and refers to the living earth-dwellers who are hostile to God and His people. The "living earth-dwellers" is defined as those "whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world." The book of life contains the names of those whose name was written from the foundation of the world. This is another way of referring to the elect. Notice Ephesians 1:4, "He (God the Father) chose us (believers) in Him (Jesus Christ) before the foundation of the world." The point here is this: God chose none of the living earth-dwellers. This argues compellingly that none of those written in the book, wonders, worships or receives the mark of the beast.

3. Will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come = states the response of the living earth-dwellers to the restoration of the composite scarlet beast. They wonder or better, they worship (Rev 13:3) the scarlet beast.

Revelation 17:9-10

(1) Here is the mind which has wisdom. (2) The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits, and they are seven kings; (3) five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and (4) when he comes, he must remain a little while.

1. Here is the mind which has wisdom = signals the need to see beyond the words (i.e., the black and white) concerning the declaration given in Revelation 17:8d. The particular clause that must be looked at beyond the simple sense is "that he was and is not and will come." In what sense can it be said that the scarlet beast "was and is not and will come." This signals that a bodily restoration is an idea that is not ordinary. It requires added comment.

2. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits, and they are seven kings = is the first attempt by the author to explain how the scarlet beast "was and is not and will come." First, the author explains the meaning of the *seven heads*. The seven heads are *seven mountains*. Seven hills as a designation for Rome is substantially verified in ancient literature. That Daniel 2 and 7 depicted Rome as the eschatological antagonist cannot be debated. These two facts have led many to conclude that Rome is the object of John's vision with seven of her kings. However, this is not the case. *Mountains* are used here to speak of strength. For the woman to be seated, she needs a place of strength. A person's head is not normally associated with strength.

During the eschatological end, John depicts the woman sitting on a composite scarlet beast that is composed of seven kings. John indicates that the seven mountains are seven kings. Now, Daniel depicts kings and their kingdoms as interchangeable. To speak of one is to speak of the other. However, it is not clear that John does the same thing here.

It appears strange for John to explain, but not really explain what he means. Seven heads equal seven mountains, which equal seven kings. Taking Scripture at face value, John has defined the seven heads. However, most interpreters want to add another step to John's equation.

Seven heads = seven mountains = seven kings = seven kingdoms. Their basis for this conclusion is based on Daniel's interchangeable reference to kings and kingdoms. I think seven kings is seven kings just as John said.

3. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come = explains the seven kings. John indicates that five kings *have fallen*. "Have fallen" is a figure of speech that refers to a person's death. Exodus 32:28 states, "So the sons of Levi did as Moses instructed, and about three thousand men...fell that day." Like wise, 1 Samuel 4:10 states, "So the Philistines fought and Israel was defeated...and the slaughter was very great, for there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers." Equally, 2 Samuel 1:19 and 1 Chronicles 5:10 also speak of men falling (dying). In each case, death occurred by violent means. The phrase *one is* indicates that one of the seven kings that the eschatological harlot will ride was contemporaneous with John. *The other has not yet come* is a prophetic prediction by John concerning the seventh and final king. This king's duration will be short.

Revelation 17:11

(1) The beast which was and is not, (2) is himself also an eighth and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction.

1. The beast which was and is not = continues the angel's explanation of the restored beast. A critical question at this point concerns the time referent. That is, is John describing the past or the future? Some have taken the phrase *which was and is not* to refer to the future. However, if this line of reasoning is correct, then one should have expected John to say, "the beast which will be and will not be and will come." John wrote, "the beast which was and is not." This must mean that *the beast was not* at the time John was writing.

Where was the beast at the time of John's writing? He must have been in the abyss!

2. Is himself also an eighth and is one of the seven = is very important. This explains the mystery concerning the "was, and is not and will come" composite scarlet-beast. The composite scarlet beast is a king. He eventuates from the seven. John's point is this: there will be seven beast/kings and one of them will service twice upon the face of the earth.

Revelation 17:12

(1) The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, (2) but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour.

1. The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom = begins the angel's explanation of the "horns." In the tradition of Daniel 7:7-8. *Horns* represent kings/kingdoms. Daniel indicated that ten kings would eventuate from the fourth beast kingdom/Rome. During the time of those kings another king would arise and subdue three of the ten. The ten kings rule concurrently. In the Revelation, John saw ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom. The ten kings of Revelation 17 are not the same as the ten kings of Daniel 7.

2. But they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour = makes a distinction between the ten kings. They do not have kingdoms, but they have authority to be kings. These kings will rule with the composite beast *for one hour*. *One hour* refers to a specific time appointed by God (Matt 24:36, 44, 50; and 25:13) and is not to be taken as a 60-minute time period.

Revelation 17:13

(1) These have one purpose, and (2) they give their power and authority to the beast.

1. These have one purpose = indicates unity among the ten kings.

2. They give their power and authority to the beast = signals the intent of the kings. All that they represent is given to the beast. They do not have kingdoms, but they must have assets that the beast can utilize for his goal.

Revelation 17:14

(1) These will wage war against the Lamb, and (2) the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and (3) those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.

1. These will wage war against the Lamb = indicates the purpose or mind of the ten kings. They are united in their attitudes toward the Lamb. The attack of the ten kings against the Lamb is not specially detailed, but they must gather with the nations to Armageddon.

2. The Lamb will overcome them = signals defeat for the ten kings and the beast. The title "Lord of lords and King of kings" is applied to the Lamb here and the rider on the white horse in Revelation 19:16.

3. Those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful = is an unusual occurrences in the Revelation. *Called* (klatos) and *chosen* (eklektos) occur only here in the Revelation.

Both words occur together in Matthew 22:14. These are clearly the saints of the ages. It is not explicitly stated what the role of the Lamb's accomplices is.

Revelation 17:15

And he said to me, (1) "The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.

1. The waters which you saw where the harlot sits = continues the angelic interpretation of the harlot's judgment. The waters are people, multitudes, nations and tongues. Revelation 17:9 declares that the harlot sits on seven king/kingdoms. Thus, we can say that the harlot is carried by a universal segment of the population of the earth.

Revelation 17:16

(1) And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, (2) these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire.

1. And the ten horns (kings) which you saw, and the beast = have the same agenda.

2. These = will do four things to the harlot:

a. Will hate the harlot = is the first. Revelation 17:7 and 9 indicates that the harlot's relationship to the beast is mutual. She wants to be with the beast and the beast wants her. Therefore, Revelation 17:16 must be taken in an ingressive sense. That is, the ten horns and the beast "will begin to hate the harlot." Something will happen that will change the relationship between the harlot, the beast, and his confederate nations.

b. Will make here desolate and naked = signals both depopulation and shame.

c. Will eat here flesh = is clearly a figure of speech. As an animal, the beast is able to devour flesh. However, the point is that the beast and the ten horns will destroy the harlot.

d. Will burn here with fire = is the fourth and final acts against the harlot by the ten horns and beast. She will be burned with fire.

Revelation 17:17

(1) For God has (2) put it in their hearts to execute His purpose, and by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, (3) until the words of God will be fulfilled.

1. For God has = signals that an explanation follows concerning why the ten kings will act as they do.

2. Put it in their hearts = comes from the Old Testament. *To put in the heart* occurs in the OT. Exodus 35:34 states that God put the ability to teach in the heart of Bezalel. Twice in the book of Nehemiah, we are told that God put in the heart of Nehemiah actions to be undertaken (2:12; 7:5). Ezra 7:27 indicates God did a special work in the heart of king Artaxerxes. In each case, God's perfect will was accomplished as a result of God's work in men's hearts. Three infinitive phrases express God's will worked out through the ten horns and the beast:

a. To execute His purpose (mind) = is a general statement that indicates that God has a purpose in allowing the deeds of the ten kings and the beast. The sovereign plan of God is worked out through the deeds of the kings and the beast. In context, it is the judgment of God that the ten horns and the beast executes for God upon the harlot.

b. By having a common purpose (mind) = indicates that the reason the ten kings are united in purpose is that God put the desire in their hearts. The unity is supernatural in origin. Political harmony is no easy feat to achieve. God's help is needed.

c. By giving their kingdom to the beast = indicates that the goal of the kings is the defeat of the Lamb. The avenue they think will accomplish their objective is to give their assets to the beast in hope that it will be enough to defeat the Lamb.

3. Until the words of God will be fulfilled = indicates that the destruction of the harlot is a fulfillment of prophecy.

Revelation 17:18

(1) The woman whom you saw is the great city, (2) which reigns over the kings of the earth.

1. The woman whom you saw is the great city = begins the final explanatory item of the bowl-carrying angel. The identity of the woman is given. She is *the great city*. Most commentaries in their attempt to force Revelation 17 to refer to the ancient city of Rome ignore, diminish, or generalize the textual details to support their conclusion.

Revelation 11:8 clearly identifies "the great city" as Jerusalem. The fact that the great harlot is called a city argues strongly for this conclusion. Revelation 17:5 clearly shows that *Babylon* is not referring to the literal city of ancient Babylon. Therefore, there is nothing in Revelation 17 that disqualifies Jerusalem as a solution for this text.

2. Which reigns (literally, has a kingdom) over the kings of the earth = is the final defining strait for the woman. The way the woman rules over the kings of the earth is through the Antichrist. This makes her a harlot. She prostitutes herself with Antichrist when she rightly belongs to God.

□

[Next Section: Chapter Eighteen - The Great City](#)

□

Revelation
COMMENTARY
WWW.REVELATIONCOMMENTARY.ORG

Questions? Comments?
Send us an email!

revelationcommentary.org

© Sola Scriptura

info@solagroup.org


SOLA SCRIPTURA

Produced and Developed by Sola Scriptura

□



□

Previous Section: Chapter Seventeen - The Great Harlot

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN - THE GREAT CITY

Revelation 18:1

(1) After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, (2) having great authority, and the earth was illumined with his glory.

1. After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven = introduces a new vision unit. Chapter 17 declared the "judgment of the great harlot/city." However, the author found it necessary to explain the objects of God's judgment and the reason God will judge the great harlot/city. She led the world in worship and commitment to the composite dragon-beast. Revelation 18 details the actual judgment of the harlot/city and Revelation 19 details the judgment of the composite dragon/beast.

2. Having great authority, and the earth was illumined with his glory = defines the character of the descending angel. How John knew that the descending angel had "great authority" is not clear. Perhaps, the angel is dressed or puts off an aura that signals his position. We are told that "the earth was illumined by his glory." *Glory* (dosa) is a term usually descriptive of the Godhead. Rarely are angelic beings assigned this characteristic (Ezek 9:3 and Heb 9:5). In both cases, a cherub is described. This suggests that the descending angel is high in rank. His very person lights up the earth. The descent of this angel is important.

Revelation 18:2

(1) And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! (2) She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird.

1. And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great = begins the angelic commentary on the destruction of the harlot/city. Reminiscent of every announcement from heaven, this proclamation is done "with a mighty voice." Like Revelation 14:8, the angel announces, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great." The imminent destruction promised of Babylon, the harlot/city in Revelation 14:8 is now detailed.

2. She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit = indicates another reason for the destruction of the harlot/city. *Dwelling place* (phulaka in the Greek) is defined by Louw-Nida, as "a place for wild animals and evil spirits to dwell — 'haunt, lair, dwelling place (§ 85.85).'" The NASB's translation does not reflect the sense that John intends at this point. The harlot/city is not a prison in the traditional sense. The Harlot City is the home or lair of the demons. The author adds that "unclean and hateful birds" also make their abode in the harlot/city. These are issues, which contribute to the wickedness of this harlot/city. Everything that the city stood for has been perverted. Evil in its worst form makes its home in God's holy city. She is a harlot destined to destruction.

Revelation 18:3

For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and (1) the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality."

1. The merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth (power) of her sensuality =

introduces another component that forms the basis for the harlot/city's destruction. After restating the reason for the destruction of the harlot/city, the author adds a point of clarification. The harlot/city led the world in worship and commitment to the composite dragon-beast. The harlot/city seduced the kings of the earth and through them caused the people of the world to follow the beast. The merchants (buying and selling) are made rich by "the power of her sensuality." The term *sensuality* normally refers to living "sensually by gratifying the senses with sexual immorality," (Louw-Nida, § 88.254). However, here it is used figuratively. It does not refer to physical acts.

The harlot/city aggressively convinces the world to put their trust in the dragon-beast. She does it with a commitment unparalleled. These are her acts of immorality. "The power of her sensuality" is her zeal to convince the world to commit to the beast. She is most persuasive.

Revelation 18:4-5

(1) I heard another voice from heaven, saying, (2) "Come out of her, my people, (3) so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues; (4) for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and (5) God has remembered her iniquities.

1. I heard another voice from heaven = is not specially identified, but since the people belong to the voice, it must be Christ who speaks. This conclusion is also supported by the fact that the voice refers to God (the Father) in verse 5.

2. Come out of her, my people = signals the subject of the command. The summons to flee from the harlot/city must be taken in a literal sense because it is the imminent destruction of the harlot/city that they will escape. *My people* indicate followers of Jesus Christ. At this point in the chronology of the Revelation, we posit that the battle of Armageddon is imminent. The call has gone out to the kings of the earth to gather for the battle. It is between the call to come and the actual arrival of the nations that God will fulfill Zechariah 14:5. His people will flee from Jerusalem to a special hiding place until God's Day of the Lord wrath is finished. The reason God removes His remnant from Jerusalem is its imminent destruction in the seventh and final bowl.

3. So that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues = is the explicitly stated reason for God's people to evacuate the harlot/city. Two issues are involved. First, to remain in the harlot/city exposes God's people to the temptation to engage in the sinful conduct of the city's citizens. If the people of God have not engaged in evil conduct prior to this point, this suggests that the level of temptation must increase in the days just prior to Armageddon. The second reason God's people must evacuate the harlot/city is that to fail to do so will result in their experiencing God's judgment. At this point in the narrative, we have not, as yet, been told all that God intends to do to the harlot/city.

4. For her sins have piled up as high as heaven = gives the ultimate reason for God's judgment of the harlot/city. *As high as heaven* is a figure of speech that emphasizes the amount or gravity of something (Gen 11:4; Deut 9:1; and 2 Chr 28:9). Here the amount of sins that the harlot/city has committed is substantial. It should not escape the reader's attention that this figure of speech also suggests that God has great patience. It would take some time for sins to stack up to heaven.

5. God has remembered her iniquities = is a figure of speech applied to God. Since knowledge is constant with God, He does not need to remember. This is the only example of God remembering something in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, God is often asked to remember a person (Judg 16:28; 2 Kigs 20:3) or the wicked acts of someone (Pss 25:7, 137:7). Ascribing this human characteristic to God suggests the idea that the reason God has not acted is that He has forgotten. The point here is that God will now deal with the unrighteous acts of the harlot/city.

Revelation 18:6

(1) Pay her back even as she has paid, and (2) give back to her double according to her deeds; (3) in the cup which she has mixed, mix twice as much for her.

1. Pay her back even as she has paid = begins a section of this chapter, which is difficult to understand. *Pay her back* is a second person plural aorist imperative. A second person plural means more than one person is addressed. Who is the subject of this imperative is at the center of the debate. In other words, who is being told to act? Logically, one would think that Christ is exhorting God to judge the harlot/city. One could object that Christ exhorting the Father is unparalleled in Scripture and this does not answer the question about the plural nature of the subject. Yet, Revelation 18:8 states, "for the Lord God who judges her is strong." There is no explicit statement that God will employ agents in the destruction of the harlot/city. This imperative is an example of the command of request. That is, God is not told what to do, but is asked to do it. Throughout the Revelation, God's wrath is executed by angelic beings. Perhaps this is the reason a second person plural is used. The voice requests that God repay the harlot/city in kind.

2. Give back to her double according to her deeds = is the second request made to God. The deeds of the harlot/city deserve twice as much punishment for her sins.

3. In the cup which she has mixed, mix twice as much for her = continues the call for appropriate judgment.

Revelation 18:7

(1) To the degree that she glorified herself and lived sensuously, (2) to the same degree give her torment and mourning; (3) for she says in her heart, (4) "I sit as a queen and I am not a widow, and will never see mourning.'

1. To the degree that she glorified herself and lived sensuously = continues the heavenly request to punish the harlot/city. The harlot/city glorified herself. *Glory* (dosa) is normal ascribed to another. Self-exaltation is condemned in Scripture (Luke 14:11). Her route to self-exaltation is explained later in this verse.

2. To the same degree give her torment and mourning = is the comparative outcome of the angelic request. The height of the harlot/city's pride is to be the depth of her punishment.

3. For she says in her heart = suggests the mode of the woman's pride.

4. I sit as a queen and I am not a widow, and will never see mourning = indicates the mental attitude of the harlot/city. The verbal parallels between Revelation 18:7 and Isaiah 48:7-8 has led some to conclude that the literal ancient city of Babylon is the referent here. However, it is the thinking of the harlot/city that is consonant with the thinking of Babylon. The conduct of the harlot/city far exceeds those of ancient Babylon. Her prideful attitude comes because of her position—seated on seven kings/kingdoms. As the chief city of the composite dragon-beast's empire, she is queen of the earth. Her claim to never see widowhood or suffer is based on her conviction that neither God nor man will ever defeat the Beast Empire.

Isaiah 28:14-15 declares that the leaders of Jerusalem will make "a covenant with death." This covenant will not protect them from the wrath of God.

Revelation 18:8

(1) For this reason in one day her plagues will come, (2) pestilence and mourning and famine, and (3) she will be burned up with fire; (4) for the Lord God who judges her is strong.

1. For this reason in one day her plagues will come = gives the outcome of the harlot/city's pride. The pride of the harlot/city brings swift judgment from God. *In one day* is the amount of time necessary for her destruction. The shortness of time necessary for God's final punishment stands in stark contrast to the boast of this city. This suggests that the woman's boast was ill founded. *Plagues* are God's weapons of choice for the harlot/city's destruction.

2. Pestilence and mourning and famine = are the specific plagues God will use against the harlot/city.

This suggests that Jerusalem starts out in a position of favor with the composite dragon-beast.

She, however, loses favor and is attacked by the composite beast. Her inhabitants experience a time of great persecution by the composite dragon-beast, which is superintended by God.

3. She will be burned up with fire = is the final or last plague of God against the harlot/city. She will be burned up.

4. For the Lord God who judges her is strong = explains how the judgment of God can be so successful against the boast of the harlot/city. She thought she was invincible because of her protection and position with the composite dragon-beast. God is stronger!

Revelation 18:9-10

(1) "And the kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her, (2) will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning, (3) standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment, saying, (4) 'Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! (5) For in one hour your judgment has come.'

1. And the kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her = introduces the response of the kings to the woman's demise. Interestingly, the kings of the earth move from favor, to hate, to weeping and lament concerning the harlot/city. At first glance, there seems to be a contradiction.

However, Zechariah 12:3 states, "It will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured." At first, Jerusalem was a trophy for the composite dragon-beast, but she soon became a burdensome stone. The favor of the Beast Empire turns to hate. Ultimately, the kings of the Beast Empire will mourn her destruction. The reason the kings weep and lament is "because of the fear of her torment." What happened to her will soon happen to them.

2. Will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning = describes the reaction of the kings of the earth to the harlot/city's demise. They weep and lament.

3. Standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment = states the attitude of the kings. God's punishment of the harlot/city will soon come to the kings.

4. Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city = continues the statement of the kings' attitude toward the harlot/city. *The great city* refers explicitly to Jerusalem in Revelation 11:8, and implicitly in Revelation 16:19. An important question at this point is this: why is Jerusalem called *Babylon*? We were told in Revelation 17:5 that the name "Babylon" is part of the mystery of the harlot. Thus, it should be clear that "Babylon" is not literal. Most scholars agree that "Babylon" is a code word in the Revelation. However, what it is a code for does not enjoy a majority consensus. There is historical evidence that "Babylon" is a code name for Rome. All sources that support this conclusion lay outside the biblical record.

There is one example of the "Babylon" as a code name in the New Testament. I Peter 5:13 states, "She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark." "Babylon" either refers to Rome, Jerusalem or the ancient city that bears that name. Most scholars see Rome as the referent.

5. For in one hour your judgment has come = caps the kings amazement. *In one hour* appears four times in the Revelation (17:10 and 18:10, 17, 19). In each location, one could easily insert the phrase "a short time." This seems to be the basic meaning intended. The power of this statement is seen in light of the boast of the harlot/city that she would endure forever.

Revelation 18:11-13

(1) And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, (2) because no one buys their cargoes any more; (3) cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and every *kind of* citron wood and every article of ivory and every article *made* from very costly wood and bronze and iron and marble, and cinnamon and spice and incense and perfume and frankincense and wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep, and *cargoes* of horses and chariots and (4) slaves and human lives.

1. And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her = constitutes the second group who are not pleased with the destruction of harlot/city. Since buying and selling is done with the beast's permission, it is clear that the merchants are beast-marked earth-dwellers. Therefore, the harlot/city must play a central role in the composite dragon-beast's empire.

2. Because no one buys their cargoes any more = states the reason the merchants are sad. The destruction of the harlot/city means a loss of commercial opportunity. Given that the composite dragon-beast controls earth's commerce, the loss of the harlot/city means that all commercial activity is coordinated from it.

3. Gold and silver and precious stones ... chariots = is a long list of products sold to the harlot/city. "Gold, silver, precious stones, and pearls" are the first four items on the list and involve expensive metals and stones. The next four items (fine linen, purple, silk, and scarlet) are expensive fabrics. "Wood and ivory" constitute the list of items. "Expensive wood, bronze, iron and marble" make up the next list of items sold. "Cinnamon, spice, incense, perfume and frankincense" are unto themselves a group. "Wine, olive oil, fine flour, and wheat" naturally are grouped together. "Cattle, sheep, horses and chariots" have a natural relationship. "Slaves and human lives" is the last mentioned list of items sold.

Now the most obvious question is this: what are the merchants getting in return for all these goods? It does not appear that the merchants bring gold and buy wheat or that they bring slaves and buy precious stones. If one has gold, why would he sell it? What would be more valuable than gold?

Revelation 18:14

(1) The fruit you long for has gone from you, and (2) all things that were luxurious and splendid have passed away from you and (3) *men* will no longer find them.

1. The fruit you long for has gone from you =

2. All things that were luxurious and splendid have passed away from you = indicates that the things of the harlot/city are gone. Things have lost their value in the face of God's judgment.

3. Men will no longer find them =

Revelation 18:15-17a

(1) The merchants of these things, who became rich from her, will stand at a distance because of the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning, saying, (2) 'Woe, woe, the great city, (3) she who was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls; (4) for in one hour such great wealth has been laid waste!'

1. The merchants...mourning = echoes the situation of the kings above. Their reaction is the same as the kings.

2. Woe, woe, the great city = indicates that the lament of the merchants is the same as the kings.

3. She who was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls = is the same description given of the harlot in Revelation 17:4a. This indicates that the woman of Revelation 17 is Babylon, the great city of Revelation 18.

4. For in one hour such great wealth has been laid waste = is similar to the expression of the kings. This suggests that "the judgment" of the harlot/city is the laying waste of her wealth.

Revelation 18:17b-18

(1) And every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea, (2) stood at a distance, and were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, (3) "What *city* is like the great city?"

1. And every shipmaster...passenger...sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea = is the third category of respondents to the destruction of the harlot/city.

2. Stood at a distance = occurs three times in this chapter. Given the quick nature of the destruction of the harlot/city, those who were dependent on her must have been given warning of her destruction. "The kings," "the merchants," and the sailors all "stood at a distance." That they will not receive of her destruction at the same time as the harlot/city suggests a warning was given and they departed.

3. What *city* is like the great city = similarly focuses on the destruction of the harlot/city. Like the "kings" and "merchants," the sailors mourn the destruction of their harlot/city.

Revelation 18:19

(1) And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in one hour she has been laid waste!'

1. And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning = is an Old Testament custom. It accompanied mourning or sorrow (Josh 7:6, Lam 2:10) and repentance (Job 42:6). Here it expresses the deep sorrow of the sailors.

Revelation 18:20

(1) Rejoice over her, (2) O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, (3) because God has pronounced judgment for you against her.

1. Rejoice over her = begins a very abrupt interjection in the dialogue of the sailors. This has led some to conclude that verse 20 was added by an editor. However, like the voice from heaven, mentioned in verse 4, this statement is characteristic of angelic attitude toward the harlot/city. The call *to rejoice* is reminiscent of Michael's call to the earth at Satan's restriction to the earth in Revelation 12:12. The rejoicing of the righteous is a proper response to God's punishment of the wicked.

2. O heaven...saints...apostles...prophets = are the four groups called up to rejoice in God's judgment of the harlot/city. *O heaven* is a figure of speech. Heaven is treated like a person in that it is called upon to rejoice. Three separate groups of individuals are recognized: (1) saints, (2) apostles, and (3) prophets. *Saints* is used throughout the Revelation to refer to the people of God. Since "apostles" and "prophets" are specifically identified, *saints* must refer to believers in general.

"Apostles" is used throughout the New Testament as a technical term for the Twelve (Luke 11:49, Eph 2:20, 2 Peter 3:2). This identification is explicitly made in Revelation 21:14. Therefore, we are on good ground to suggest that the Twelve (minus Judas, plus Paul) be intended here. "Prophets" is a bit more difficult to identify. Old Testament versus New Testament prophets is a possibility. However, it is best to see both Old and New Testament prophets here as with "the saints."

3. Because God has pronounced judgment for you against her = gives the reason for the call to rejoice. The sense is that God judged the harlot/city because she judged the saints, apostles and prophets. This clearly connects the harlot/city with Jerusalem. Matthew 23:37 records the Lord's condemnation of Jerusalem because she "kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her."

Revelation 18:21

(1) Then a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, (2) "So will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and (3) will not be found any longer.

1. Then a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea = contains a reference to "a strong angel," which is the third and final reference to a "strong

angel" in the book of Revelation. These are revelatory beings. The strong angel picks up a huge stone and throws it into the sea. This is reminiscent of Matthew 18:6 where Jesus indicates that the punishment for those who cause believers to stumble is worse than one "to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. This figure of speech suggests a violent death. This is echoed in Revelation 18:21.

2. So will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence = mirrors God's punishment of ancient Babylon. The harlot/city will suffer a violent destruction.

3. (It) will not be found any longer = may at first appear to present a problem for the interpretation that the harlot/city is Jerusalem, the capital of the composite dragon/beast Empire during the great persecution of God's people. Revelation 20:9 states that after the millennium, Satan and his forces will "surround the camp of the saints and the beloved city." The assumption is that the "beloved city" is Jerusalem. However, Revelation 21:10 declares that Jerusalem will descend from heaven as the eternal home of the saints. Ezekiel 48:35 indicates that the millennial city on earth will be called, "The Lord is there, (YHWH shammah)." Therefore, the city that the dragon/beast inhabits will be destroyed. It will not be found again. However, the land will remain.

Revelation 18:22-23

(1) And the sound of harpists and musicians and flute-players and trumpeters will not be heard in you any longer; and (2) no craftsman of any craft will be found in you any longer; and (3) the sound of a mill will not be heard in you any longer; (4) the light of a lamp will not shine in you any longer; and (5) the voice of the bridegroom and bride will not be heard in you any longer; (6) for your merchants were the great men of the earth, (7) because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery.

1. And the sound of harpists and musicians and flute-players and trumpeters will not be heard in you any longer = is the first of five groups delineated in vv. 22-23. The cessation or absence of different aspects of city life will evidence the judgment of God upon the harlot/city. This first of these groups concern music produced by instruments. The absence of music indicates desolation.

2. No craftsman of any craft will be found in you any longer = is the second group listed. Industrial production ceased.

3. The sound of a mill will not be heard in you any longer = is the third item absent because the harlot/city ceases to be. Milling was necessary to produce flour and meal, which was a main staple of ancient-city life. The absence of milling means the absence of people.

4. The light of a lamp will not shine in you any longer = is the fourth item rendered absent by the destruction of the harlot/city. Lamplight was necessary for home life in the evenings.

5. The voice of the bridegroom and bride will not be heard in you any longer = is the fifth and final evidence of God's judgment against the harlot/city. The absence of marriage means the city has ceased to be.

6. For your merchants were the great men of the earth = begins a final explanation concerning why God's judgment has fallen upon the harlot/city. The harlot/city employed the very best merchants the world could afford. The proof of this claim is seen in their success.

7. Because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery = explains why the merchants of the harlot/city are correctly described as "the great men of the earth." The secret of the harlot/city's success is exposed. *Sorcery* (pharmakeia) is the ancient art of casting magic spells. The success of the harlot/city's merchants and indeed the harlot/city is sorcery/magic. This ultimately can be traced to the dragon who empowers the beast.

Revelation 18:24

(1) And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and (2) of all who have been slain on the earth.

1. And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints = is exclusively spoken of by the Lord and attributed to Jerusalem in Matthew 23:35.

2. Of all who have been slain on the earth = is probably another way of saying the same thing mentioned in the first half of this verse. This is a restatement of why God's judgment falls upon the harlot/city. The harlot/city is condemned because she deceived the nations by sorcery and murdered the prophets and saints.

□

[Next Section: Chapter Nineteen - The Great Army](#)

□



**Questions? Comments?
Send us an email!**

revelationcommentary.org
© Sola Scriptura
info@solagroup.org



Produced and Developed by [Sola Scriptura](#)

□



□

Previous Section: Chapter Eighteen - The Great City

CHAPTER NINETEEN - THE GREAT ARMY

Revelation 19:1-2

(1) After these things (2) I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, (3) "Hallelujah! (4) Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; (5) because His judgments are true and righteous; (6) for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and (7) He has avenged the blood of His bond-servants on her."

1. After these things = indicates the final vision unit in the Revelation. This vision concludes the eschatological judgment of God and moves through the millennial kingdom of the Son of Man to the final eternal kingdom of God on a new earth.
2. I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven = introduces the first group to proclaim a hallelujah chorus in response to God's final phase of eschatological judgment. John hears "something like a loud voice." One would normally expect John to hear *voices*, but he hears a *voice*. This suggests that the voices speak as one--unison. *A great multitude* is the exact same phrase that occurs in Revelation 7:9. This group is probably the redeemed of the ages.
3. Hallelujah = begins the praise chorus of the great multitude. Hallelujah is an English transliteration of *hallalouia*, which is a Greek transliteration (not translation) of a Hebrew term, which means, "praise Jehovah." The reader is called to praise the Lord.
4. Salvation and glory and power belong to our God = ascribes to God attributes, which He alone has. This is the content of the call to praise the Lord.
5. Because His judgments are true and righteous = gives the reason for God to receive praise. Those who look to God can depend on His judgments to be true and righteous. There is never doubt.
6. For He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality = is the second of two reasons to praise the Lord. God's judgment of the great harlot evidences that His judgments are true and righteous. The judgment of the great harlot/city is past as evidenced by the verb *judged*. God judged the harlot/city because she led the charge to get the world to worship composite dragon/beast. Her devotion and public commitment caused the world to copy her conduct. For this, she was condemned and punished.
7. He has avenged the blood of His bond-servants on her = is the second reasons for God's judgment of the harlot/city. She caused the death of many of God's apostles, prophets and saints. In fulfillment of God's promise to the fifth seal martyrs who requested God's judgment of the living earth-dwellers who were responsible for their deaths (Rev 6:10), God judged the harlot/city. God promised the martyrs that He would avenge their deaths and He has.

Revelation 19:3

(1) And a second time they said, "Hallelujah! (2) Her smoke rises up forever and ever."

1. And a second time they said, Hallelujah = indicates that the great multitude is still speaking.
2. Her smoke rises up forever and ever = is another reason the great multitude praises the

Lord. The harlot/city destruction is still evident by the smoke rising up from her ruins. However, the reader must understand this figure of speech. The smoke of this burning city does not last for all eternity. Rather, *forever and ever* is a figure of speech meaning the destruction is total and irrevocable.

Revelation 19:4

(1) And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, (2) "Amen. Hallelujah!"

1. And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne = indicates the second group of praise and worshipers. This worship group has been seen throughout the Revelation, particularly in hymnodic sections. Apparently, whenever praise and worship breakout in heaven, one can expect the elders and creatures to join in.

2. Amen! Hallelujah = echoes Revelation 5:14, *amen* concludes a hymnodic section by the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures. The elders and the creatures are of the same opinion as the great multitude.

Revelation 19:5

(1) And a voice came from the throne, saying, (2) "Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great."

1. And a voice came from the throne = is not explicitly identified. The voice includes himself among those who claim God as *our God*.

2. Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants = is the action the voice calls upon his audience to take. The "bond-servants" are called upon to praise God as the great multitude and the elders and creatures. The location of the bond-servants is not clear. They can either be in heaven or on the earth. There is no doubt that the great multitude is in heaven as are the elders, living creatures and the voice. At this point in the narration of the book of Revelation, God's bond-servants are either in heaven or in hiding on the earth. Therefore, it is more than likely that the bond-servants called up on to praise the Lord are in heaven. *Small and great* refers to one's status (Louw-Nida, § 87.22, 58). Given that this event occurs after the rewarding of the saints (Rev 11:18), status will be reflected among the saints (Matt 25:14-30).

Revelation 19:6

(1) Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, (2) "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.

1. Then I heard = begins three metaphors that John will use to describe the loudness of the chorus heard in heaven. This last group of praise and worshipers must include the three groups mentioned above because of the emphasis on the loudness of this group.

2. Hallelujah, for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns = expresses the motive of the praise chorus at this point—God reigns. God physically reigns upon the earth (Rev 11:18). This is a praise-worthy event because while it was promised through the ages, God is now physically reigning upon the earth. Praise the Lord!

Revelation 19:7

(1) Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, (2) for the marriage of the Lamb has come and (3) His bride has made herself ready."

1. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him = begins the second reason for exaltation. These three actions are warranted in light of God the Father's next agenda item.

2. For the marriage of the Lamb has come = is the reason for the call to rejoice, be glad and the giving of glory. The wedding of the Lamb is announced. This, of course, is metaphorical. There

will be no literal wedding.

3. His bride (wife) has made herself ready = completes the metaphor of a wedding. One would expect the text to refer to a *bride* (numpha) at this point, but the Greek uses the term *guna* (wife). "Wife" suggests the wedding is completed. However, in Jewish marriage customs, the betrothed virgin was bonded to her husband. The marriage ceremony was a consummation of the legal process begun months and sometime years before.

The apostle Paul on two separate occasions spoke of a church relationship to Christ in terms of the bridegroom/bride metaphor. 2 Corinthians 11:2 and Ephesians 5:25-32 both develop different aspects of this concept.

It is clear in the Old Testament that Israel is the bride of God (Hos 2:19-20; Ezek 16:8-14; Isa 54:1-6). The emphasis here is on the collective whole—the nation of Israel. One is a part of the bride of God by physical birth—the physical seed of Abraham. However, the bride of Christ is formed by faith—the spiritual seed of Abraham.

Revelation 19:8

(1) It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright *and* clean; (2) for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

1. It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright *and* clean = continues the marital metaphor with regards to the clothing. The symbolical garments are appropriate for the wife of the Lamb.

2. For the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints = makes the symbolical significance of the garments clear. The fine linen is the righteous deeds of the people of God.

Those who attempt to limit the bride of Christ to those saved after the cross misunderstand Paul's intent. The metaphor of a bridegroom/bride emphasizes the relationship between Christ and the saints. Paul never says the church is the bride of Christ. Rather, he compares the relationship between Christ and the church to that of a bride and her bridegroom. Therefore, one commits an error when he attempts to make a distinction between Old Testament saints and New Testament saints on the basis of this metaphor. The "righteous deeds" of the Old Testament saints are qualitatively no different from the "righteous deeds" of New Testament saints.

Revelation 19:9

(1) Then he said to me, (2) "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" (3) And he said to me, "These are true words of God."

1. Then he said to me = begins the fourth of seven beatitudes in the Revelation. In light of verse 10, this speaker must be the same angel who began the explanation of God's judgment of the harlot/city in Revelation 17:1.

2. Write, "Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb" = continues the metaphor marital ritual. After the formal wedding ceremony follows the banquet. Since the bride (faithful believers) is mentioned in Revelation 19:7, this invitation must involve friends and family, but such a conclusion has a problem. If the bride constitutes the believers, then who could be the invited guests? Since the wedding of the Lamb occurs just prior to His return at Armageddon, the bride must consist of those resurrected, glorified and rewarded in heaven. The marriage supper of the Lamb occurs on earth (Isaiah 25:6; Mark 14:25 and Luke 12:36, 22:28-30). The invited guests must involve those on earth that are saved, but not glorified. They participate in the kingdom of God on earth as saved, but not glorified individuals who assist in the re-population of the earth during the millennial kingdom (Isaiah 65:17-24).

3. And he said to me, "These are true words of God." = is not explicitly defined. How much of what has preceded is covered by this declaration cannot be asserted.

Revelation 19:10

(1) Then I fell at his feet to worship him. (2) But he said to me, "Do not do that; (3) I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. (4) For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

1. Then I fell at his feet to worship him = echoes the tradition of pure worship in ancient times. To fall before a person and offer worship evidences true commitment or great fear. That John would do such a thing at this point is interesting. Having been in the presence of many angels throughout the book, why fall down and worship this particular angel?

2. But he said to me, "Do not do that; = indicates a rebuke to John for his actions.

3. I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus = identifies the speaker as angelic. As a fellow servant, he cannot receive worship. That is God's prerogative alone. He, like John, is a propagator of the truth concerning Jesus — He is Lord.

4. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy = express concretely the point just made. The testimony about Jesus (that He is Lord, alone) is the spirit (at the heart) of prophecy. Jesus as much stated the same idea in John 5:39-47. "For if you (the Jews) believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me." "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me." These are the Lord's words, which evidence that He is at the heart of all Scripture.

Revelation 19:11

(1) And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and (2) He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and (3) in righteousness He judges and wages war.

1. And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse = introduces a new vision originating in heaven. John sees a white horse. This immediately recalls Revelation 6:2. However, this rider comes to fight against the beasts introduced in Revelation 13.

2. He who sat on it is called Faithful and True = identifies the rider as Jesus (Rev 3:14). Unlike the rider of Revelation 6:2, this rider is true or genuine.

3. In righteousness He judges and wages war = indicates the moral foundation upon which the Lord stands as He deals with both the people of God and the wicked earth-dwellers on the earth.

Revelation 19:12-13

(1) His eyes *are* a flame of fire, and (2) on His head *are* many diadems; and (3) He has a name written *on Him* which no one knows except Himself. (4) *He is* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and (5) His name is called The Word of God.

1. His eyes are a flame of fire = repeated twice as (Rev 1:14 and 2:18) a description of Jesus Christ.

2. On His head are many diadems = in contradistinction to the dragon and the beast that wears diadems on multiple heads, this rider has a single head with multiple diadems. He is the true "King of kings and Lord of lords."

3. He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself = offers a little insight as to the identity of the rider on the white horse. We know who the rider is, but we do not know his name. *Christ* is a title as is *Lord*. *Jesus* is a name. Obviously, John must see the name in order to know that it is, in fact, written on Him. It is also clear that those who accompany the rider must also see the name. Perhaps, the meaning of the name is also unknown to those who see it on the rider.

4. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood = continues the description of the rider. The image of a blood-stained deliverer is not new to the Old Testament (Isa 63:1-3). However, here the rider is coming for battle, but the garments have already been stained. This indicates previous

contact with warfare.

5. His name is called the Word of God = is another name for the rider on the white horse. The phrase the Word of God occurs five times in the Revelation (1:2, 9; 6:9; 19:13; 20:4) and refers to the revealed will of God. The return of Christ to fight the enemies of God is God's revealed will. Long prophesied and anticipated, now fulfilled as God determined before the foundation of the world. This is the eternal gospel.

Revelation 19:14

(1) And the armies which are in heaven, (2) clothed in fine linen, white and clean, (3) were following Him on white horses.

1. And the armies which are in heaven = refers to a group that will accompany the Lord at His return to fight the enemies of God. The exact identity of the heavenly armies is not clear. It could refer to the angelic host, the rewarded faithful followers of Jesus Christ or both. There is a significant Old Testament basis to argue that the heavenly armies are angelic beings. Zechariah 14:5 explicitly states angelic accompaniment at the Lord's return for the salvation of Israel. Matthew 16:27 declares that an angelic accompaniment will be present at the Lord's return to judge the world. A debatable text in 1 Thessalonians 3:13 probably refers to angelic accompaniment at the Lord's return. There is no explicit New Testament text that indicates the saints will return with the Lord to punish the wicked. Therefore, one can argue that the heavenly armies that accompany the Lord at His return is angelic for sure and possibly human.

2. Clothed in fine linen, white and clean = describes the attire of the accompanying armies of the Lord. Revelation 15:6 describes the seven bowl carrying angels as wearing pure and bright linen. The clothing symbolize the righteousness of this group as throughout the Revelation.

Revelation 19:15

(1) From His mouth comes a sharp sword, (2) so that with it He may strike down the nations, and (3) He will rule them with a rod of iron; and (4) He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.

1. From His mouth comes a sharp sword = continues the description of the rider on the white horse. However, having introduced the heavenly armies who will accompany the Lord, John will now explain that the rider will execute judgment alone. Hebrews 4:12 depicts the Word of God as a sword. Since Jesus is the Word of God, what He speaks is also the Word of God. The words and actions of Jesus accomplish with speed the will of God. Therefore, His words accomplish their task as a sword does, thus the comparison.

2. So that with it He may strike down the nations = indicates the purpose of the sword from the mouth of the rider. He will strike down the nations. The angelic accompaniment from heaven will have no part in the destruction of the nations. Rather, the rider will strike them with His words (the sword) and they will fall.

3. He will rule them with a rod of iron = continues the identification of the rider by explaining his role in the fulfillment of God's revealed will. Revelation 12:5 indicates that the male child of the woman was "to rule all the nations with a rod of iron." With this same role, John identifies the rider. Therefore, the male child and rider must be the same individual. This indicates that the rider will strike the nations, but He will not destroy all of them. There must be something left for Him to rule over.

4. He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty = echoes Isaiah 63:1-3 where the winepress is God's judgment. Here, the rider executes God's wrath against the nations. It is important to understand that John is ascribing the above stated description to the rider. In other words, John recognizes the rider and describes the rider to the reader with knowledge he (John) has had prior to the moment of the vision.

Revelation 19:16

(1) And on His robe and on His thigh (2) He has a name written, "King of kings and Lord of lords."

1. And on His robe and on His thigh = is not altogether clear. One could suppose that since the rider is descending from heaven on a horse that his thigh would be seen. Many have seen a contradiction here in light of Revelation 19:12, which indicated that the name on the rider was unknown. However, this conclusion assumes that there is only one name under discussion. Since the rider has many crowns, he must also have many names in contradistinction to the harlot/city.

2. He has a name written, "King of kings and Lord of lords," = is the third title or name ascribed to the rider. This title is usually reserved for God, but here has christological significance. This rider has both the authority of God and supremacy of man as backdrops to his reign.

Revelation 19:17-18

(1) Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and (2) he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, (3) "Come, assemble for the great supper of God, (4) so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great."

1. Then I saw an angel standing in the sun = introduces a new vision scene here. This angel takes a stand "in the sun." Whether this angel is the same angel connected with the fourth bowl angel is not clear. Both deal with the sun. Whether the angel is standing in the rays of the sun or standing on/in the sun itself cannot be determined.

2. He cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven = introduces the audience of the loud voice. The birds of the heavens are called. With the exception of an eagle (Rev 8:13) this is the first major role birds play in the Revelation.

3. Come, assemble for the great supper of God = states the command given to the birds. *The great supper of God* does not have a parallel in Scripture. In Ezekiel 39:17, God instructs the prophet to call the birds and beast to His sacrifice. In both cases, obviously a figure of speech is used.

4. So that you may eat = is the purpose of the gathering of the birds. They will eat. Since birds are the only invited guest to this supper, it is safe to assume that this supper depicts the battle of Armageddon as anything but a war or battle. The menu contains an assortment of humanity.

- a. The flesh of kings
- b. The flesh of commanders
- c. The flesh of mighty men
- d. The flesh of horses
- e. The flesh of riders
- f. The flesh of all men (free and slave, small and great)

Clearly, the purpose of this list is to indicate that no segment of society will be left out. When the nations gather for the war of the great day of God, they will represent every people group and every segment of society. However, every single individual will not be present at this battle/supper.

Revelation 19:19

(1) And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled (2) to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.

1. And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled = outlines the list of those who gather for the war. Which beast is not explicitly identified at this point. This is clearly the fulfillment of the sixth bowl. With the arrival of the rider on the white horse, the stage is set.

2. To make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army = indicates the purpose of the gathering from a human perspective.

Revelation 19:20

(1) And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; (2) these two were thrown alive in to the lake of fire which burns with brimstone.

1. And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet = clarifies who is captured—both beasts. It is not explicitly stated who seized the two, but it is probably that the rider does Himself.

2. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone = indicates the outcome of the two earthly beasts. That they are thrown alive into the fires cannot be debated. The Greek is emphatic. Also, the fact that they are not eaten by birds indicates a different outcome for them unlike the rest who will be eaten.

The lake of fire, which burns with brimstone occurs with variation six times throughout Revelation 20-21. While the eternal punishment of the wicked is associated with *fire* on several occasions in Scripture, the notion that it will be a *lake of fire* is not. Isaiah 66:24b explicitly states, "their (transgressors against God) fire will not be quenched." Jesus explicitly stated, "If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire," (Mark 9:43).

Revelation 20:14 indicates that the lake of fire is the eternal destiny of the wicked who have been judged. Once one is thrown into the lake of fire there is no escape or second chance. This is very important. The beast and the false prophet are cast alive into the lake of fire in conjunction with the battle at Armageddon. Their judgment is final. This occurs before the millennial reign of Christ on the earth. Therefore, the lake of fire must exist before the millennial reign of Christ.

This accords with Matthew 25:41, which indicates that the "goats" of the sheep and goat judgment are cast alive into the eternal fire. Matthew states, "then He (Jesus) will say to those on His left (the goats), 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.'" Once in the lake (the eternal fire) these people will not be resurrected because they did not die, but were cast alive into the fire as the beast and the false prophet. They have been judged, sentenced and the execution completed.

Revelation 19:21

(1) And the rest were killed (2) with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and (3) all the birds were filled with their flesh.

1. And the rest were killed = explains what happened to the armies of the beast. They were killed.

2. With the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse = explains how the kings and their armies died. As John indicated, the rider spoke and armies died. Unlike the beast and false prophet who were cast alive into the lake of fire, the rest were killed and thus must await a future final judgment. This judgment is detailed in Revelation 20:11-15.

3. All the birds were filled with their flesh = as God promised when He gathered them.

□

[Next Section: Chapter Twenty - The Beginning and End of the Millennium](#)

□



**Questions? Comments?
Send us an email!**

revelationcommentary.org

© Sola Scriptura

info@solagroup.org



Produced and Developed by [Sola Scriptura](#)





□

Previous Section: Chapter Nineteen - The Great Army

CHAPTER TWENTY - THE BEGINNING AND END OF THE MILLENNIUM

Revelation 20:1

(1) Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, (2) holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand.

1. Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven = introduces a new vision report. This is the third report of an angel descending from heaven (Rev 10:1 and 18:1).
2. Holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand = This is the second event connected with the "abyss." In Revelation 9:1, an angelic being was given the key to the abyss. Here, the angelic being has the key as he descends from heaven. Given the nature of this event, the key is probably not literal. The angelic being has the authority to open and close the abyss. Equally, the chain most likely is not literal, but represents the ability to restrict the movements of an individual.

Revelation 20:2-3

(1) And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, (2) and bound him for a thousand years; (3) and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, (4) so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, (5) until the thousand years were completed; (6) after these things he must be released for a short time.

1. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan = indicates the completion of the containment of the triumvirate. Having already described the eternal judgment of the beast and false prophet, we are told of the temporary imprisonment of the dragon. His eternal destiny is not stated at this point. The identification of the dragon as the serpent of old, i.e. the devil and Satan, is necessary to distinguish between the composite dragon (Rev 12:3) and the dragon (Rev 12:7-13).
2. And bound him for a thousand years = indicates the purpose of the chain. The notion of binding a supernatural being with a chain has led some to conclude that this is metaphorical. Thus, the number of years is not literal. However, Mark 6:17 records that, "Herod himself had sent and had John arrested and bound in prison...." Both "arrested" and "bound" are the exact same terms used in Revelation 20:2 of Satan. The assumption that since Satan is an angelic being, he cannot be physically bound is based on a false notion.
3. He threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him = announces the final consignment of Satan to the abyss. The point seems to be that Satan will be restricted in movement. He is both bound and imprisoned for 1000 years.
4. So that he would not deceive the nations any longer = indicates the purpose of the imprisonment of Satan for a thousand years. As the father of lies (John 8:44) and deception (Rev 12:9), Satan has systematically deceived the world. Jesus indicated during his earthly ministry that deception would be a marked characteristic of eschatological times (Matt 24:5).
5. Until the thousand years were completed = gives the duration of Satan's imprisonment and the nations' freedom from deception. An obvious question at this point concerns the nations. Will there be any nations left after Armageddon? Revelation 19:19 indicates that the beast, the kings of the earth and their armies gather for the Great War. Matthew 25:31ff indicate that the

nations will be gathered for individual judgment. Among the nations will be both sheep and goats. The sheep will inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the earth. Therefore, there certainly will be nations after Armageddon and during the Kingdom.

6. After these things he must be released for a short time = gives the reason for the temporary imprisonment of Satan. The beast and the false prophet are given eternal sentences following Armageddon, but Satan is not. The reason, it appears, is that God still has plans for him. Exactly why Satan is released and what he will do after his imprisonment is not stated at this point. How long Satan will be allowed to roam free is indicated by the phrase *a short time*. Beyond this, one is not able to be dogmatic.

Revelation 20:4

(1) Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. (2) And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded (3) because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, (4) and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, (5) and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and (6) they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

1. Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them = begins another vision report by John. This vision concerns other events connected with this one thousand-year period alluded to in connection with the imprisonment of the dragon. John indicates that he saw *thrones*, plural. The thrones are occupied when John sees them. Those seated are given judgment – the ability and right to judge.

The identity of these throne-sitters is not explicitly indicated. In the context of the millennial reign of Christ, these individuals must be the faithful saints of the ages. Otherwise, there is no mention of the saints in general connected with the 1000-year reign of Christ at this point in the Revelation. However, unlike the beheaded martyrs to follow, these individuals are already seated on the thrones when John sees them. They have already received the right to render judgments. Therefore, their resurrection must have preceded John's sighting of them. This accords with Revelation 11:18, which indicated the rewarding of the saints preceded the final wrath of God through the bowl judgments. Since the millennial reign follows the bowl judgments, the saints will have been judged already and anticipating the reign of Christ to begin.

2. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded = begins a description of a second group of individuals connected with the 1000-year reign of Christ. While many commentators generalize this group into the whole of saints throughout the ages, there is no textual basis for this conclusion. John specifically indicates that this group was beheaded. *Pelikizein* meaning "to behead with an axe" is very specific. Some try to make Revelation 6:9, which refers to martyrs and Revelation 20:4 refer to the same group. However, this again is a case of over generalizing the similarities to the neglect of the differences.

For John to refer to all believers as martyrs would indicate a gross abuse of both language and truth. To behead with an axe limits the application of Revelation 20:4 to those so killed. However, Revelation 6:9 uses a term that could describe death resulting from many different possibilities. This simply is not the case in Revelation 20:4. There are two groups described in Revelation 20:4—the throne-sitters and the beheaded faithful.

3. Because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God = gives a positive explanation for why this group of individuals was killed. They continued to witness to the fact that Jesus is Lord. *The word of God* refers to God's commands. These "Christians" did not deny the Lord, but remained faithful to the word of God.

4. And those who had not worshiped the beast or his image = continues the description of the beheaded martyrs. However, the author turns to some negative reasons for their death. The conjunction *and* in Greek can be translated *even* giving the meaning *in addition to*. Thus, John is not introducing a third group of individuals resurrected at this point. Rather, John continues to describe the beheaded martyrs by giving additional reasons for their death. In their obedience to God, they naturally offended the beast. To remain faithful to Jesus Christ automatically put one in opposition to the beast.

The beheaded faithful refused to worship the beast or his image, which is the expressed requirement to live on the earth during the reign of the dragon. The gravity of one's refusal to worship the beast can be seen in the consequence—beheading. Scripture does not indicate why decapitation is the preferred method of capital punishment for the beast. Down through the history of the church, several methods have proved favorites: (1) burning alive; (2) crucifixion; (3) exposure to wild animals; (4) to be shot; (5) starvation; and (6) decapitation to name a few. Decapitation proves to be the least labor intensive. All one needs is a sharp axe.

5. And had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand = continues the descriptive reason why the beheaded lost their lives during the reign of the dragon. Commitment to Christ naturally forestalls the acceptance of a brand of allegiance to the beast. The outcome is naturally death.

The fact that the beheaded faithful faced the persecution of the beast and the false prophets clearly limits the historical referent. The reign of the beast is limited to three and a half years just prior to the Lord's parousia. Therefore, the beheaded saints cannot refer to believers throughout the ages. They must be limited to the great persecution at the hands of Satan/Antichrist/beast during the second half of Daniel's Seventieth Week. Equally, they must be limited to believers following the Rapture of the saints, else they would have been taken during the Rapture. Therefore, these people died after the Rapture, but before Armageddon.

This fosters a question: will anyone be saved after the Rapture? Obviously, there must be people saved after the Rapture. Matthew 25:31ff indicates that there will be a sheep and goat judgment, just prior to the Kingdom. The only way there can be "sheep" is that salvation occurred after the Rapture.

6. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years = indicates the point of this vision. The beheaded *came to life*. *Zan* is the Greek verb used here, which carries the meaning *to live*. In context, this word can only mean, "to raise from the dead, or resurrection." It refers to the resurrection of Jesus in Revelation 2:8. It has this sense in Acts 9:41 and Matthew 9:18. In relationship to the dead, it always refers to a physical restoration of life.

The amillennialists, in a never-ending quest to subvert the literal plain sense of Scripture, argue that a spiritual resurrection is intended here. That is, the saints begin their reign with Christ at salvation in a Pauline sense (Eph 2:6, Col 3:1). However, this conclusion is directly contradicted by the context that follows. These folks are indicated to reign with Christ for a thousand years. Many make the false assumption that Psalms 90:4 repeated in 2 Peter 3:8 that "one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day" is grounds to spiritualize Revelation 20:4. This is obviously a figure of speech. It does not say that one day is a thousand years. Secondly, this reference to time is from God's perspective, not man's.

There is nothing in Revelation 20:4 that supports a figurative interpretation. To say that the reign of the believer is spiritual, one must also say that Satan is presently bound and locked away, which is laughably absurd. Only the naive or theologically biased would argue that Satan has been bound for the last 2000 years. The apostle Paul states that unbelievers are blinded (deceived) continually concerning the gospel (2 Cor 4:4). Acts 5:3 explicitly states that Satan inspired Ananias to lie to the Holy Spirit.

Revelation 20:5

(1) The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. (2) This is the first resurrection.

1. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed = contrasts with the martyrs resurrected in Revelation 20:4. If in fact, only one group of believers is identified in Revelation 20:4, then one must conclude that only martyrs are resurrected. Revelation 3:18 declares that overcoming believers will sit with Christ on his throne. Therefore, Revelation 20:4 must refer to at least two groups. Whom then, does "the rest of the dead" refer to?

The premillennialists would argue that "the rest of the dead" refers to unbelievers. The saints of the ages who died before the sixth seal are resurrected between seals six and seven and

those beheaded after the Rapture are resurrected near/on the beginning of the 1000-year period. The general resurrection of the wicked occurs at the end of the 1000-year kingdom. The amillennialists must argue that "the rest of the dead" refers to the wicked and perhaps some righteous. However, this causes a major problem. If "come to life" is spiritual in Revelation 20:4, then it must be spiritual in Revelation 20:5. Problem: how do the wicked come to life in a spiritual sense? If "come to life" is spiritual in Revelation 20:4, how can the same verb refer to physical life in Revelation 20:5 without any textual clues to help the reader understand this change? Such "doings" are unnatural to the text!

2. This is the first resurrection = clarifies the significance of the resurrection of the beheaded faithful. Their resurrection is a part of a larger event that can correctly be described as "the first resurrection." Since only the beheaded dead are described as resurrected in Revelation 20:4, this must be a part of a greater whole. For the resurrection will include all the saints of all the ages. The only biblical solution is to recognize the explanation of the apostle Paul. 1 Corinthians 15:22-24 states,

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.

Paul clearly delineates several groupings, all of which constitute "the first resurrection." Christ is described as the *first fruits*. Metaphorically, if Christ is the first fruits, then the rest of the harvest follows later. Paul is using the figure of speech taken from agriculture. Any farmer knows that a crop does not ripen all at once. Usually, a small portion ripen first, then the largest portion ripens and lastly a small portion ripens late. In keeping with Paul's figure of speech, whether one is taken as the first fruits, the general harvest or the last of the harvest, all fruit would be considered part of the harvest. There is one harvest regardless of when the fruit is picked.

The next gathering of ripened fruit (resurrection of the dead) will occur at the Lord's coming (*parousia*). The apostle Paul describes it as a "snatching away" of the righteous living and dead. Paul indicates that this event will occur at the Lord's coming (*parousia*) (1 Thess 4:16). Revelation 20:4 indicates a final group (the late harvest) will finish the harvest begun with the resurrection of Jesus. This harvest from Christ to the beheaded dead constitutes "the first resurrection."

Revelation 20:6

(1) Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; (2) over these the second death has no power, (3) but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

1. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection = is the fifth of seven beatitudes in the Revelation. The beatitude announces the importance of having a part in "the first resurrection." All of those who have a part in it are blessed and holy. This clearly limits "the first resurrection" to the righteous. Even if the Revelation does not label a resurrection after the 1000 years as "the second resurrection," this beatitude makes such a conclusion an absolute necessity. There must be a resurrection in which those who have a part are devoid of holiness.

2. Over these the second death has no power (authority) = offers another reason those who have a part in the first resurrection are blessed. The second death has no authority. The phrase *second death* occurs in the Revelation four times. Revelation 20:14 defines the second death as the lake of fire or eternal punishment. All of those who partake in the first resurrection have no fear of eternal punishment. This can only mean that no one who partakes in the first resurrection is unholy or is damnable. This confirms that the first resurrection will only involve the righteous.

This is not the case for the general resurrection that comes at the end of the 1000-year kingdom. This resurrection will involve both the wicked and those righteous ones who died during the 1000-year kingdom. The second death will have authority during this resurrection to claim those who belong to it. Physical death separates man from any opportunity to experience God's presence. The second death will do it again, but for eternity.

3. But they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years = is a powerful contrast. Instead of separation from the presence of God (the second death) those who have a part in the first resurrection will serve as priests of God and of Christ. This is just the opposite of the second death. Not only will the resurrected be in God's presence they will literally work for Him as priests.

God has always had a priestly representative on the earth. The first priest we meet in the Scriptures is Melchizedek (Gen 14:18-20). In what is truly one of the great mysteries of Scripture, Melchizedek appears and disappears without a beginning or an end. Subsequently, Israel becomes "a kingdom of priests." The priestly function was to represent man before God. Through sacrificial mediation, the priest communicated to God on behalf of man. In what sense then will the resurrected faithful serve as priests to God and Christ? During the millennial kingdom, the saints will reign with Christ. Their job description, if you will, will involve their representation of Christ to the millennial constituents and visa versa.

The fact that the reign of the resurrected is limited to 1000 years signals an important detail. This reign cannot involve a spiritual reign in heaven. The Lord's promise to the overcomers in Revelation 2:26-27 makes no sense if a spiritual reign is the goal. There is no appreciable effect on the nations, if the saints are reigning in heaven in the sense intended in Revelation 2:26-27. To use 1000 years to describe the present reign of the saints (now 2000 years for some and may be less than six months for those killed just prior to the Lord's return) renders the whole concept nonsensical. Revelation 5:10 explicitly states that those purchased by the blood of Christ "will reign upon the earth."

Revelation 20:7-8

(1) When the thousand years are completed, (2) Satan will be released from his prison, and (3) will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, (4) to gather them together for the war; (5) the number of them is like the sand of the seashore.

1. When the thousand years are completed = transitions the reader to the end of the 1000-year period. No details are given concerning the life and times of the 1000-year period. The fact that the author has referred to a period consisting of 1000 years six times fails to dent those who attempt to interpret the numbers of Revelation spiritually. John indicates that this period will begin, cover a certain period of time and end with a significant event.

2. Satan will be released from his prison = marks a significant event about to take place. That Satan's confinement can be correctly defined as a prison is confirmed.

3. (He) will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four-corners of the earth, Gog and Magog = indicates the intent of Satan once he is released. He will resume his campaign to overthrow the Son of the woman who rules over the nations.

The nations—where did they come from? Since Revelation 19:11-21 indicates the destruction of the nations. However, Revelation 19:11-21 does not indicate that every single nation on the face of earth was destroyed. It says that the kings of the earth and their armies were destroyed. It does not naturally follow that every single individual from every single nation on the face of the earth was killed.

In fact, Matthew 25:31ff clearly indicates that there will be people left from all the nations of the world who are sheep (follows of Jesus Christ). These individuals inherit the kingdom on earth. During the 1000-year period, there will be a great increase in the population of the earth (Isaiah 65:17ff). Since those who enter God's kingdom in natural bodies will be able to have babies, subsequent generations will have a choice to follow or not to follow Christ. Thus, His need to rule the nations with a rod of iron (Rev 2:26-27). Zechariah 14:16-19 states,

Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths. And it will be that whichever of the families of the earth does not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, there will be no rain on them. And if the family of Egypt does not go up or enter, then no rain

will fall on them; it will be the plague with which the LORD smites the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths. This will be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths.

The fact that Christ will rule with a rod of iron indicates hostility. Obviously, after 25 generations of humanity, given the choice to follow Christ, many will rather live apart from His care and control. Those who perhaps are not committed to the Lord will be deceived by Satan to mount a campaign against the Son. Apparently, their unbelief in His salvific worth extends to their unbelief concerning his power and might.

There is no satisfactory answer for the reference to "Gog and Magog" at this point in the narrative of Revelation 20. Gog of the land of Magog is an enemy of Israel as detailed in Ezekiel 38-39. The relationship between Ezekiel 38-39 and Revelation 20 cannot be discovered at this point.

4. To gather them together for the war = indicates the purpose of Satan gathering the hostile nations.

5. The number of them is like the sand of the seashore = describes the enormous army Satan deceives into fighting. *The sand of the seashore* is a figure of speech used in Scripture to indicate overwhelming numbers (Gen 41:49; Josh 11:4; Judg 7:12). This will necessitate a tremendous number of births on the earth during the 25 generation-kingdom of the Son.

Revelation 20:9

(1) And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and (2) surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and (3) fire came down from heaven and devoured them.

1. And they came up on the broad plain of the earth = indicates the place where this final battle between Satan and his forces and Christ will be fought. *Broad plain* translates the Greek word *platos*, which means "the measurement of width," (Louw-Nida § 81.15). This suggests that the idea of the text is that this innumerable horde with Satan traveled the breadth of the earth (from the four corners) to get to the battle. This suggests that the nations have gone as far away from the influence of the Son as humanly possible.

2. Surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city = is the destination of the innumerable hordes with Satan. "Camp" translates the Greek word *paremballein*. It can refer to either an army or encampment of people. Since Jesus Christ is ruling on the earth, His people (the saints) would have no need of learning to fight in wars. Therefore, the encampment refers to people in general. The encampment of the saints and the beloved city is surrounded by the innumerable hordes.

The beloved city naturally refers to Jerusalem. However, whether it is the New Jerusalem or not is the question. That Jerusalem will be a new city during the millennial kingdom cannot be debated. Revelation 16:19 declares that Jerusalem will be destroyed by the most powerful earthquake ever experienced on the earth during the bowl judgments. Whether this "New" Jerusalem will be the eternal New Jerusalem is open for debate. One cannot be dogmatic either way.

3. Fire came down from heaven and devoured them = explains God's solution to the problem. He burns up the wicked. What happens to the saints living on the earth at this time with natural bodies (non-glorified) is not detailed. If they received instant glorification, it is not suggested.

Revelation 20:10

(1) And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, (2) where the beast and the false prophet are also; and (3) they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

1. And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone = explains the destiny of Satan. He will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone.

2. Where the beast and the false prophet are also = confirms that Satan receives punishment. He ends up where the beast and the false prophet are. The beast and false prophet were thrown into the lake 1000 years earlier. This confirms that the punishment of the wicked is eternal in nature. After 1000 years, the beast and the false prophet are still suffering, but they have not been annihilated.

3. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever = makes the eternal nature of the punishment of the wicked crystal clear.

Revelation 20:11

(1) Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, (2) from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and (3) no place was found for them.

1. Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it = introduces the sixth vision report of this vision sequence. Those who attempt to subvert the chronology of Revelation 19:11-20:15 must deny the obvious. The chronology is so natural if left as John presents it. After the 1000-year kingdom, God will allow a final satanic lead revolt, which removes all unbelievers from the face of the earth forever. After the disposal of the devil, God will judge the wicked of all the ages. This judgment is now narrated in Revelation 20:11-15.

A *great white throne* distinguishes this throne from the thrones mentioned earlier in the book of Revelation. The one seated on this throne is not explicitly identified. However, in previous examples, "the One seated on the throne" is God, the Almighty.

2. From whose presence earth and heaven fled away = adds a significant detail to the appearances of the great throne and Sitter. Earth and heaven fled away. What the author means by *fled away* is explained in the following clause.

3. No place was found for them = clearly indicates the earth and heaven cease to exist. This is the meaning of *fled away*.

The placement of this announcement at this point is problematic. If the verses were cast in future tense, there would be no problem. Revelation 21:1 declares that the "first heaven and the first earth passed away." The order indicates that this event occurs after the general judgment of the wicked of all the ages and the righteous who died during the 1000-year kingdom. Thus, the problem with the placement of this announcement in Revelation 20:11. Two verses later in Revelation 20:13, we are told that "the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them...." The announcement of the resurrection of the dead from sources that should have passed away is problematic.

Some attempt a solution by interpreting Revelation 20:11 metaphorically. Heaven and earth are running away in fear of God's judgment, but could find no place to hide. This is how some interpret this text.

Other attempts to explain the text involve the notion that the general resurrection of the dead and the destruction of heaven and earth might occur simultaneously. A more drastic notion intuitively feels that the text is out of its original order. This would necessitate the placement of verse 11 later in the sequence of this passage. However, a better solution is to recognize the literary technique employed by John. In Revelation 20:11, he presents the cessation of heaven and earth before the occurrence of the judgment of the dead in Revelation 20:12. In Revelation 20:12, he presents the judgment of the dead before their resurrection in Revelation 20:13. This indicates that John is not arguing for a strict chronology at this point. Rather, by placing verse 11 at this point, John seeks to indicate to his reader that this is the final judgment just prior to the eternal kingdom of God. This is in contradistinction to the judgment that occurs just prior to the beginning of the millennial kingdom highlighted in Matthew 25:31ff.

Since both verses 11 and 12 begin with the introductory formula: *and I saw*, it is more probable that John offers in summary fashion verse 11. The emphasis of verse 11 is the "great white throne and Him who sat upon it." The appearance of the "great white throne" signals the final, absolute end of the old order.

Revelation 20:12

(1) And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and (2) books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*; and (3) the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

1. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne = introduces the seventh vision report of the vision sequence begun back in Revelation 19. John indicates that *the dead* are "standing before the throne." The reason John calls these individuals *the dead* is to tie verse 12 back to Revelation 20:5. "The dead" not raised at the beginning of the 1000-year kingdom are now raised to be judged.

It should not escape the reader's attention that "the living" is not mentioned here. This supports the conclusion that their glorification must have occurred soon after the destruction of the wicked or will follow God's final disposition of the wicked.

2. Books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book of life* = appears to indicate two separate groups of books.

3. The dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds = indicates the purpose of *the books*. *The books* (excluding the book of life) record the *deeds* of the dead. The phrase *according to their deeds* must refer to the wicked deeds of the dead.

Revelation 20:13

(1) And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and (2) death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and (3) they were judged, everyone of them according to their deeds.

1. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it = introduces the sources of the dead. It is not clear, why John refers to the sea at this point as a source of the dead. This is particularly difficult in light of the destruction of the earth mentioned in Revelation 20:11.

2. Death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them = is the second source of the dead who appear for this judgment. The exact relationship between death and Hades is not defined in the Revelation.

3. They were judged, every one of them according to their deeds = restates the purpose of the resurrection of the dead.

Revelation 20:14

(1) Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. (2) This is the second death, the lake of fire.

1. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire = seems at odds with logic. Death is not a person, therefore how can it suffer the same fate as the wicked?

2. This is the second death, the lake of fire = is problematic because there is no evidence that death and Hades suffered the first death. Perhaps, the reason John personifies death and Hades is to emphasize their termination as instruments of God's judgment.

Revelation 20:15

(1) And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, (2) he was thrown into the lake of fire.

1. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life = that this book would be consulted at this point indicates the possibility of some appearing in the book. This argues strongly for the conclusion that saints will die during the millennial reign of Christ.

2. He was thrown into the lake of fire = is the consequence of not having one's name in the book of life.



[Next Section: Chapter Twenty-One - New Heavens, New Earth, New Jerusalem](#)



**Questions? Comments?
Send us an email!**

revelationcommentary.org
© Sola Scriptura
info@solagroup.org



Produced and Developed by [Sola Scriptura](#)





□

Previous Section: Chapter Twenty - The Beginning and End of the Millennium

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE - NEW HEAVENS, NEW EARTH, NEW JERUSALEM

Revelation 21:1

(1) Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; (2) for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and (3) there is no longer *any* sea.

1. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth = begins with the typical introductory vision formula that signals a new vision description. This vision concerns a new heaven and earth, which one would expect to follow the general judgment of all the wicked of the ages. The sequence of this event is logical in light of the overall structure of Revelation 19-21. This reinforces the notion that John's depiction of the earth fleeing away in Revelation 20:11 is accurate. *New* (*kainos*) pertains "to having been in existence for only a short time – new, recent (Louw-Nida, § 67.115)."

2. For the first heaven and the first earth passed away = explains why John sees a new heaven and earth at this point. The first heaven and earth *passed away*. Louw-Nida indicates that the sense of the text is "to go out of existence." This is a clear reference to the final destruction of the present earth. One will notice the apparent absence of any reference to a fiery destruction of the earth. There is explicit biblical proof that God will destroy the wicked with fire (Zeph 1:18; 3:8; Isa 66:15-16).

There is no biblical basis for the conclusion that God will destroy the physical earth with fire. The closest possible biblical support for this conclusion might be II Peter 3:5-7, 10. However, it is clear that Peter is contrasting the destruction of the wicked in the days of Noah with that of the wicked during the Day of the Lord. Clearly, the physical destruction of the earth did not concern earth itself, but the people who dwell upon it. Equally, the Day of the Lord will remove the wicked from the earth and cause severe damage to the physical earth, but the earth will not cease to exist during the Day of the Lord.

The strongest verse that seems to support a fiery destruction of the physical earth is II Peter 3:10, which states,

"But 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 its works will be burned up."

This verse has caused some to argue that the Day of the Lord extends until the end of the millennial reign of Christ. However, this conclusion is unwarranted.

The translation of 2 Peter 3:10 in the English Standard Version better reflects the intent of the text. Notice, "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed."

Notice that instead of "burned up," the better reading is "will be exposed." The quality of the work is exposed by fire, but the physical earth is not burned up. There is no biblical basis for the physical earth being burned up.

3. There is no longer *any* sea = argues strongly that the period described by John in Revelation 21:1 must follow the temporal kingdom. The absence of the sea, but the presence

of a new heaven and earth signals a difference between this period and the kingdom period. The sea is present during the kingdom.

Revelation 21:2

(1) And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, (2) made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

1. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God = will again be repeated in Revelation 21:10 with a slight variation. This has led some to suggest that the New Jerusalem comes down twice. One cannot be dogmatic either way.

2. Made ready as a bride adorned for her husband = describes the New Jerusalem. This New Jerusalem is in stark contrast to the "woman" of Revelation 17. This New Jerusalem comes as a bride for a new earth.

Revelation 21:3-4

(1) And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and (2) He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and (3) God Himself will be among them, and (4) He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and (5) there will no longer be any death; (6) there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; (7) the first things have passed away.

1. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men = continues the unrecognized voice that declares from the throne. In this case, the voice announces that "the tabernacle (dwelling) of God is with men." Long promised, God is finally among his people (Ezek 37:27).

2. He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people = refers to God in the third person. Someone is describing the new situation on the new earth. In a way unparalleled in history, God will live among His people.

3. God Himself will be among them = adds a note of emphasis. God the Father will live among His people. Separated in the garden, men had lost the ability to commune with God. However, God finally returns to live with man on earth.

4. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes = is the first listed benefit of this new earthly relationship with the God of heaven. The cessation of weeping and mourning is an eschatological promise (Is 35:10, 65:19) finally realized.

5. There will no longer be any death = is the second item of relief the new creation will experience when God's eternal rule is established on earth. The phrase is absolute. Death will cease. In the new heaven and earth with a New Jerusalem, there will be no death.

6. There will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain = indicates the absence of all those human conditions which produce outcomes of mourning, crying, and pain.

7. The first things have passed away = restates the reason why the human condition has improved. This clause refers back to Revelation 21:1, which indicated that a new heaven and earth had come. Those aspects of the creation that produced hardship and suffering for mankind have been removed. This is not restoration, but re-creation.

Revelation 21:5

(1) And He who sits on the throne said, (2) "Behold, I am making all things new." (3) And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."

1. And He who sits on the throne said = is a direct reference to God the Father. This is one of the few direct references to the Father in the Revelation. The Father speaks.

2. Behold, I am making all things new = is a bit strange at first glance. One would think that given the context that this sentence would read, "I have made all things new." However, as it

stands, it appears that God is still in the act of creating all things new.

3. He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true" = applies to the whole book of Revelation and not just this section.

Revelation 21:6

(1) And He said to me, "It is done. (2) I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. (3) I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.

1. And He said to me, "It is done..." = indicates completion. Unfortunately, it is not clear what is finished. In context, one would assume that God's new creation is finished, but this is guessing.

2. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end = basically is two ways of saying the same thing. The phrase focuses on the absolute power and sovereignty of God.

3. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost = is metaphorical way of referring to eternal life. What was promised for thousands of years is now fulfilled. Progressive sanctification finally results in absolute glorification.

Revelation 21:7

(1) He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and (2) I will be his God and he will be My son.

1. He who overcomes shall inherit these things = reiterates the promise. The overcomer gets "all these things." This refers to the list outlined in verse four above.

2. I will be his God and he will be My son = is singular, nevertheless it applies to all of those who are overcomers. This is a great promise. Overcomers will be adopted as "sons" of God. All the rights and privileges of sonship come with this promise. This is beyond human comprehension. The road from being the objects of ridicule and scorn to "sonship" is the heart of this revelation. We are sons of God.

Revelation 21:8

But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

This verse actually concludes the chronological development of the book of Revelation. From this point on, the book deals with issues related to the consummation of human history, as we know it. Having reached eternity, God restates his promise to the righteous and his intent to punish the wicked. The righteous become part of the family of God the Father, but the wicked receive eternal punishment, which ultimately refers to the absence of God's presence.

Revelation 21:9

(1) And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, came and spoke with me, saying, (2) "Come here, I shall show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."

1. One of the seven angels...saying = implies that the final details of the book are about to be added. This is not an advancement of the chronology of the book. That ended at Revelation 21:8.

2. Come here, I shall show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb = is clearly metaphorical language. That said, I am not sure of the literal referent intended here. In Revelation 19, the wife of the Lamb consists of believers. In Revelation 21, the wife of the Lamb is the New Jerusalem.

Revelation 21:10-11

(1) And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, (2) and showed me the holy city,

Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God having the glory of God. (3) Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper.

1. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain = is interesting because in Revelation 16:20 all mountains on the earth are removed. This simply means that John is given the view of the New Jerusalem before the actual events occur. John saw the New Jerusalem 2000 thousand years ago before the events actually take place.

2. And showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God having the glory of God = indicates an obvious contrast with the city of Revelation 17, which had the glory of man.

3. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper = is an image of God's glory.

Revelation 21:12-14

It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names *were* written on them, which are *those* of (1) the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. *There were* three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west. And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of (2) the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

1. The twelve tribes of the sons of Israel = will each represent a gate. Thus, each tribe has access to the city. Israel will have her promised restoration.

2. The twelve apostles of the Lamb = includes the apostle Paul. The Lord Jesus also promised the Disciples that they would govern the twelve tribes of Israel during His temporal kingdom (Matt 19:27-30). Over the twelve apostles will be King David (Ezek 34:23-24, 37:24-25).

Revelation 21:15-18

The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, (1) fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, *according to* human measurements, which are *also* angelic *measurements*. The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.

1. Fifteen hundred miles = is the dimension of this great city. Fifteen hundred miles is the distance between New York City and Dallas. This city is a perfect cube. If you make a box with Minneapolis, MN as the Northeast corner, Seattle, WA as the Northwest corner, San Diego, CA as the Southwest corner and Little Rock, AR as the Southeast corner you would have a picture of this great city in terms of its breath. A fifteen hundred mile high, wide and long city would equal three billion three hundred seventy-five million cubic miles. Such a city could accommodate one billion believers with each able to have a 14,000 square-foot apartment with room left over.

Revelation 21:19-21

The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

Revelation 21:22-27

(1) I saw no temple in it, (2) for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. (3) And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, (4) for the glory of God has illumined it, and (5) its lamp *is* the Lamb. (6) The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. (7) In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; and (8) they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; and (9) nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and

lying, shall ever come into it, (10) but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

1. I saw no temple in it = is a bit strange. So long a part of the Jewish economy, the absence of a temple in the new heaven and earth is striking. This is evidence that God has indeed created "all things new." The administration of earth will be new and different.

2. For the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple = explains why there is no temple in the New Jerusalem. Shadows have been replaced with reality. Instead of God being housed in a building, the building is housed in God.

3. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it = is a second absent element in the New Jerusalem. The sun and moon are light sources. The New Jerusalem will not need natural light sources. This could mean either the sun and moon no longer exists or that the city has no windows.

4. For the glory of God has illumined it = explains why the sun and moon will not be necessary in the New Jerusalem. The glory of God illumines it.

5. Its lamp is the Lamb = continues the explanation concerning why the city will be absent of natural light.

6. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it = is seen by some as a contradiction. The nations (Gentiles) were destroyed and the kings were as well. Therefore, where come these kings? This is one of the reasons some see the New Jerusalem coming down at the beginning of the millennial kingdom. The idea is that once the eternal future begins ethnic differences fade away.

7. In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed = indicates complete safety. Open gates is a sign of confidence in the personal safety of the inhabitants. The absence of night would also mean no need for sleep. This is certainly a characteristic of the eternal future.

8. They will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it = probably refers to the kings. It is not apparently clear what "glory and honor" refer to here.

9. Nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it = is a natural outcome given the nature of the New Jerusalem. However, if the New Jerusalem comes down at the beginning of the eternal future, where come the wicked? That is, the judgment of the damned occurs at the end of the millennium. After the creation of the new heaven and earth, there will be no more wickedness on the earth.

This verse has led some to conclude that the New Jerusalem must come down at the beginning of the millennial kingdom. Else why talk about a problem that does not and cannot exist.

10. But only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life = clarifies who will be able to enter the New Jerusalem. This again argues for the conclusion that the New Jerusalem comes down at the beginning of the millennial kingdom. It appears strange to list those who can enter the city unless there are those who cannot enter it.

□

[Next Section: Chapter Twenty-Two - Epilogue](#)

□



**Questions? Comments?
Send us an email!**

revelationcommentary.org
© Sola Scriptura
info@solagroup.org



Produced and Developed by [Sola Scriptura](#)





□

**Previous Section: Chapter Twenty-One - New Heavens,
New Earth, New Jerusalem**

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO - EPILOGUE

Revelation 22:1-2

(1) And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, (2) coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, (3) in the middle of its street. (4) And on either side of the river was the tree of life, (5) bearing twelve *kinds* of fruit; (6) yielding its fruit every month; and (7) the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

1. And he showed me a river of the water of life = echoes the promise of Christ to the woman at the well of John 4. *Living water* has benefits for those that drink it. It quenches thirst.

2. Coming from the throne of God and the Lamb = is the source of the living water. This water supply is supernaturally supplied, which ensures the eternal or continuing nature of not only the supply of water, but the quality as well. The mutual nature of the throne of the Father and the Son should not lead to confusion about the trinity. They both share equally the same essence. However, Christ is the only member of the trinity that localizes with human physicality. God the Father never takes on human form. He can and will make His presence known. We will be very much aware of His presence, but not because He manifests Himself in physical form. That prerogative is uniquely Jesus Christ's. The throne belongs to the Father, but He shares it with His Son. This is beyond human comprehension, but reality no less.

3. In the middle of its street = at first glance might appear contradictory to the previous idea that the city is a cube. Street is singular, giving the impression that the city has only one street. However, while John does give some information about the city, we certainly must entertain the notion that there is much to the city that he did not communicate. The text does not say "in the middle of its only street." Given the size of the city, there must be many streets. However, whether it's the Magnificent Mile in Chicago, Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills or Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, all great cities are known for having one great street.

4. And on either side of the river was the tree of life = indicates more than one "tree of life." Since Jesus Christ's death on the cross is the only means of salvation from sin, "the tree of life" does not grant to those who eat from it eternal life.

Since the only people allowed in the New Jerusalem are those who already have eternal life (Rev 21:27), "the water of life" and "the tree of life" are not sources of eternal life for "those who are written in the Lamb's book of life." Water and fruit contribute to the quality of life. The river and the tree will contribute to the quality one existence in the eternal city.

5. Bearing twelve *kinds* of fruit = indicates miraculous production.

6. Yielding its fruit every month = continues the miraculous production of the trees of life. Thought may be that the trees bear a different fruit for each month of the year. Since time will not be indicted by the sun (Rev 22:5) during the eternal kingdom of God, perhaps the trees will indicate the months of the year.

7. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations = echoes Adam's attempt to cover himself, but failed to remove the curse.

Revelation 22:3-4

(1) And there shall no longer be any curse; and (2) the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and (3) His bond-servants shall serve Him; and (4) they shall see His face, and (5) His name *shall be* on their foreheads.

1. And there shall no longer be any curse = continues the descriptive benefits of the New Jerusalem. Since "the nations" have the benefit of the healing leaves from "the tree of life," the curse of Adam is finally taken away forever. The curse of Genesis three is removed both from nature and mankind. Nature has returned to full productivity and man is both spiritually and physically satisfied.

2. The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it = signals another benefit of the New Jerusalem. Notice that John indicates that this is a future reality. At issue here is whether or not the Lamb is seated on a separate throne. Revelation 3:21 states, "He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne." The Lord's throne relates to the millennial reign on earth. The Father's throne relates to eternity. Since God the Father does not manifest Himself in human form, Jesus Christ will be the eternal physical manifestation of God to man. We will be aware of the Father's presence, but His presence will not include sight.

3. His bond-servants shall serve Him = actually focuses on worship. The Greek verb refers to religious conduct. What else the righteous will do during eternity is not indicated, but worship will be primary.

4. They shall see His face = that is the face of the Lord Jesus. His bond-servants shall see His face. The Lord Jesus states in Matthew 18:10, "See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you, that their angels in heaven continually behold the face of My Father who is in heaven." Since the Father is invisible, the sense of the Lord's words refers to the presence of God. The angels are continually in the presence of God.

5. His name *shall be* on their foreheads = is the last descriptive benefit of the citizens of the New Jerusalem. Like the 144,000 who have the seal of the God the Father on their foreheads, the bond-servants of Jesus Christ will be so marked.

Revelation 22:5

(1) And there shall no longer be *any* night; and (2) they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them; and (3) they shall reign forever and ever.

1. And there shall no longer be *any* night = indicates a significant change in the course of human history. The loss of night as a segment of the human timeframe means a change in humanity.

2. They shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them = explains why there will be no night. There will be no electricity in the New Jerusalem. God will be the light source for the New Jerusalem.

3. They shall reign forever and ever = refers to the bond-servants. That the saints will reign with Christ during His temporal kingdom on earth for a thousand years is clear. However, that they will reign with God for all eternity is less clear. Daniel 7:18 and 27 states that the saints will receive an eternal kingdom. What they will do however is not clear.

Revelation 22:6-7

And he said to me, "These words are faithful and true"; and (2) the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, (3) sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must shortly take place. And (4) Behold, I am coming quickly. (5) Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book."

1. And he said to me, "These words are faithful and true" = refers to the complete Revelation. This sentence begins an important conclusion to the book with witnesses to the process.

2. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets = adds support to the claims that Scripture

can be trusted, particularly this Revelation.

3. Sent His angel to show to His bond-servants...place = restates the claims of the angel at the beginning of the Revelation that what is written was sent directly from God.

4. Behold, I am coming quickly = cannot be taken in a temporal sense because it has been 2,000 years since these words were given. Jesus will not return quickly, but His return will be quick.

5. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book = a call to faithfulness regardless of what might happen to the reader. Again, John asserts that this Revelation is prophecy in the same tradition as all other Old and New Testament prophecy.

Revelation 22:8-9

And I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things. And he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book; worship God."

Restates the claim of John that the Revelation is his writings. John's reaction to the Revelation is the same as Daniel. Both attempt to worship, but were prevented.

Revelation 22:10

And he said to me, (1) "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, (2) for the time is near.

1. Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book = contrasts the message of Daniel (Dan 12:4, 9). Daniel sealed his book, but the Revelation is to be unsealed.

2. For the time is near = cannot refer to time, since 2000 years has transpired.

Revelation 22:11

Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and let the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and let the one who is holy, still keep himself holy.

This is a very difficult verse to understand. Two exhortations are given to the wicked and two exhortations are given to the righteous. Now it is at once clear that the wicked do not read the Bible for direction or encouragement to sin. Therefore, this text is written for the believer. However, one of the difficulties with this verse is the exhortation to sinners to keep on sinning. This is clearly contradictory to the nature of Scripture and the Lord.

Some attempt solve the problem by placing the timing of this exhortation in the context of the days immediately preceding the return of Jesus Christ in which it will be too late to change once the Lord is seen coming on the clouds. However, it has been two thousand years since these words were spoken. Sinners certainly have had time to repent. Scripture would never counsel a sinner to keep on sinning—never! Therefore, we must look closer at what is stated.

Unlike Daniel 12:9-10, which *states* what is true about the unbeliever, Revelation 22:11 *exhorts* the unbeliever to persist in his lifestyle. It is clear that Revelation 22:11 is echoing Daniel 12:10. What Daniel declared would happen is exactly what John encourages to happen. Scripture is not indicating what sinners might do, but what they will do. Not because they are not free to do otherwise, but because once set upon their course even the wrath of God will not change them (Rev 9:20-21; 16:9b, 11).

Revelation 22:12-13

"Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

Some use passages such as this to support a claim that the return of Christ to rapture the

church to heaven is imminent (could happen at any moment). A position rendered nonsensical by 2000 years of human history. In what sense can the Lord's return be termed "a quick coming?" Unless the term *quick* has changed, it cannot refer to time. It has been 2000 years since the Lord returned to Glory. *Quick* can refer to the manner of the Lord's return. In other words, the Lord's return will happen very quickly. The Lord emphasizes the quickness of His return because the level of suffering the believers will be experiencing during the persecution of Satan/Antichrist against the saints will be unparalleled. Once the Lord sets out to rescue the elect, it will happen very quickly – in the twinkling of any eye!

Revelation 22:14-15

(1) Blessed are those who wash their robes, (2) that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. (3) Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.

1. Blessed are those who wash their robes = is the last of seven blessings that occur in the Revelation. The reward for "washing their robes" is the same as the reward for "the one who conquers." This categorically proves that "the tree of life" does not grant one eternal life. Rather, the quality of eternal life is the issue. There is the opinion among some that as long as a person is saved that's all that matters. I beg to differ. There is going to be a qualitative difference between those who were faithful and those who were faithful, but not as faithful as they could have been.

"Those who washed their robes" are those who work at moral conformity to the will of God. The Old Testament is replete with examples of those who need to wash their garments in order to be cleansed before entering before God. Since the person must wash his own garments, this has nothing to do with gaining salvation. Rather, the issue concerns what one does after he has attained salvation. We are not working to gain or keep salvation, but to enjoy it.

2. That they might have the right to the tree of life = is the first of two purpose clauses that explain the purpose of washing one's robe. The Greek of this clause literally says, "in order that they will have the authority over the tree of life." The second purpose of "washing one's robes" is to enter the city through the gates.

3. Outside are the dogs...lying = obviously refers to the city. *Dogs* here refer to male prostitutes or homosexuals.

Revelation 22:16

"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

Revelation 22:17

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

Revelation 22:18-19

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book; if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

Revelation 22:20-21

He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen

□

□



**Questions? Comments?
Send us an email!**

revelationcommentary.org
© Sola Scriptura
info@solagroup.org



Produced and Developed by [Sola Scriptura](#)

