

Introduction to Revelation

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Author & Date

The apostle John wrote the book of Revelation while exiled on the island of Patmos by the Emperor Domitian (A.D. 81-96). “Some of the early church fathers (Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, Irenaeus, and Victorinus) wrote that the Apostle John experienced exile on the island of Patmos during Domitian’s reign.”¹ Accepting their testimony helps to date the book around A.D. 95-96.

Audience

John wrote the book of Revelation to seven churches that resided in Asia (modern day Turkey). These churches are listed in Revelation chapters 2-3.



¹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Jud 25.

Interpretive Approaches

1. *The nonliteral or allegorical approach* – this view lets the reader make the text say whatever he/she wants, but primarily sees it as an allegory in which good triumphs over evil.
2. *The preterist approach* – The word preterist comes from the Latin word *praeter*, which means “past.” The preterist view regards the book of Revelation as already fulfilled in the first century—some say up to the third century—and contains no future prophecy.
3. *The historical approach* – this view sees the book as being fulfilled throughout church history, from the time of the apostle John until the second coming of Jesus (common among the Protestant reformers). “It holds that the book has been in the process of being fulfilled throughout the whole Christian era.”²
4. *The futurist approach* – this view interprets the book of Revelation in a consistent, literal manner while recognizing the use of types and symbols throughout (i.e. lampstands, the number seven, etc.). It sees the seven churches of Revelation 2-3 as representative of all types of churches throughout church history, and views Revelation 4-22 as future.

This author will follow a normal, grammatical, historical approach to the book of Revelation. This approach considers words and phrases within their context, and reads them according to their normal meaning, unless something within a passage indicates it should be interpreted otherwise. There are symbols used throughout the book of Revelation; however, many of those symbols are either interpreted within the passage itself, or can be interpreted by similar passages that provide understanding. For example, the seven stars are angels (Rev. 1:20), the great dragon is Satan (Rev. 12:9), and the leopard, bear, and lion (Rev. 13:2) resemble the animals mentioned in Daniel (Dan. 7:4-6). A plain reading of Scripture protects the reader from fanciful interpretations. “If one does not use the plain, normal, or literal method of interpretation, all objectivity is lost.”³

When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, and literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, clearly indicate otherwise.⁴

² Charles C. Ryrie, *Revelation-Everyman's Bible Commentary* (Chicago, Ill. Moody Publishers, 1996), 6.

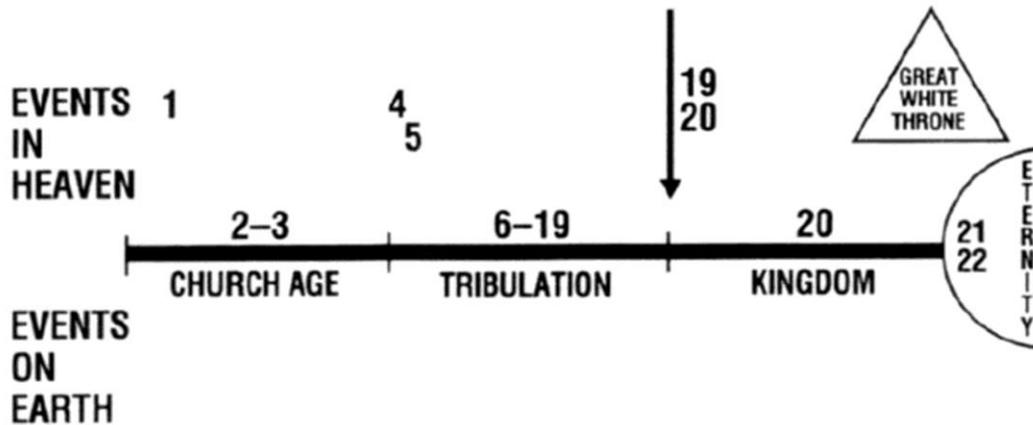
³ Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism* (Chicago, Ill. Moody Press, 1995), 82.

⁴ David L. Cooper, *The God of Israel* (Los Angeles: Biblical Research Society, 1945), iii.

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of the book is to reveal Jesus Christ (Rev. 1:1-20), His authority over the church (Rev. 2-3) and the world (Rev. 6-18). After His Second Coming (Rev 3:3, 11; 16:15; 19:11-16; 22:7, 12, 20), He will establish His kingdom on earth and will reign forever (Rev. 11:15; 12:10; Rev. 20:1-6).

Shifting Scenes in Revelation



Taken from: Charles C. Ryrie, *Revelation-Everyman's Bible Commentary*, page 12

The Judgments of Revelation

THE SEAL JUDGMENTS 6

- 1st - COLD WAR
- 2d - OPEN WAR
- 3d - FAMINE
- 4th - DEATH
- 5th - MARTYRDOM
- 6th - DISTURBANCES
- 7th - (8:1-6)



THE TRUMPET JUDGMENTS 8-9

- 1st - EARTH AFFECTED
- 2d - SEA AFFECTED
- 3d - WATERS AFFECTED
- 4th - HEAVENS AFFECTED
- 5th - MEN AFFECTED
- 6th - DEATH
- 7th - (11:15-19)



THE BOWL JUDGMENTS 16

- 1st - SORES
- 2d - SEA AFFECTED
- 3d - RIVERS AFFECTED
- 4th - SCORCHING
- 5th - DARKNESS
- 6th - EUPHRATES DRIED UP
- 7th - DESTRUCTION



Outline

The Lord Jesus told John, “Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things [μετὰ ταῦτα *meta tauta* – Rev. 4:1]” (Rev. 1:19).

- I. Introduction: “What You Have Seen” (chap. 1)
 - A. Prologue (1:1–3)
 - B. Salutation (1:4–8)
 - C. The Patmos vision of Christ glorified (1:9–18)
 - D. The command to write (1:19–20)
- II. Letters to the Seven Churches: “What Is Now” (chaps. 2–3)
 - A. The letter to the church in Ephesus (2:1–7)
 - B. The letter to the church in Smyrna (2:8–11)
 - C. The letter to the church in Pergamum (2:12–17)
 - D. The letter to the church in Thyatira (2:18–29)
 - E. The letter to the church in Sardis (3:1–6)
 - F. The letter to the church in Philadelphia (3:7–13)
 - G. The letter to the church in Laodicea (3:14–22)
- III. The Revelation of the Future: “What Will Take Place Later” (chaps. 4–22)
 - A. The vision of the heavenly throne (chap. 4)
 - B. The seven-sealed scroll (chap. 5)
 - C. The opening of the six seals: the time of divine wrath (chap. 6)
 - D. Those who will be saved in the Great Tribulation (chap. 7)
 - E. The opening of the seventh seal and the introduction of the seven trumpets (chaps. 8–9)
 - F. The mighty angel and the little scroll (chap. 10)
 - G. The two witnesses (11:1–14)
 - H. The sounding of the seventh trumpet (11:15–19)
 - I. The seven great personages of the end times (chaps. 12–15)
 - J. The bowls of divine wrath (chap. 16)
 - K. The fall of Babylon (chaps. 17–18)
 - L. The song of hallelujah in heaven (19:1–10)
 - M. The second coming of Christ (19:11–21)
 - N. The millennial reign of Christ (20:1–10)
 - O. The judgment of the great white throne (20:11–15)
 - P. The new heaven and the new earth (21:1–22:5)
 - Q. The final word from God (22:6–21)⁵

⁵ John F. Walvoord, “Revelation,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 927–928.

Sovereignty, Wrath, Love, and Grace During the Tribulation

God is the sovereign Creator-Lord of the universe (Gen. 1:1; Ps. 115:3; 135:6; Dan. 4:35). He is infinitely good, and all good things were created by Him, for Him, and to His glory. God has many attributes, and the most commonly recognized are:

1. Sovereign (1 Chron. 29:11; Dan. 4:35; Acts 17:24-25)
2. All-knowing (Ps. 139:1-6; Matt. 6:31-33)
3. All-present (Ps. 139:7-12; Heb. 13:5)
4. Almighty (Job 42:2; Isa. 40:28-29)
5. Righteous (Ps. 11:7; 119:137)
6. Just (Ps. 9:7-8; 19:9; 50:6; 58:11)
7. Holy (Ps. 99:9)
8. Immutable (Ps. 102:26, 27; Mal. 3:6)
9. Truthful (2 Sam. 7:28; John 17:17; 1 John 5:20)
10. Loving (Jer. 31:3; 1 John 4:7-12, 16)
11. Faithful (Deut. 7:9; Lam. 3:23; 1 John 1:9)
12. Merciful (Ps. 86:15; Luke 6:36; Tit. 3:5)
13. Gracious (Ps. 111:4; 116:5; 1 Pet. 5:10)
14. Eternal (Deut. 33:27; 1 Tim. 1:17)

God's sovereignty is His foremost attribute, but whatever is said about His sovereignty, it must be understood that it never operates independently of, or contrary to, His other attributes. For example, because God is righteous, all His sovereign decrees are just. Because God is immutable, His moral perfections never change. Because God is eternal, He is sovereign forever. Because God is omniscient, His sovereign acts are always predicated on perfect knowledge. Because God is omnipotent, He is always able to execute His will. Because God is love, His supreme judgments can be merciful toward the undeserving and humble.

From Genesis to Revelation, God sovereignly governs the lives of people and nations. People exist because God gives them life. David writes, "Know that the LORD Himself is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves" (Ps. 100:3). He determines the duration of each person's life, having final control over the day and cause of a person's death. It is written, "in Your book were all written the days that were ordained *for me*, when as yet there was not one of them" (Ps. 139:16). And Hannah, in her stately prayer says, "The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up" (1 Sam. 2:6). People live and die as God decides, "for in Him we live and move and exist" (Acts 17:28). God controls when and where people will live in history, for "He made from one *man* every

nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation” (Acts 17:26). Even the great rulers of this world exist because of His plan, for “It is He who changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding” (Dan. 2:21). God has power over wealth and poverty, for “The LORD makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts” (1 Sam. 2:7). The Lord is supreme over all His creation, “Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps” (Ps. 135:6). There is no one who can understand all His ways, or stop what He has set in motion. “All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and *among* the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’” (Dan 4:35). God allows fallen angels and humans to produce sin and evil, but they never act beyond or against His sovereign will (Job 1:1-21; Ps. 105:12-15; 1 Kings 22:19-23; 2 Cor. 12:7-10). God’s sovereignty over all creation is a prevailing theme throughout all of Scripture. God has many attributes, but His sovereignty is foremost.

It is God’s sovereign plan (according to His revealed will in Scripture), that Jesus Christ will return to earth to set up His millennial kingdom. At the time of His return He will put down rebellion, both angelic and human. God’s wrath will destroy the rebellion of Satan and his angels, unbelieving Israel, and unbelieving Gentiles. At the close of the Tribulation, Satan will be defeated and eventually bound (Rev. 12:7-9; 20:1-3), all unbelievers will be destroyed (Rev. 19:19-21), leaving only believing Jews and Gentiles to enter His kingdom on earth (Rev. 19:19-21; cf. Matt. 24:29-25:46). In spite of all the satanic rebellion in the world during the Tribulation, God remains sovereign and in complete control (Rev. 17:17; cf. Prov. 16:4). The book of Revelation also reveals God’s love and grace during the time of the Tribulation, which is extended to:

1. The 144,000 Jews He saves and calls to service (Rev. 7:4-8).
2. The martyrs who have died for their faith in Jesus (Rev. 7:9-17).
3. His two prophetic witnesses whom He resurrects (Rev. 11:11-12).
4. The nations to whom He sends His gospel message (Rev. 14:6-7).
5. Those who enter into His kingdom after the Tribulation (Rev. 20:4-6).

In all the judgments, God is righteous and just, whereas men are wicked and “deserve” wrath (Rev. 16:6-7; cf. 19:2). Rather than turning to God, the rebellious will:

1. Try to hide and flee from Him (Rev. 6:15-16)
2. Seek a horrible death rather than conform to His will (Rev. 9:6)

3. Not repent of their rebellion (Rev. 9:20-21)
4. Rejoice and celebrate at the death of His servants (Rev. 11:7-10)
5. Side with the Satan (Rev. 13:3-4)
6. Blaspheme and curse God's name (Rev. 16:8-9, 11, 21)
7. Make war with Jesus Christ (Rev. 19:19)

Revelation 1:1-8

The Revelation [ἀποκάλυψις *apokalupsis* – *to reveal, uncover, expose, make known*] of Jesus Christ, which God [the Father] gave Him [Jesus] to show to His bond-servants [for their benefit], the things which must shortly take place [ἐν τάχει *en tachei* – *speed, swiftness, quickness*]; and He [Jesus] sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John [revelation came several times by means of an angel; see Rev. 17:1; 19:9-10], ² who bore witness [μαρτυρέω *martureo* – *to testify, bear witness*] to the word of God [Scripture] and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, *even* to all that he saw. ³ Blessed is he [singular] who reads and those [plural] who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it [cf. Rev. 22:7]; for the time is near. ⁴ John to the seven churches that are in Asia [modern Turkey]: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come [Jesus Christ]; and from the seven Spirits [perhaps the Holy Spirit, Isa. 11:2; cf. Rev. 3:1; 4:5; 5:6] who are before His throne; ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead [i.e. the first to be resurrected from the dead; see 1 Cor. 15:20-23], and the ruler of the kings of the earth [emphasizing His sovereignty over human rulers]. To Him who loves us [ἀγαπάω *agapao* – present tense = keeps on loving us], and released us [λύω *luo* – *to release, untie, set free* = image of freeing a slave] from our sins by His blood [His blood = the payment for our sins], ⁶ and He has made us *to be* a kingdom, priests [spiritual representatives] to His God and Father; to Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever; amen. ⁷ Behold, He is coming with the clouds [Dan. 7:13], and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him [perhaps mourning because He disrupts their lives]; even so; amen [the coming of Jesus is the theme of the book]. ⁸ “I am the Alpha and the Omega [merism = the eternal One; similar to the term *I Am*],” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty [παντοκράτωρ *pantokrator* – *almighty, all-powerful* – used 9 times: Rev. 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22].”

Summary:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that John is given a revelation from Jesus, about Jesus, to the seven churches in Asia.
2. The word revelation translates the Greek word ἀποκάλυψις *apokalupsis*, which means an *unveiling* or *disclosure* of information. The word is transliterated “apocalypse” in English, which has the idea of chaos, disaster, or destruction, and often connotes a dark and hopeless future accompanied with despair. The revelation given to John is both by and about Jesus, and is intended to inform us about what God will accomplish in the future.

John's prophecy is primarily the revelation of Jesus Christ, not the revelation of future events. You must not divorce the Person from the prophecy, for without the Person there could be no fulfillment of the prophecy. "He is not incidental to its action," wrote Dr. Merrill Tenney. "He is its chief Subject." In Revelation 1–3, Christ is seen as the exalted Priest-King ministering to the churches. In Revelation 4–5, He is seen in heaven as the glorified Lamb of God, reigning on the throne. In Revelation 6–18, Christ is the Judge of all the earth; and in Revelation 19, He returns to earth as the conquering King of kings. The book closes with the heavenly Bridegroom ushering His bride, the church, into the glorious heavenly city.⁶

3. John states there is blessing upon all who read and heed the words of this prophecy. The word blessing translates the Greek word μακάριος *makarios*, which means *blessed* or *happy*, and is used seven times throughout the book (Rev. 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14).
4. The revelation provides information concerning God's sovereign rule over creation and mankind, either directly, or through Jesus. Jesus is called "the ruler of the kings of the earth" (Rev. 1:5), who has "dominion forever and ever" (Rev. 1:6), who is "coming with the clouds" to establish His kingdom on earth (Rev. 1:7; cf. Dan. 7:13-14), and is "the Almighty" (Rev. 1:8). This introduction frontloads the idea that Jesus is coming back to establish His kingdom on earth (Rev. 11:15; 19:11-21; 20:4-6). This is the earthly kingdom that was promised to David's son—Jesus—who will rule over the world forever (2 Sam. 7:16; Ps. 89:3-4, 34-37; Jer. 23:5-6; 33:14-15; Dan. 2:44; 7:13-14, 27; Matt. 6:10; Luke 1:31-33; Rev. 11:15; 20:4-6).

⁶ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 566.

Revelation 1:9-20

I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation [[θλίψις *thlipsis*](#) – *tribulation, affliction* = general sufferings for Christ] and kingdom and perseverance *which are* in Jesus [[cf. Acts 14:22; 2 Thess. 1:5](#)], was on the island called Patmos, because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus [[church tradition says John was exiled by Emperor Domitian](#)].¹⁰ I was in the Spirit [[ἐν πνεύματι *en pneumati*](#) – used by John to describe his visionary transport; see [Rev. 4:2; 17:3; 21:10](#)] on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like *the sound* of a trumpet,¹¹ saying, “[Write](#) [[γράφω *grapho*](#) – aor/act/imp = *to write down, record, compose*] in a book [[βιβλίον *biblion*](#) – *book, scroll*] what you see, and [send](#) [[πέμπω *pempo*](#) – aor/act/imp – *to send, dispatch*] 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.”¹² And I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands [[i.e. seven churches; see Rev. 1:20](#)];¹³ and in the middle of the lampstands one like a son of man [[Jesus Christ, Dan. 7:13; cf. Matt. 9:6; 10:23](#)], clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His breast with a golden girdle [[likely the attire of a judge](#)].¹⁴ And His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow [[symbolizing purity from sin, Isa. 1:18; Dan. 7:9](#)]; and His eyes were like a flame of fire [[perhaps eyes that judge righteously Rev. 2:18; 19:11-12](#)];¹⁵ and His feet *were* like burnished bronze [[perhaps feet that bring righteous judgment](#)], when it has been caused to glow in a furnace, and His voice *was* like the sound of many waters [[a voice of authority](#)].¹⁶ And in His right hand [[symbolizing strength and sovereignty](#)] He held seven stars [[seven angels of the churches](#)]; and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword [[ῥομφαία *rhomphaia*](#) - a Roman sword used for killing, [Rev. 2:12, 16; 6:8; 19:15, 21](#)]; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength [[like at His transfiguration; Matt. 17:2](#)].¹⁷ And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as a dead man [[he fainted](#)]. And He laid His right hand upon me [[comforting and strengthening](#)], saying, “Do not be afraid [[Divine encounters often produced fear – Judg. 13:21-23; Isa. 6:1-5; Dan. 10:9-12; Matt. 17:6-8](#)]; I am the first and the last [[merism – eternal One](#)],¹⁸ and the living One; and I was dead [[crucified](#)], and behold, I am alive forevermore [[resurrection – never to die again](#)], and I have the keys of death and of Hades [[power over death, and the place of the dead](#)].¹⁹ “Write [[γράφω *grapho*](#) – aor/act/imp] therefore the things which you have seen [[past – chapter 1 – the vision of Christ](#)], and the things which are [[present – chapters 2-3 – the seven churches](#)], and the things which shall take place after these things [[μετὰ ταῦτα *meta tauta*](#) – [future – chapters 4-22; cf. Rev. 4:1 – the events of the Tribulation, Jesus' Second Coming, the earthly kingdom, and eternal state](#)].²⁰ “As for the 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 [[the seven angels are possibly humans; see Luke 9:51-52; Jam. 2:25](#)], and the seven

lampstands are the seven churches [a lamp is to light it's environment = the light of biblical truth].

Summary:

1. The *Central Idea of the Text* is that John is commissioned to write and send a revelation *from* and *about* Jesus Christ to seven churches in Asia (Rev. 1:11).
2. Twelve times John was commanded to write what was revealed to him (Rev. 1:11, 19; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14; 14:13; 19:9; 21:5), and one time not to write (Rev. 10:4).⁷ The word *write* translates the Greek word γράφω *grapho*, which means to mark characters on the surface of material (such as paper, stone, or even a computer screen), in order to transmit thought from one person to another. The act of writing assumes intellect, volition, and the ability of the recipient to understand what is communicated. The content of John's writing is a picture of Jesus as the righteous Judge. "He judges the churches (chs. 2–3), the whole earth (chs. 4–16), Babylonianism (chs. 17–18), world rulers at Armageddon (19:19–21), and Satan (20:1–3, 10). He also judges the earth during the Millennium (20:4–6), the rebellious earth at the end of the Millennium (20:7–9), and all the unsaved dead (20:11–15)."⁸
3. Jesus mentioned seven golden lampstands (Rev. 1:12), as well as seven stars in His right hand (Rev. 1:16). Later, He explains, "the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches" (Rev 1:20). The word *angel* translates the Greek word ἄγγελος *aggelos* which means *messenger*, and can refer either to supernatural spirit beings (Rev. 7:2; 14:6), or human messengers (Luke 7:24; 9:51-52; Jam. 2:25). It seems likely these are human representatives in the church who serve in a leadership capacity. The word *lampstand* translates the Greek word λυχνία *luchnia*, which device was used to illuminate its surroundings. Jesus is the Light of the world (John 1:4-9; 8:12), and His light expels the darkness of sin (John 3:19; 12:35). The two witnesses in Revelation 11 are described as "the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth" (Rev. 11:4). Believers are connected to the One who is Light (John 12:36; 1 Thess. 5:5), choose to walk in obedience to God (1 John 1:5-7; cf. Rom. 13:12-14), fellowship with other believers (2 Cor. 6:14-15), and pursue "goodness and righteousness and truth" (Eph. 5:8-10).

The fruit of the light is those qualities that characterize God's life (i.e., the fruit that the Spirit produces). The three qualities mentioned here

⁷ Other persons were commanded by God to write what He revealed (Ex. 17:14; 34:27; Deut. 27:8; Jer. 30:1-2; 36:2; Rev. 1:11, 19), and some chose to write on their own (Luke 1:3).

⁸ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible*, Re 1:16.

are the opposite of the fruit of darkness (4:18–19). If the child of light does not walk in the light, he will not bear much of the fruit of the light (cf. John 15:1–6). He might even be outwardly indistinguishable from a child of darkness (cf. Matt. 13:24–30).⁹

⁹ Ibid., Eph 5:9–10.

Introduction to Revelation 2-3

1. Jesus is revealed as the head of the seven churches mentioned in Revelation chapters 2-3 and He provides an inspection of each.
2. Out of the seven, Jesus gave both praise and rebuke to four (Ephesus, Pergamum, Thyatira, and Sardis), praise only for two (Smyrna and Philadelphia), and rebuke only for one (Laodicea).
3. The church at Ephesus reveals that a local church that starts well (Eph. 1:15-16) may decline over time and need rejuvenation (Eph. 2:2-5).
4. Christ praised or rebuked His churches for their attitudes and behaviors (i.e. love and good works), not their buildings or programs.
5. False teachers existed in the first four churches in Revelation (Rev. 2:2, 6, 9, 14-15, 20).
6. Satan is mentioned in four of the seven letters to the churches (Rev. 2:9, 13, 24; 3:9).
7. The characteristics of these seven churches are similar to churches today.

Revelation 2:1-7

To the angel [ἄγγελος *aggelos* – messenger, most likely a human leader; cf. Luke 7:24, 27; 9:52] of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand [emphasizing sovereignty], the One who walks [περιπατέω *peripateo* – lit. walks about – emphasizing His omnipresence] among the seven golden lampstands [i.e. churches], says this: ² ‘I know [οἶδα *oida* – to have seen, or perceived; hence to know – emphasizing omniscience] your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot endure [βαστάζω *bastazo* – take up, bear, tolerate] evil men, and you put to the test [doctrinally] those who call themselves apostles [i.e. men sent by God], and they are not, and you found them to be false [2 Cor. 11:13; 1 John 4:1; perhaps the Nicolaitans mentioned in vs. 6]; ³ and you have perseverance and have endured for My name’s sake, and have not grown weary. ⁴ ‘But I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love [πρῶτος *protos* – first, chief]. ⁵ ‘Remember [μνημονεύω *mnemoneuo* – remember, to call to mind] therefore from where you have fallen [like the prodigal son; Luke 15:17-18], and repent [μετανοέω *metanoeo* – change one’s mind, or purpose] and do the deeds you did at first [“do” – ποιέω *poieo* – aor/act/imp – to make, do – i.e. direct the will to action]; or else I am coming to you [divine discipline], and will remove your lampstand out of its place [shut down the church] -- unless you repent. ⁶ ‘Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans [a group that endorsed other religions and their licentious practices], which I also hate. ⁷ ‘He who has an ear [i.e. spiritual capacity and willingness to understand], let him hear [ἀκούω *akouo* - aor/act/imp – to hear, listen] what the Spirit says to the churches [i.e. requires of all churches]. To him who overcomes [νικάω *nikao* – to prevail, conquer, overcome – pres/act/part – lit. to him who is overcoming], I will grant to eat of the tree of life [see Rev. 22:14], which is in the Paradise of God [in heaven].’

Summary:

Ephesus was the Roman capital city of Asia Minor. “Paul had evangelized it and used it as a base of operations for at least three years (Acts 18:19–21; 19; 1 Cor. 16:8). Timothy had labored there (1 Tim. 1:3) as had the Apostle John.”¹⁰ Jesus identifies Himself as the One who is present at the church at Ephesus and knows their deeds, that they do not tolerate evil men and test and reject those who falsely call themselves apostles (Rev. 2:1-2). He also recognizes their faithful perseverance during persecution (Rev. 2:3). However, in spite of their doctrinal purity and faithfulness, they had “left their first love” (Rev. 2:4). Jesus tells them to *remember, repent* (twice), and *return* to practicing the deeds they did at first (Rev. 2:5a). Christian love motivates us to good deeds, and good deeds fan the flames of

¹⁰ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible*, Re 2:1.

love. Refusal to love will result in the removal of their lampstand, which is a picture of judgment upon a stagnant church (Rev. 2:5b). Christ then offers praise for their hatred of the deeds of the Nicolaitans, a group that promoted acceptance of pagan religions, which has no place in the Christian church. Jesus then calls them to hear what the Holy Spirit says to the churches, “To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7). In one sense, we overcome the world by our faith in Jesus (1 John 5:4-5), and in another sense we overcome the world as obedient-to-the-word believers who live by faith (Jam. 1:22; Heb. 11:33; Rev. 21:7).

The Doctrine of Ears

1. Thoughts are a function of the mind, which refers to our ability to receive (through our senses), organize, and comprehend information. No one has ever seen a thought. We can observe the activity of the brain while thinking, but we cannot see the thought itself. We know thoughts exist because we have them, and because we can share them with other rational persons by means of communication, either verbally or written.
2. Talking and hearing are perhaps the most common ways thoughts are shared, and this was true at the time when the Bible was written. On several occasions Jesus said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear” (Matt. 11:15; 13:9, 43; Mark 4:9, 23; Luke 8:8; 14:35; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 13:9). Assuming normal development and birth, every person has physical ears to hear, which help to advance intellectual growth. “Let him hear” translates the Greek verb ἀκούω *akouo*, which refers to one’s capacity to receive and understand the verbal information provided by a communicator. The word also connotes attentive listening for the purpose of complying with a command. At times a parent, teacher, or supervisor will say, “Listen to me”, which really means, “Pay attention and understand what I’m saying.” The comment is often used when saying something important or issuing a command. Every instance of the verb ἀκούω *akouo* in the Gospels and the book of Revelation is in the imperative mood, which means Jesus is issuing a command to His hearers to pay attention and comply with His words.
3. To each believer in the seven churches Christ states, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29 ; 3:6, 13, 22). This means that each believer was to understand and comply with Jesus’ commands. Failure to obey would result in discipline (Rev. 2:5, 16, 22-23; 3:3, 16, 19-20).
4. Though most of us have ears to hear, not everyone has the ability to understand. At the moment of regeneration (John 3:3-10; 1 Pet. 1:3, 23), God gives every believer the spiritual capacity to receive and understand His revelation (1 Cor. 2:6-16), and to comply with His commands (Rom. 6:11-13; 1 Cor. 10:13); although, according to His sovereign purposes, there were times He concealed information from believers (Luke 9:45; 18:34; Rev. 10:4). Impediments to understanding and obedience include immaturity (Heb. 5:11-14; 1 Pet. 2:2), carnality (1 Cor. 3:1-3), and bad associations (1 Cor. 15:33; 2 Cor. 6:14). Stimulants to increase understanding and obedience include:
 - a. Submission to God and seeking His will above all else (Rom. 12:1)
 - b. Transforming our mind to think as He thinks (Rom. 12:2).
 - c. Continual study of Scripture, applying it to every aspect of life (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18).

- d. Being filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18).
- e. Walking in daily dependence on the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 21).
- f. Restoring broken fellowship with God through confession of personal sin (1 John 1:9).
- g. Taking advantage of the time God gives us to learn and grow spiritually (Eph. 5:15-17; cf. Heb. 5:12; 1 Pet. 1:17; 4:1-2).
- h. Doing good works that fan the flames of our relationship with God and others (Tit. 2:14; Heb. 10:24; Rev. 2:5).

Revelation 2:8-11

And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life [i.e. suffered unjustly and overcome], says this: ⁹ ‘I know [οἶδα *oida* – *to have seen, or perceived* – emphasizing omniscience] your tribulation [suffering] and your poverty [financial], but you are rich [spiritually; cf. [James 2:5](#)], and the blasphemy [slandering attacks] by those who say they are Jews and are not [Rom. 9:6], but are a synagogue of Satan [religious people who are governed by Satan]. ¹⁰ ‘Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil [through his servants] is about to cast some of you into prison [persecution according to God’s permissive will], that you may be tested [to determine the quality of their faith, like Job; see Job 1:6-20], and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death [as Christ had been], and I will give you the crown of life [a martyrs-reward for obedience; cf. 1 Cor. 3:13-14; Jam. 1:12]. ¹¹ ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes [1 John 5:3-4] will not [οὐ μὴ *ou me* – emphatic negative] be hurt by the second death [Lake of Fire; [Rev. 20:14](#)].’

Summary:

Smyrna was a seaport city about 40 miles north of Ephesus and had a population of nearly 100,000. It was known for its connection with myrrh, from which the city derives its name. Jesus identifies Himself as “the first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life” (Rev. 2:8). Jesus knew their persecution, and though they were financially poor, they were spiritually rich (Rev. 2:9a). He also knew about the slanders they suffered at the hands of hostile Jews, whom Jesus declared “are a synagogue of Satan” (Rev. 2:9b). That is, they belong to Satan and do his will, attacking God’s people. Ultimately, our battle is in the spiritual realm (Eph. 6:12). God permitted some Christians at Smyrna to undergo suffering for a period of ten days, promising a crown-reward for those who endure (Rev. 2:10). It is not the gift of eternal life, but the abundance of that life (John 10:10). Though these Christians might be hurt by physical suffering and death, they will never be hurt by the second death (Rev. 2:11).

Revelation 2:12-17

And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword [i.e. the authority to kill] says this: ¹³ ‘I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is [θρόνος *thronos* – *seat of sovereignty, authority, dominion*]; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith, even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. ¹⁴ ‘But I have a few things against you, because you have there some [a few believers] who hold the teaching of Balaam [who desired greed above godliness], who kept teaching Balak [the leader of Moab] to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel [to fellowship with the Moabites and be seduced by their pagan practices], to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit *acts of immorality* [πορνεῦω *porneuo* – *fornication*; see Num. 25:1-2; 31:15-16]. ¹⁵ ‘Thus you also have some [a few believers] who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans [which seems to be similar to the teaching of Balaam, promoting acceptance of pagan religions]. ¹⁶ ‘Repent therefore [i.e. deal with the few who are teaching error]; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth [discipline for those rebellious believers in the church]. ¹⁷ ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches [i.e. listen and comply]. To him who overcomes, to him I will give *some* of the hidden manna [located in the Ark of the Covenant in heaven; Rev. 11:19], and I will give him a white stone [perhaps symbolizing acceptance by Christ], and a new name written on the stone [perhaps the name of Jesus] which no one knows but he who receives it.’

Summary:

Pergamum was about 55 miles northeast of Smyrna. The city was known for its library (roughly 200,000 parchments), its manufacture of parchment, a university for medical study, and as a religious center for the Greek pagan cults of Zeus, Dionysius, Athena, Asclepius, and Roman emperor worship. The church at Pergamum received both praise and rebuke. Jesus is identified as the One who has “the sharp two-edged sword” which means He has the authority and power to kill (Rev. 2:12). He displays omniscience when telling His church, “I know where you dwell” and identifies it as the place “where Satan’s throne” is located. (Rev. 2:13a). This could be a reference to the worship of Zeus, or perhaps emperor worship, which was prevalent in Pergamum. Though a Satanic hotspot with many imposing pressures, Jesus praises them as faithful witnesses, specifically mentioning “the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells” (Rev. 2:13b). The church at Pergamum was reprimanded for not dealing with members who accepted and promoted dangerous teachings similar to those of Balaam. Balaam was a prophet of God who was hired

by Balak—the king of Moab—to curse the Israelites, but God stopped Balaam and blessed Israel instead (see Numbers 22-25). However, God’s people were defeated when the Moabites enticed them into friendly relationships that led to idolatry and sexual promiscuity (Num. 25:1-3), and this was accomplished “through the counsel of Balaam” (Num. 31:16). This social enticement that led to sin seems to be the same thing taught by the Nicolaitans (Rev. 2:14-15), and is another example of how bad associations can lead believers into sinful practices (1 Cor. 15:33; 2 Cor. 6:14-15). Jesus states He will make war with them if they do not repent of their false views and practices. Jesus promises “hidden manna” to those who overcome, which is spiritual nourishment, in contrast to the food sacrificed to idols (Rev. 2:14). “Christ is the true bread from heaven (John 6:31–33, 48–51) and that may be the idea here. Those faithful to Christ will have transcendent fellowship with him.”¹¹ Jesus also promises to give those who overcome “a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it” (Rev. 2:17). “In those days, a white stone was put into a vessel by a judge to vote acquittal for a person on trial. It was also used like a “ticket” to gain admission to a feast. Both would certainly apply to the believer in a spiritual sense: he has been declared righteous through faith in Christ, and he feasts with Christ today (Rev. 3:20) and will feast with Him in glory (Rev. 19:6–9).”¹²

The historical parallel to the church in Pergamum is the period following Constantine’s legalization of Christianity in A.D. 313 that lasted for about 300 years. When Christianity became the official religion of the empire, paganism overwhelmed it. It became hard to distinguish true Christians because people claiming to be Christians were everywhere. Many of them were practicing pagans who indulged in immoral festivals and all kinds of behavior inconsistent with the teachings of Christianity. Many writers have noted that “Pergamum” comes from the Greek word *gamos* that means marriage. This letter pictures a church married to the world rather than to Christ.¹³

¹¹ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Re 2:17.

¹² Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2, 574.

¹³ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible*, Re 2:17.

Revelation 2:18-29

And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The Son of God [ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ - occurs only here in the book of Revelation], who has eyes like a flame of fire [emphasizing righteousness], and His feet are like burnished bronze [symbolizing righteous judgment], says this: ¹⁹ ‘I know your deeds [emphasizing omniscience], and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first [an increase in good works]. ²⁰ ‘But I have *this* against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess [i.e. one who receives direct revelation from God], and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray [with false doctrine and sinful practices], so that they commit *acts of* immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols [similar to what Ahab and Jezebel in the OT did with Israel; cf. 1 Kings 16:31-33]. ²¹ ‘And I gave her time to repent [warning before judgment]; and she does not want to repent of her immorality [perpetuation of negative volition]. ²² ‘Behold, I will cast her upon a bed of *sickness* [divine judgment for rebellion], and those [her willing Christian followers] who commit [spiritual] adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. ²³ ‘And I will kill her children [Christians who follow her teaching and practices] with pestilence; and all the churches [i.e. all who see Christ’s judgment on the church at Thyatira] will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts [emphasizing omniscience]; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds [emphasizing justice]. ²⁴ ‘But I say to you [faithful Christians], the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this [false] teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan [i.e. false teachings of Jezebel, perhaps a claim to secret knowledge], as they call them-- I place no other burden on you. ²⁵ ‘Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come. ²⁶ ‘And he who overcomes [1 John 5:4-5], and he who keeps My deeds until the end [faithfully executes the Christian life], to him I will give authority over the nations [to rule with Christ; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 20:4-6]; ²⁷ and he shall rule [ποιμαίνω *poimaino* – lit. *act like a shepherd*; cf. Rev. 12:5; 19:15] 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; ²⁸ and I will give him the morning star [eternal reward – perhaps right to rule]. ²⁹ ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

Summary:

Thyatira was located about 40 miles southeast of Pergamum. Lidia was from Thyatira (Acts 16:14), and she may have been the one who took the gospel to them. Of the messages given to the seven churches, the one given to Thyatira is the longest. Jesus is presented as the “Son of God”—a phrase that occurs only here in the book of Revelation—and He is described as one “who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze” (Rev. 2:18), which pictures Him as a

righteous judge Who brings righteous judgment. As a righteous judge, Jesus commended them for the things they were doing right, which included their good **deeds, love, faith, service, and perseverance**. “In many particulars some in this church were praiseworthy. They were strong in good deeds, love for others, trust in God, service of their Savior, and patient endurance in trials. Moreover they had become even more zealous recently. Love shows itself in service, and faith demonstrates itself in perseverance through persecution.”¹⁴ However, all these good qualities and practices were overshadowed by a sinful woman named Jezebel (either her name, or descriptive term), who claimed to be a prophetess, and was teaching and leading Christians to engage in idolatry and sexual immorality, which was prevalent in Thyatira (Rev. 2:20). Her name, Jezebel, implies her values and practices were similar to Ahab’s wife, who corrupted Israel with her paganism. God gave Jezebel time to change her ways, but she refused (Rev. 2:21). Jesus then declares He will judge Jezebel and her followers and personally administer sickness and death unless they turn from her practices (Rev. 2:22-23). To those who do not follow Jezebel and her teachings—what Jesus calls “the deep things of Satan”—He places no other demands (Rev. 2:24). These believers were to stay in the church, as a faithful remnant, and “hold fast until I come” (Rev. 2:25). To those who overcome and keep His deeds, demonstrating righteous character, Jesus promised to give authority to rule with Him in His future kingdom (Rev. 2:26-27). The “morning star” could be the right to rule in close relationship with Jesus (Rev. 2:28; cf. 22:16). Jesus finishes His remarks to the Christian church at Thyatira, saying, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev. 2:29), which means the believers were to listen and comply with His commands.

¹⁴ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible*, Re 2:19.

Revelation 3:1-6

Sardis was about 33 miles southeast of Thyatira. “Important industries included jewelry, dye, and textiles, which had made the city wealthy. From a religious standpoint it was a center of pagan worship and site of a temple of Artemis, which ruins still remain (cf. comments on 2:1 regarding another temple of Artemis).”¹⁵ The city was also famous for its location, and its citizens thought it was militarily impregnable, so rather than be watchful, they became overly confident and careless. However, it was invaded and captured by the Persians around 550 B.C. and again by the Greeks about 218 B.C.

And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: He who has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars [i.e. messengers of the seven churches – [Rev. 1:20](#)], says this: ‘I know your deeds [omniscience], that you have a name that you are alive [a false reputation], but you are dead [[νεκρός nekros](#) – most likely a reference to being out of fellowship with God].² ‘Wake up [[γίνου γρηγορῶν](#) – or *be alert, be watchful*] and strengthen [[στηρίζω sterizo](#) – *strengthen, establish* – aor/act/imp] the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed [i.e. divinely assigned tasks; cf. [Eph. 2:10](#)] in the sight of My God.³ ‘Remember therefore what you have received and heard [i.e. recall biblical teaching]; and keep it [i.e. guard it, watch over it], and repent [turn back]. If therefore you will not wake up [3rd class condition – possible future], I will come like a thief [unannounced and unexpected], and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you [for discipline].⁴ ‘But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments [i.e. a faithful remnant]; and they will walk with Me in white; for they are worthy [[ἄξιος axios](#) – *worthy, deserving* – because they executed their spiritual duties].⁵ ‘He who overcomes [[νικάω nikao](#) – *to conquer, prevail* – i.e. is saved and obedient] shall thus be clothed in white garments [a reward for obedient saints; see [Rev. 19:8](#)]; and I will not [[οὐ μὴ ou me](#) – emphatic negative = *not never*] erase his name from the book of life [the ledger of the saved], and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels.⁶ ‘He who has an ear [the spiritually sensitive believer], let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’”

Summary:

Jesus states the church has a public name that they are “alive”, but in fact most were abiding in death. The church was spiritually alive, so this likely refers to *carnal death* (Luke 15:24, 32; James 1:14-15), which meant they were out of fellowship with God and operating according to their sinful natures (Rom. 6:6;

¹⁵ John F. Walvoord, “Revelation,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 938.

13:14; Col. 3:9). Similarly, there are many churches today that reside in beautiful structures and have many programs, yet do not teach God's word and show little signs of spiritual life. These believers were alive, but asleep. The call from Jesus was to "wake up and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die" (Rev. 3:2a). He declares, "I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God" (Rev. 3:2b). This alludes to the idea that all believers have specific works that God creates and calls us to walk in, but we must accept those opportunities (Eph. 2:10). He then calls them to "remember" what they had heard, which refers to biblical teaching that guides the Christian life; and, they were to "keep it" close and safe (i.e. guard it), and "repent" by turning back to a walk of obedience (Rev. 3:3a). He warns them with a threat of judgment, saying, "If therefore you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you" (Rev. 3:3b). God will send discipline upon the believer who turns away from Him (Heb. 12:5-11). Jesus then addresses the faithful remnant within the church, those "who have not soiled their garments" by worldly living (Rev. 3:4a), and declares, "they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy" (Rev. 3:4b). This implies reward for obedience. Jesus states, "He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels" (Rev. 3:5). "While this passage may imply that a name could be erased from the book of life, actually it only gives a positive affirmation that their names will not be erased."¹⁶ He concludes, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev. 3:6). This statement calls believers to listen and to obey what is communicated.

¹⁶ Ibid., 938.

Revelation 3:7-13

Philadelphia—which means *brotherly love*—was located about 28 miles southeast of Sardis and was named after Attalus Philadelphus, a former king of Pergamum. The city was known for its pagan temples and was sometimes referred to as *little Athens*. It was also known for its earthquakes, most notably, one which destroyed the city in 17 B.C. Afterwards, some of the residents moved outside the city for fear of another disaster.

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy [*ἅγιος hagios – sacred, holy, set apart; cf. 1 Pet. 1:15*], who is true [*ἀληθινός alethinos – true, genuine – in contrast to the many false gods people worshipped*], who has the key of David [*authority; cf. Isa. 22:20-22*], who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens [*i.e. controls opportunities*], says this: ⁸ ‘I know your deeds [*omniscience*]. Behold, I have put before you an open door [*an opportunity for ministry*] which no one can shut, because you have a little power [*sufficient for the need*], and have kept My word [*faithful obedience*], and have not denied My name [*in spite of public pressure*]. ⁹ ‘Behold, I will cause *those* of the synagogue of Satan [*i.e. Jewish unbelievers in league with Satan to oppose the gospel*], who say that they are Jews [*God’s true representatives*], and are not [*deny Messiah – Rom. 9:6-8*], but lie -- behold, I will make them to come and bow down at your feet, and to know that I have loved you [*perhaps in the future; see Phil. 2:10-11*]. ¹⁰ ‘Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that *hour* which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth [*i.e. the great tribulation*]. ¹¹ ‘I am coming quickly [*i.e. in a quick manner – 1 Cor. 15:51-52*]; hold fast what you have [*be faithful until death*], in order that no one take your crown [*στέφανος stephanos – crown, wreath, i.e. heavenly reward, see 1 Cor. 3:10-15*]. ¹² ‘He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name [*giving a name signified ownership*]. ¹³ ‘He who has an ear [*the individual believer who is spiritually sensitive*], let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

Summary:

Jesus presents Himself as the One who is holy and true, which means He is worthy to judge the church at Philadelphia. He possesses the “key of David” (Rev. 3:7; cf. Isa. 22:22), which means He has the authority to open and close doors of opportunity. He commends the Christians at Philadelphia for their deeds, saying, “I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name” (Rev. 3:8). The

Christians at Philadelphia were under persecution from Jewish unbelievers who had aligned with Satan and opposed the gospel message. To these, Jesus said, “I will make them to come and bow down at your feet, and to know that I have loved you” (Rev. 3:9). This could be an allusion to a future judgment when all shall bow the knee in recognition of Jesus as Lord (Phil. 2:10). Because of their faithfulness, Jesus promised, “I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that *hour* which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth” (Rev. 3:10). “This is an explicit promise that the Philadelphia church will not endure the hour of trial which is unfolded, beginning in Revelation 6. Christ was saying that the Philadelphia church would not enter the future time of trouble; He could not have stated it more explicitly.”¹⁷ When Jesus comes, He will come quickly, and will reward faithful Christians (Rev. 3:11). To those who overcome, Jesus promises, “I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name” (Rev. 3:12). “The symbolism in this verse would be especially meaningful to people who lived in constant danger of earthquakes: the stability of the pillar, no need to go out or to flee, a heavenly city that nothing could destroy. Ancient cities often honored great leaders by erecting pillars with their names inscribed on them. God’s pillars are not made of stone, because there is no temple in the heavenly city (Rev. 21:22). His pillars are faithful people who bear His name for His glory (Gal. 2:9).”¹⁸ Those with capacity to hear were to listen and comply with the words of Jesus (Rev. 3:13)

The Doctrine of the Open Door

Throughout the New Testament, an “open door” refers to a divinely orchestrated opportunity for sharing the gospel and engaging in Christian ministry (Acts 14:25-27). Scripture also reveals, at least one time, where the Lord closed an opportunity for ministry (Acts 16:6-7), but then opened another (Acts 16:9-10). An “open door” for ministry can have opposition (1 Cor. 16:7-9), does not remove everyday concerns about life (2 Cor. 2:12-13), should be sought with prayer (Col. 4:2-3), and once opened cannot be shut by people (Rev. 3:8). As God’s people, we do not create occasions for Christian ministry; we simply accept those provided for us by the Lord.

¹⁷ John F. Walvoord, “Revelation,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 939.

¹⁸ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2, 579.

Revelation 3:14-22

Laodicea was a church that had been in existence for nearly 30 years when John wrote the book of Revelation, for Paul had mentioned Laodicea in his letter to the church at Colossae (Col. 2:1; 4:13-16), which was written about A.D. 60-62. This would mean that much of John's audience was a second generation group of believers. Laodicea is the last of the seven churches mentioned in Revelation. Its location was about 45 miles southeast of Philadelphia. Laodicea was a very wealthy city and known as a center for banking, cloth, and medicine (eye salve). Like the other churches mentioned previously, the church in Laodicea had been influenced by its surrounding culture. This church receives only rebuke from the Lord Jesus.

And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen [*ἀμήν amen – so be it – the One who is right*], the faithful and true Witness [*in contrast to false prophets*], the Beginning [*ἀρχή arche – beginning, ruler, originator*] of the creation of God [*i.e. emphasizing His authority over all creation; cf. Col. 1:16*], says this: ¹⁵ ‘I know your deeds [*omniscience*], that you are neither cold nor hot [*neither refreshing nor therapeutic*]; I would that you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ ‘So because you are lukewarm [*providing no benefit*], and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth [*ἐμέω emeo – vomit*]. ¹⁷ ‘Because you say [*self-estimation*], “I am rich, and have become wealthy [*perhaps because of the local banking industry*], and have need of nothing [*perceived independence*],” and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked [*spiritually destitute*], ¹⁸ I advise you to buy from Me [*i.e. give something to get something*] gold refined by fire [*riches free from impurities*], that you may become rich, and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, and *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see [*spiritual enlightenment*]. ¹⁹ ‘Those whom I love [*believers*], I reprove and discipline [*Heb. 12:5-11; cf. Ps. 119:71*]; be zealous therefore, and repent [*turn back to relying on the Lord*]. ²⁰ ‘Behold, I stand at the door and knock [*standing outside*]; if anyone [*a rebellious believer*] hears My voice and opens the door [*turns back to obedience*], I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me [*dining = a picture of fellowship*]. ²¹ ‘He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne [*divine rewards*], as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. ²² ‘He who has an ear [*the individual believer who is spiritually sensitive*], let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’” (Rev. 3:14-22)

Summary:

Jesus is described as “The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God” (Rev. 3:14). This means that what He says is true and comes

to pass as He promises. As omniscient God, Jesus knew the “deeds” of the Laodiceans, which speak of their Christian works, being “neither cold nor hot” (Rev. 3:15). This reference was an allusion to Laodicea’s warm water supply which was piped in from Colossae and Hierapolis. The water from Colossae started out cold, and the water from Hierapolis started out hot, but it was tepid by the time it reached Laodicea and was neither refreshing nor therapeutic. In comparison, the Christians at Laodicea were neither refreshing nor therapeutic to others as God intended. Because they were “lukewarm” (Rev. 3:16), Jesus said He would vomit them out of His mouth, which pictures strong disapproval. A second criticism leveled against the church at Laodicea was that they were saying to themselves, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing” (Rev. 3:17a). Apparently they had embraced the values of their surrounding culture, and though they’d become rich by worldly standards, Jesus’ estimation was that they were “wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked” (Rev. 3:17b). The solution to their spiritual poverty was to buy from Jesus “gold refined by fire” which would make them spiritually rich, and “white garments” which would cover the shame of their nakedness, and “eye salve” that would heal their spiritual blindness (Rev. 3:18). The Christians at Laodicea were called to give in order to get, and this meant nothing less than the sacrifice of their lives, time, and resources in exchange for spiritual wealth, honor, and wisdom from the Lord. Though salvation is free, discipleship is very costly, but the rewards are tremendous and lasting. Jesus then states, “Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore and repent” (Rev. 3:19). Though the church is nauseating to Jesus, He still loves them and desires fellowship with them, and if they would open their lives to Him and welcome Him in, He would fellowship with them and things would be better (Rev. 3:20). To the overcomer, Jesus promises future reward, saying, “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” (Rev. 3:21). And finally, He states to individual believers, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev. 3:22). One could argue that the church at Laodicea represents many modern churches today that prioritize opulent buildings and community programs, while being ignorant of their spiritual poverty.

Revelation 4:1-11

Revelation chapters 4 & 5 provide a prologue to the rest of the book, giving insights into heaven, showing it is theocentric and authoritative, and that God is worthy of praise.

After these things [Μετὰ ταῦτα *meta tauta* – a literary marker showing chronological sequence; cf. Rev. 1:19; 19:1; 20:3] I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven [an opening for heavenly insights], and the first voice which I had heard, like *the sound* of a trumpet speaking with me, said, “Come up here [perhaps a picture of the rapture], and I will show you what must [δεῖ *dei* – necessarily] take place after these things.”² Immediately I was in the Spirit [perhaps a state of spiritual sensitivity to receive divine revelation]; and behold, a throne [θρόνος *thronos* – a seat of authority; mentioned 18x in chapters 4-5, and 45x in book] was standing in heaven, and One [God the Father] sitting on the throne.³ And He who was sitting *was* like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and *there was* a rainbow around the throne [symbolizing God’s mercy to men; Gen. 9:11-17], like an emerald in appearance.⁴ And around the throne *were* twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones *I saw* twenty-four elders sitting [probably representatives of the church], clothed in white garments [picturing righteousness; Rev. 3:4, 18], and golden crowns on their heads [στέφανος *stephanos* – victory rewards; cf. 1 Cor. 3:10-15; 2 Tim. 4:8; Jas. 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4].⁵ And from the throne proceed flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder [the sights and sounds of an approaching storm which signify God’s voice of judgment; cf. Ex. 9:23; 1 Sam. 7:10; 12:17-18; Rev. 8:5; 11:19; 16:18]. And *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God;⁶ and before the throne *there was*, as it were, a sea of glass like crystal [Ezek. 1:22]; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures [probably angelic beings; cf. Ezek. 1:4-10] full of eyes in front and behind [eyes = insight].⁷ And the first creature *was* like a lion [strong], and the second creature like a calf [creature of service], and the third creature had a face like that of a man [intelligence], and the fourth creature *was* like a flying eagle [swift].⁸ And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within [wisdom]; and day and night they do not cease to say, “Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come [like the seraphim mention in Isaiah 6:2-3].”⁹ And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever,¹⁰ the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever [worship is common in Revelation; cf. Rev. 4:8, 11; 5:9-13; 7:12-17; 11:15-18; 12:10-12; 15:3-4; 16:5-7; 18:2-8; 19:2-6], and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying,¹¹ “Worthy [ἄξιος *axios* – worthy, deserving] art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory

and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created.”

Summary:

The *Central Idea of the Text* is that God is portrayed in heaven, seated on His throne, as the sovereign Lord of creation who is worthy of worship. God’s sovereign authority is a common theme throughout Scripture (1 Chron. 29:11; Ps. 115:3; 135:6; Isa. 45:5-7; Dan. 2:21; 4:35; Acts 17:26-28). The chapter opens with John being called up to heaven (Rev. 4:1), and sees God seated on His throne (Rev. 4:2), which is beautiful in appearance, like precious stones and a rainbow (Rev. 4:3). John then witnessed twenty-four elders who were seated on twenty-four thrones which were around the throne of God, and these were “clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads” (Rev. 4:4). Some have thought the twenty-four elders are angels, but this seems unlikely, as they wear white clothing and crowns which picture righteous living and victory over sin (2 Tim. 4:8; Jas. 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4), and angels are never described this way in Scripture. Others have thought the twenty-four elders represent all the saints of Scripture, which would include the twelve patriarchs of Israel as well as the twelve apostles of the Church. This is possible, as they are described as those “purchased for God” with the blood of Christ (Rev 5:9), and this would include all the saints of all time. It seems more likely that the twenty-four elders represent the Christian church because of the references to the *white clothing* (Rev. 3:4, 18), and *crowns* (Rev. 2:10; 3:11; cf. 2 Tim. 4:8; Jas. 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4), which are never said to be given to OT saints, only Christians who live victorious lives. John then states, “Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder” (Rev 4:5a), which picture God’s approaching judgments (cf. Ex. 9:23; 1 Sam. 7:10; 12:17-18; Rev. 8:5; 11:19; 16:18). The “seven Spirits of God” (Rev. 4:5b) could represent either God the Holy Spirit (Ryrie), or seven principle angels who serve God (Constable). John then describes the landscape before God’s throne as something “like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind” (Rev. 4:6). Based on their appearance and behavior (Rev. 4:7-8), the four living creatures seem to be angels like those described by Isaiah (Isa. 6:2-3) and Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:4-10), who do not cease to worship God, saying, “Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come” (Rev. 4:8b). Following the lead of the angels, the twenty-four elders worship God too (Rev. 4:9-10), and will cast their crowns before the Lord, saying, “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created” (Rev. 4:11).

Revelation 5:1-14

And I saw in [ἐπί *epi* – *on, upon*] the right hand of Him [God the Father] who sat on the throne a book [βιβλίον *biblion* – *scroll*] written inside and on the back [full on both sides], sealed up with seven seals [perhaps referring to the book mentioned to Daniel; Dan. 12:4, 9].² And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice [for all to hear], “Who is worthy [ἄξιος *axios* – *worthy, deserving*; i.e. has the right] to open the book and to break its seals?”³ And no one in heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth [all creation], was able to open the book, or to look into it.⁴ And I *began* to weep greatly, because no one was found worthy to open the book, or to look into it;⁵ and one of the [24] elders said to me, “Stop weeping; behold, the Lion [1x in Revelation] that is from the tribe of Judah [Gen. 49:8-10], the Root of David [Isa. 11:1, 10], has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals.”⁶ And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb [27x in Revelation] standing, as if slain, having seven horns [perfect power; cf. Num. 23:22; Deut. 33:17] and seven eyes [perfect wisdom; cf. Zech. 4:10], which are the seven Spirits of God [cf. Rev. 1:4, 4:5], sent out into all the earth.⁷ And He [the Son] came, and He took *it* out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne [transfer of authority – signifying judgment will begin – which is followed by an outpouring of praise].⁸ And when He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb [expression of worship], having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints [cf. Ps. 141:1-2].⁹ And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals [execute righteous judgment]; for You were slain, and purchased [ἀγοράζω *agorazo* – *buy for a price*] for God with Thy blood *men* from every tribe [lineage] and tongue [language] and people [race] and nation [geographical location].¹⁰ “And Thou hast made them *to be* a kingdom and priests [in service of praise] to our God; and they will reign upon the earth [during the millennium].”¹¹ And 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 myriads of myriads [lit. ten thousand times ten thousand], and thousands of thousands,¹² saying with a loud voice [worship in heaven is often corporate and loud], “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing [seven qualities belonging to Christ].”¹³ 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 [all creation; cf. vs. 3], I heard saying, “To Him who sits on the throne [God the Father], and to the Lamb [God the Son], *be* blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.”¹⁴ And the four living creatures kept saying, “Amen.” [in agreement] And the elders fell down [a humble posture] and worshiped.

Summary:

The *Central Idea of the Text* is that Jesus is worthy to open the scroll with the seven seals of judgment, and all creation worships Him. The heavenly scene opens with God the Father seated on His throne in heaven with a book, with writing on both sides, on His right hand, which contained seven seals (Rev. 5:1). A question was posed by a mighty angel, asking, “Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?” (Rev. 5:2). The response was that no one in all creation was worthy (Rev. 5:3), and this caused John to weep greatly (Rev. 5:4). But just when all seemed hopeless, one of the elders instructed John to stop weeping, because Jesus, “the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals” (Rev. 5:5). Jesus is then described as having seven horns and seven eyes, which could be seven principle spirits that do God’s will (Constable). Jesus then came and took the book from God the Father (Rev. 5:6), which moved the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders to fall down and worship Him (Rev. 5:8). They sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them *to be* a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth” (Rev. 5:9-10). This song anticipates the coming righteous judgments that God will pour out on the earth because of the wickedness of mankind. The praise initiated by the four living creatures and twenty-four elders is magnified by an incalculable number of angels described as “myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands” (Rev. 5:11). The content of their song is, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing” (Rev. 5:12). Lastly, all creation, in heaven and earth, joins in the praise, saying, “To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, *be* blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever” (Rev. 5:13). The chapter concludes with the original four living creatures and twenty-four elders saying, “Amen”, and then “the elders fell down and worshiped” (Rev. 5:14).

In Revelation chapter five, worship is a response to divine revelation – “I saw” & “I looked” (Rev. 5:6, 11), involving instruments (Rev. 5:8), is verbal – “sang” & “saying” (Rev. 5:9, 12), is given both by angels and men (Rev. 5:11-14), is loud – “with a loud voice” (Rev. 5:12), is theocentric – focused on God (Rev. 5:12), acknowledges God’s worth (Rev. 5:12), and is reverential (Rev. 5:14). Throughout the book of Revelation, God is worshipped because He is the Creator (Rev. 4:11), Who is worthy to rule (Rev. 5:9-13; 11:15-18; 12:10-12), Who comforts those who suffer (Rev. 7:12-17), Who will pour out His wrath on the wicked (Rev. 16:5-7; 18:2-8; cf. Rom. 12:19; Rev. 6:10-11), and Who is righteous in all His actions (Rev. 15:3-4; 19:1-6).

Preview of Coming Judgments

THE SEAL JUDGMENTS 6

- 1st - COLD WAR
- 2d - OPEN WAR
- 3d - FAMINE
- 4th - DEATH
- 5th - MARTYRDOM
- 6th - DISTURBANCES
- 7th - (8:1-6)



THE TRUMPET JUDGMENTS 8-9

- 1st - EARTH AFFECTED
- 2d - SEA AFFECTED
- 3d - WATERS AFFECTED
- 4th - HEAVENS AFFECTED
- 5th - MEN AFFECTED
- 6th - DEATH
- 7th - (11:15-19)



THE BOWL JUDGMENTS 16

- 1st - SORES
- 2d - SEA AFFECTED
- 3d - RIVERS AFFECTED
- 4th - SCORCHING
- 5th - DARKNESS
- 6th - EUPHRATES DRIED UP
- 7th - DESTRUCTION



What is the relationship of the events of Revelation to Christ's sermon on the end times? (Matt. 24–25) As J. Dwight Pentecost points out (*Things to Come*, pp. 280–82), the order of events in Revelation and the order of events in Matthew are strikingly similar: (a) war (Matt. 24:6–7; Rev. 6:3–4), (b) famine (Matt. 24:7; Rev. 6:5–6), (c) death (Matt. 24:7–9; Rev. 6:7–8), (d) martyrdom (Matt. 24:9–10, 16–22; Rev. 6:9–11), (e) the sun and the moon darkened with stars falling (Matt. 24:29; Rev. 6:12–14), (f) divine judgment (Matt. 24:32–25:26; Rev. 6:15–17). It should be obvious that the events of Revelation have their background in previous prophecies, which aids in interpreting John's symbolic revelation.¹⁹

¹⁹ John F. Walvoord, "Revelation," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 947.

Revelation 6:1-17

Revelation 6 contains the seven Seal judgments of God on the earth and prepares the way for the Trumpet judgments (8-9), and bowl judgments that follow (16). In these judgments God is controlling the events of the Tribulation and dealing out judgment on the arrogant and rebellious who oppose Him. God's judgment on earth will end with the return of Christ who will "rule the nations with a rod of iron" (Rev. 12:5; 19:1-6).

And I saw when the Lamb [Jesus] broke one of the seven seals [unleashing judgment], and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, "Come."² And I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he [probably antichrist] who sat on it had a bow; and a [victor's] crown was given [δίδωμι *didomi* – to give – aor/pas/ind] to him [delegated authority]; and he went out conquering, and to conquer [to subdue mankind].³ And when He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come."⁴ And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take [circumstantial] peace from the earth, and that *men* should slay one another [in war]; and a great sword was given to him [delegated authority to kill].⁵ And when He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, "Come." And I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand [symbolizing economic control].⁶ And I heard as it were a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius [nutrition commodities = a day's wage]; and do not harm the oil and the wine [affordable only for the wealthy]."⁷ And when He broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come."⁸ And I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades [the place of departed unbelievers] was following with him. And authority was given to them [both have delegated authority] over a fourth of the earth [25% of humanity], to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth [a variety of means to bring about death].⁹ And when He broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God [likely martyrs who died during the first part of the Tribulation], and because of the testimony which they had maintained [did not compromise their faith during a time of persecution];¹⁰ and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth [they petition God to avenge them]?"¹¹ And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer [comforted and asked to be patient], until *the number of* their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, should be completed also [God permits the persecution and killing of believers].¹² And I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great

earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth *made* of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; ¹³ and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. ¹⁴ And the sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. ¹⁵ And the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man [every class of people], hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; ¹⁶ and they said to the mountains and to the rocks [the prayer of the rebellious], “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne [God the Father], and from the wrath of the Lamb [biblical paradox]; ¹⁷ for the great day of their wrath [Father and Son] has come; and who is able to stand [they willfully continue in open rebellion and would rather die than submit]?”

Summary:

In Revelation 6:1-17 Jesus breaks six of the seven seals on the scroll and brings intentional and precise judgment upon the rebellious of the earth. The first judgment is a rider on a white horse—probably the antichrist—who is described as one who “had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer” (Rev. 6:2; cf. Matt. 24:6-7a). His authority to be victorious—like all human authority— is derived from heaven’s throne (Rom. 13:1). The second rider came out on a red horse and to him “it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that *men* should slay one another” (Rev. 6:4; cf. Matt. 24:7b). The third rider came on a black horse and “had a pair of scales in his hand” (Rev. 6:5), which signifies economic control. Under this judgment a single day’s meal will cost a whole day’s wages (Rev. 6:6). The fourth rider is Death, and John tells us that Hades followed him, and “Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth” (Rev. 6:8). *Death* destroys the body, and *Hades* scoops up the soul. The breaking of the fifth seal shifts from an earthly scene to a heavenly one, in which John reports, “I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained” (Rev. 6:9). These are probably believers who are martyred during the first half of the Tribulation. Their cry to God is, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” (Rev. 6:10; cf. 2 Thess. 1:6-8). John reveals God’s comfort to them, saying, “there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until *the number of* their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also” (Rev. 6:11). Their request for vengeance will be answered by God. The sixth seal brings cataclysmic disaster in the heavens and earth which cause earthquakes, affecting the sun, moon, and perhaps shifting tectonic plates which cause

mountains to move (Rev. 6:12-14). The rebellious will try to hide themselves from God's wrath (Rev. 6:15), praying to the mountains and the rocks, saying, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (Rev. 6:16-17). Their prayer is irrational, as they seek to hide from Him who is omnipresent, and who promises final judgment upon the wicked (Rev. 20:11-15).

Revelation 7:1-17

Revelation chapter 6 presented six of the seven seal judgments (Rev. 6:1-17), and is followed in Revelation 7 with an interlude in heaven which includes the sealing of the 144,000 Jewish believers (Rev. 7:1-8), and a worship scene that includes martyred saints (Rev. 7:9-17).

After this [the breaking of the six seals] I saw four angels [angels are mentioned 67x in Revelation] standing at the four corners of the earth [i.e. the four directions of the compass], holding back the four winds of the earth [restraining natural forces], so that no wind should blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree. ² And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun [i.e. from the East], having the seal [σφραγίς *sphragis* – the instrument with which one seals] of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, ³ saying, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed [σφραγίζω *sphragizo* – a seal, identifying mark; cf. Eph. 4:30] the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads [identified by God as servant-believers].” ⁴ And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel [Jewish believers]: ⁵ from the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand *were* sealed, from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand, from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand, ⁶ from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand, from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand, from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand, ⁷ from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand, from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand, from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand, ⁸ from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand, from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand, from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand *were* sealed. ⁹ After these things [the sealing of the 144,000 Jewish believers] I looked, and behold, a great multitude [of Gentile believers], which no one could count, from every nation and *all* tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes [i.e. redeemed persons], and palm branches *were* in their hands; ¹⁰ and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” ¹¹ And all the angels were standing around the throne and *around* the [24] elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying, “Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, *be* to our God forever and ever. Amen.” ¹³ And one of the elders answered, saying to me, “These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and from where have they come?” ¹⁴ And I said to him, “My lord, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation [martyred saints; cf. Matt. 24:21], and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb [a biblical paradox]. ¹⁵ “For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple [free from harm]; and He who sits on the

throne shall spread His tabernacle over them [divine protection].¹⁶ “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun beat down on them, nor any heat [not experience the pressures of life];¹⁷ for the Lamb in the center of the throne shall be their shepherd [a biblical paradox], and shall guide them to springs of the water of life; and God shall wipe every tear from their eyes [great compassion].”

Summary:

Revelation 7 opens with the sealing of 144,000 Jewish believers who will serve God during the Tribulation (Rev. 7:1-8), and then presents a heavenly scene of believers who worship God and receive His care (Rev. 7:9-17). Revelation 7 is probably best seen as a parenthesis in the chronology of events, since the seventh seal will not be opened until Revelation 8:1. The opening scene presents an angel speaking to four other angels—who have the power to harm the earth—saying to them, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads” (Rev. 7:3). These bond-servants are described as Jewish believers, “one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel” (Rev. 7:4; cf. 5-8). The scene shifts to heaven where John beholds “a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and *all* tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches *were* in their hands” (Rev. 7:9). These are very thankful saying, “Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb” (Rev. 7:10). Joining in their worship are angels, the four living creatures and elders (Rev. 7:11), and they say, “Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, *be* to our God forever and ever. Amen” (Rev. 7:12). Perhaps John was curious about those who were dressed in white clothes, and this explains why one of the elders approached him and asked, “These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and from where have they come?” (Rev. 7:13), and John answered that he did not know (Rev. 7:14a). The elder replied, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:14b). These are martyrs who die during the tribulation, who wear robes that have been cleansed and made spiritually white by the blood of the Lamb. The elder explains further, “For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne shall spread His tabernacle over them” (Rev. 7:15). This is a picture of unrestrained service to God with the blessing of perfect protection. Further, these saints will not suffer privation or persecution ever again, as the elder reveals, “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb in the center of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them to springs of the water of life; and God shall wipe

every tear from their eyes” (Rev. 7:16-17). Jesus will forever be their Shepherd, protecting and providing for their every need.

Revelation 8:1-13

And when He broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour [[like the quiet before the storm](#)].² And I saw the seven angels who stand before God [[ready to do His will](#)]; and seven trumpets were given to them [[trumpets signify something important will follow; cf. Ex. 19:16; 20:18; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess.4:16](#)].³ And another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne [[cf. Ps. 141:2; Rev. 5:8](#)].⁴ And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand.⁵ 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 peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake [[after the prayers ascend, the judgments descend; cf. Rev. 6:9-11](#)].⁶ And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them.⁷ And the first sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood [[of the saints?](#)], and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up [[1/3 destruction demonstrates the control of God](#)].⁸ And the second angel sounded, and *something* like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood [[Ex. 7:14-22](#)];⁹ and a third of the creatures, which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed.¹⁰ And the third angel sounded, and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters [[fresh waters polluted](#)];¹¹ and the name of the star is called Wormwood [[Deut. 29:18; Jer. 9:13-15; 23:13-15](#)]; and a third of the waters became wormwood; and many men died from the waters, because they were made bitter.¹² And the fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were smitten [[impacting light sources](#)], so that a third of them might be darkened and the day might not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way [[Luke 21:25](#)].¹³ And I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe [[three woes](#)], to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound [[warning the last three judgments are more severe than the previous ones](#)]!"

Summary:

Revelation 8 opens with a scene in heaven in which there was silence for about half an hour, which perhaps anticipates the approaching storm of judgments that are coming (Rev. 8:1). Afterwards, John saw seven angels who were given seven trumpets, which judgments will be poured out upon the earth (Rev. 8:2). Part of God's judgment upon the earth is in response to the prayers of the saints; for after

their prayers have ascended, His judgments will descend (Rev. 6:9-11; 8:3-5; cf. 2 Thess. 1:6).

Who are the saints whose prayers are being heard here? At the very least they are saints of the Tribulation who are living on the earth and who pray to God for an outpouring of His wrath on the godless rebels on the earth. But they may include the saints of all time whose longing petitions for the coming of the Lord's kingdom are now about to be answered.²⁰

The judgments originate from heaven and are sent to the earth to judge those who are in rebellion against God. Four of the seven angels sounded judgments against the earth, burning up trees and grass (Rev. 8:6-7), against the sea, creatures in it, and ships (Rev. 8:8-9), against rivers and springs, poisoning the waters (Rev. 8:10-11), and the sun, moon and stars, diminishing the light sources of the earth (Rev. 8:12).

The first four trumpet judgments are “natural” in that they affect the land, the saltwater, the fresh water, and the heavenly bodies. The fifth and sixth judgments involve the release of demonic forces that first torment, and then kill. The last of the trumpet judgments (Rev. 11:15–19) creates a crisis among all the nations of the world.²¹

Finally, there was a pronouncement concerning the last three judgments, describing them as three woes (Rev. 8:13). The first woe unleashes the locusts from the abyss (Rev. 9:1-12), the second woe releases the four angels imprisoned at the river Euphrates which kills a third of mankind (Rev. 9:13-18; cf. 11:14), and the third woe occurs when Satan is cast out of heaven to the earth (Rev. 11:14; 12:12).

²⁰ Charles C. Ryrie, *Revelation, Everyman's Bible Commentary*, 66.

²¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2, 593.

Revelation 9:1-21

And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star [an unusual angel, perhaps Satan] from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the key of the bottomless pit [ἄβυσσος abussos – abyss; a demonic prison; cf. Luke 8:31; Rev. 9:11] was given to him.² And he opened the bottomless pit [ἄβυσσος abussos – abyss]; and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit.³ And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth [considering their prison, they are most likely demons described as locusts]; and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power.⁴ And they were told that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads [unbelievers; cf. Rev. 7:2-3].⁵ And they were not permitted to kill anyone, but to torment for five months; and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man.⁶ And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; and they will long to die and death flees from them [no suicides].⁷ And the appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle; and on their heads, as it were, crowns like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men.⁸ And they had hair like the hair of women, and their teeth were like the teeth of lions.⁹ And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle.¹⁰ And they have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months.¹¹ They have as king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon [Abaddon and Apollyon = destroyer].¹² The first woe is past [i.e. the fifth trumpet judgment]; behold, two woes are still coming after these things.¹³ And the sixth angel sounded [the seventh angel does not sound until Rev. 11:15 after the interlude that occurs in Rev. 10:1-11:14], and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,¹⁴ one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four [fallen] angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.”¹⁵ And the four [fallen] angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year [specific time], were released, so that they might kill a third of mankind [Rev. 6:7-8 declared that 1/4 of humanity would be killed, and here 1/3 of remaining humanity would be destroyed = 1/2 of humanity killed up to this point].¹⁶ And the number of the armies of the horsemen was two hundred million [either demons, or demon-possessed people]; I heard the number of them.¹⁷ And this is how I saw in the vision the horses and those who sat on them: *the riders* had breastplates *the color* of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone [red, blue, yellow]; and the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceed fire and smoke and brimstone [judgment].¹⁸ A third of mankind was killed by these three plagues, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone [perhaps volcanic activity triggered by demons], which proceeded out of their mouths.¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ And the rest of mankind [unbelievers], who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands [which is the cause of their receiving judgment], so as not to worship demons, and the idols [substitutes for God] of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk [unable to save]; ²¹ and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts.

Summary:

In Revelation chapter 9, John reveals the sounding of the fifth and sixth trumpets—the first and second “woes”—which bring God’s continued judgment upon the world. John opens with a scene in which he says, “I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him” (Rev. 9:1). This “star” is an angel sent to release demonic creatures from their current state of captivity (Rev. 9:2-3), and once released are sent on a specific mission to torment “only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads” (Rev. 9:4), and are “not permitted to kill anyone, but to torment for five months” (Rev. 9:5). Their authority is limited concerning their target, the extent of the injury inflicted, and the duration of their activity. The pain imposed by these creatures will prompt men to seek death, but it will flee from them (Rev. 9:6). John then provides a detailed description of these creatures as having features like a locust, with faces of men, long hair like women, teeth like a lion, breastplates of iron, wings, and tails like a scorpion (Rev. 9:7-10). The leader of this army is called Abaddon, and Apollyon, which means “destroyer” (Rev. 9:11). The fifth trumpet concludes the first “woe” (Rev. 9:12). Then the sixth angel sounded his trumpet in heaven, and he was commanded to release “the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates” (Rev. 9:14). These four angels are given authority to kill a third of mankind (Rev. 9:15), and to accomplish this task they command an army of two hundred million soldiers—whether demons or men is not certain—who send plagues upon mankind (Rev. 9:16-19). Elisha the prophet once saw an angelic army (2 Ki. 6:13-17). The two “woes” described in Revelation chapter 9 correspond with the words of Daniel and Jesus concerning the destruction that will come during the Great Tribulation, and that if God did not intervene, all mankind would be destroyed (Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21-22). Those people who remain alive after this destruction refuse to repent of their idolatry and sinful ways (Rev. 9:20-21). “At least three realities stand out from this chapter: (1) the reality and power of the unseen world of demons and Satan; (2) the reality of a God who judges; and (3) the reality of the hardness of sinful human hearts.”²²

²² Charles C. Ryrie, *Revelation, Everyman’s Bible Commentary*, 76.

The Doctrine of Idolatry

There is only one God (Isa 46:9; 1 Cor. 8:4), who is worthy of praise (Ps. 148:13), and He does not share His glory with others (Isa 42:8). God forbids the manufacture and worship of idols (Ex. 20:4-6), and declares every man stupid who puts his/her trust in them (Jer. 10:14-15). Idolatry is the substitutionary worship of anything/anyone other than the one true God of Scripture. Crafted idols, which start as a concept in the mind, are often fashioned into some form of man or beast using earthly materials (Isa. 37:18-19; 40:18-20; 44:6-19; Jer. 10:1-15). Idols have no life in them (Ps. 115:1-8; Jer. 51:17; Hab. 2:18-20), nor can they deliver in times of trouble (Isa. 46:5-7), and a curse is pronounced upon those who worship them (Deut. 27:15). Idolatry among God's people is tantamount to spiritual adultery (Ezek. 23:37; Hos. 4:12-13), and in some cases even included human sacrifice (2 Chron. 33:1-7; 2 Ki. 16:3; 17:17; 21:6; Jer. 32:35; Ezek. 16:21). Scripture teaches us the worship of idols is actually the worship of demons (1 Cor. 10:19-20; cf. 1 Tim. 4:1), who seek to steal God's glory and wreck our relationship with Him. Because the human heart is sinful, our natural proclivity is to worship at the altar of self-interest, and all God's children—even the wisest—are susceptible to the snares of idolatry. For example, Aaron led Israel to worship a golden calf (Ex. 32:1-6), and Solomon, by the end of his life, bowed down the pagan idols of Ashtoreth and Milcom. Solomon even built places of worship for Chemosh and Molech, that God's people might be led astray to serve them (1 Ki. 11:6-10). Idolatry was a concern for the Christians at Corinth (1 Cor. 8:1-13; 10:14-33; 2 Cor. 6:16), and the apostle John twice bowed down and worshiped an angel and was rebuked for it (Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9). I believe John knew the sinful inclination of all Christians and this is why he warns us, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21).

There's no place for idolatry in the life of any Christian who is devoted to God (Rom 12:1-2), who seeks to know Him, and His will, through Scripture (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17), who is surrounded with growing believers (1 Cor. 15:33; Heb. 10:24-25), who makes time to worship the Lord daily, singing to Him and praising Him for all His blessings (Ps. 95:2; 105:2; Eph. 5:18-21; Phil. 4:6; Col. 3:16-17; 1 Thess. 5:18), and who are satisfied with what the Lord provides. This last point is emphasized by the apostle Paul, who reveals that idolatry is born out of a covetous heart (Col. 3:5) that leads us to desire more than what God gives, and to trust something or someone lesser than Him to satisfy our wants and needs. The believer who is satisfied with God is content with what He provides, whether little or much (Phil. 4:11-13; 1 Tim. 6:7-11; Heb. 13:5); but the covetous believer is never content and always seeks more (i.e. money, success, friends, etc.) in order to feel secure or to please the flesh.

Revelation 10:1-11

Review: Revelation 6 presents the six seal judgments, and chapter 7 follows with the salvation of Jews and Gentiles. Revelation chapters 8 & 9 reveal the six trumpet judgments, which are followed by another interlude that runs from 10:1 to 11:14, just before the seventh trumpet sounds. The scene shifts again from earth to heaven, and John transitions from being an observer to a participant.

And I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud [picturing judgment]; and the rainbow was upon his head [like a crown], and his face was like the sun [demonstrating glory], and his feet like pillars of fire [symbolizing purity];² and he had in his hand a little book which was open. And he placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land [a symbol of dominion];³ and he cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars [commanding attention]; and when he had cried out, the seven peals of thunder uttered their voices.⁴ And when the seven peals of thunder had spoken, I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken [concerning judgments during the Tribulation], and do not write them.” [John was commanded not to record what he’d heard; cf. Deut. 29:29]⁵ And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to heaven [to take an oath],⁶ and swore by Him who lives forever and ever [to God], who created heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it, that there shall be delay no longer [for judgment; cf. Rev. 6:9-11],⁷ but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets.⁸ And the voice which I heard from heaven, *I heard* again speaking with me, and saying, “Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land.”⁹ And I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book. And he said to me, “Take it, and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey [the word of God is sweet to consume, though some of its content is difficult to digest; cf. Ps. 19:9-10; 119:103; Jer. 15:16].”¹⁰ And I took the little book out of the angel’s hand and ate it [an idiom for receiving knowledge], and it was in my mouth sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter.¹¹ And they said to me, “You must [δεῖ dei – must, necessarily] prophesy again [i.e. speak God’s truth] concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.” [John’s call to prophecy follows his consuming the little book that contained God’s revelation]

Summary:

Revelation chapter 10 is about a strong angel that John describes as “coming down out of heaven, 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” (Rev. 10:1). Unlike the fallen angels that came from abyss (Rev. 9:2), this angel originates from heaven and is clothed with a cloud, which signifies power and judgment (Dan. 7:13-14; Mark 13:26; Rev. 14:14-16), and a rainbow upon his head which signifies mercy and faithfulness (Gen. 9:13-16), and he radiated God’s glory like the sun, and his feet were like pillars of fire, which picture purity and judgment. The angel had a “little book” in his hand, and he is seen placing one foot on land and the other on the sea, which is a picture of conquest and control. After the angel cried out with a loud voice, John says, “the seven peals of thunder uttered their voices” (Rev. 10:3). John was about to record what he heard, when suddenly a voice from heaven commanded, “Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken and do not write them” (Rev. 10:4). John recorded that he could not record the revelation he’d heard from heaven. “While Revelation is primarily designed to reveal and not to conceal God’s purpose and future events, some revelation was kept hidden as illustrated by God’s prohibiting John to write what ‘the voices’ of the seven thunders said.”²³ In wisdom, God does not tell us everything He’s doing, but shares only what we need to know; and by faith we trust Him. The angel then raised his right hand to heaven and swore to God (Rev. 10:5), who is described as the creator of heaven and earth, stating there will not be any further delay in the execution of His judgments (Rev. 10:6). John reveals the time of judgment will occur when the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, and then tells us, “then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets” (Rev. 10:7). “The reference, therefore, is not to hidden truth but to the fulfillment of many Old Testament passages which refer to the glorious return of the Son of God and the establishment of His kingdom of righteousness and peace on the earth.”²⁴ John was commanded to take the little book from the angel (Rev. 10:8-9a), who told him, “Take it and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey” (Rev 10:9b). John’s experience was exactly as the angel had described (Rev. 10:10). John experienced real exposure to God’s Word, which is both sweet and bitter in its own way, depending on what God is saying or doing. John was then commanded, “You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings” (Rev. 10:11). Perhaps the little book John consumed contained the content of his prophetic message.

²³ John F. Walvoord, “Revelation,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 954.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 954.

Revelation 11:1-19

And there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, “Rise and measure the temple [*ναός naos – temple, inner sanctuary*] of God, and the altar [*perhaps the altar of incense within the sanctuary*], and those who worship in it [*believers during the Tribulation*].² “And leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it [*treat it as unimportant*], for it has been given to the nations [*which are under Satanic control*]; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months [*3 ½ years*].³ “And I will grant *authority* to my two witnesses [*God’s prophets who manifest the power and authority of Moses and Elijah*], and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days [*3 ½ years*], clothed in sackcloth.”⁴ These are the two olive trees [*Jewish believers*] and the two lampstands [*bringers of light*] that stand before the Lord of the earth [*the One who is sovereign*].⁵ And if anyone desires to harm them, fire proceeds out of their mouth and devours their enemies [*i.e. they have the power to kill*]; and if anyone would desire to harm them, in this manner he must be killed.⁶ These have the power to shut up the sky, in order that rain may not fall during the days of their prophesying [*like Elijah*]; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they desire [*like Moses*].⁷ And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss [*probably Satan because of his place of origin*] will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them [*divine protection is provided until their ministry is complete*].⁸ And their dead bodies *will lie* in the street of the great city [*Jerusalem*] which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt [*known for their apostasy*], where also their Lord was crucified.⁹ And those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations [*rebellious unbelievers*] *will* look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb.¹⁰ And those who dwell on the earth [*unbelievers*] *will* rejoice over them and make merry; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth [*the only mention of earthly celebration during the Tribulation*].¹¹ And after the three and a half days the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were beholding them.¹² And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” And they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies beheld them.¹³ And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; and seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven [*perhaps a conversion experience*].¹⁴ The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly.¹⁵ And the seventh angel sounded [*its judgment is not complete until Revelation 16*]; and there arose loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become *the kingdom* of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever [*proleptic statement concerning the certainty of the reign of Christ on the*

earth].”¹⁶ And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God,¹⁷ saying, “We give Thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who art and who wast, because Thou hast taken Thy great power and hast begun to reign.”¹⁸ “And the nations were enraged [against God; cf. Ps. 2:1-2], and Thy wrath came, and the time *came* for the dead to be judged [certainty of great White Throne judgment], and *the time* to give their reward to Thy bond-servants the prophets and to the saints and to those who fear Thy name, the small and the great [rewards for obedience], and to destroy those who destroy the earth [rebellious unbelievers].”¹⁹ And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple, and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm.

Summary:

In Revelation 11 John is given a measuring rod and told to measure the temple, the altar, and those who worship in it (Rev. 11:1).²⁵ “The measuring itself seems to be an act of knowing, claiming, or staking out. In this act of John's, God is giving assurance that He will take note of those who faithfully worship Him in the first half of the Tribulation.”²⁶ John is told not to measure the court outside the temple, for that is given to unbelievers who will trample Jerusalem for forty two months (Rev. 11:2). John is then informed about two witnesses who—though unidentified—prophecy and serve in the power and character of Elijah and Moses (Rev. 11:3-6). After “they have finished their testimony” and completed their ministry, “the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them” (Rev 11:7). There are three beasts mentioned in Revelation: 1) Satan is the beast that comes out of the Abyss (Rev. 11:7), 2) the Antichrist is the beast that comes out of the sea (Rev. 13:1), and 3) the false prophet is the beast that comes out of the earth (Rev. 13:11). God permits the bodies of His witnesses to lie in the streets for three days while their enemies celebrate (Rev. 11:8-10), but then God strikes fear in their hearts after He raises His two witnesses back to life and calls them to heaven (Rev. 11:11-12). Following their departure, the Lord sends an earthquake on Jerusalem that destroys a tenth of the city and kills seven thousand people (Rev. 11:13). The seventh woe is past (Rev. 11:14), which is followed by the sounding of seventh trumpet, and the prophetic statement that the kingdom of God and Christ has arrived on earth. The

²⁵ There are six temples mentioned in Scripture: 1) Solomon's Temple (1 Chron. 22:9-10, 953 BC), 2) Zerubbabel's Temple (Hag. 2:3-9; 515 BC), 3) Herod's Temple (John 2:20; AD 63), 4) the Tribulation Temple (Rev. 11:1-2; future), 5) the Millennial Temple (Ezek. 40-48; future), and the Heavenly Temple (Rev. 11:19; present).

²⁶ Charles C. Ryrie, *Revelation, Everyman's Bible Commentary*, 83.

judgment of the seventh trumpet runs from Revelation 11:15 to the end of revelation 16, culminating in the seven Bowl Judgments.

Revelation 12:1-17

And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman [who represents Israel in the days of Joseph] clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars [Jacob, Rachel, and their twelve sons; Gen. 37:9-11]; ² and she was with child [Jesus – the Messiah]; and she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth. ³ And another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns [Satan’s geo-political control through world rulers; Rev. 17:9-13], and on his heads *were* seven diadems. ⁴ And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven [reference to angels; cf. Job 38:7; Dan. 8:10; Jude 6; 2 Pet. 2:4; Rev. 9:1], and threw them to the earth [to cause trouble]. And the dragon stood before the woman [Israel] who was about to give birth [to the Messiah], so that when she gave birth he might devour her child [Matt. 2:13-16]. ⁵ And she gave birth to a son, a male, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron [Ps. 2:9; Rev. 2:27; 19:15]; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne [Acts 1:9]. ⁶ And the woman [Israel during the second half of the Tribulation] fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God [cf. Matt. 24:15-16], so that there she might be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days. ⁷ And there was war in heaven, Michael [the special guardian angel for Israel; Dan. 12:1] and his angels waging war with the dragon. And the dragon and his angels [demons] waged war, ⁸ and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. ⁹ And the great dragon [depicting his fierce nature] was thrown down, the serpent of old [depicting his ability to deceive] who is called the devil [accuser] and Satan [adversary], who deceives the whole world [revealing the scope of his influence; cf. Rev. 13:14; 20:3, 8]; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him [half way through the Tribulation Satan is removed from heaven, and at the end of the Tribulation he’s removed from the earth]. ¹⁰ And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night [cf. Job. 1:6; 2:1]. ¹¹ “And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb [the work of Christ on their behalf] and because of the word of their testimony [uncompromising faith], and they did not love their life even to death [they love God more than anything]. ¹² “For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has *only* a short time.” ¹³ And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman [believing-Israel, during the second half of the Tribulation] who gave birth to the male *child*. ¹⁴ And the two wings of the great eagle [divine protection; Ex. 19:4; Deut. 32:10-12] were given to the woman, in order that she might fly into the wilderness to her place [perhaps Petra], where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time [3 ½ years],

from the presence of the serpent.¹⁵ And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood [perhaps a flood of persecution].¹⁶ And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth [God provides protection].¹⁷ And the dragon was enraged with the woman [believing-Israelites who flee to the wilderness and receive divine protection], and went off to make war with the rest of her offspring [believing-Israelites who do not flee], who keep the commandments of God [obedient-to-the-word believers] and hold to the testimony of Jesus [adamant faith].

Summary:

Revelation 12 opens with a sign that pictures ancient Israel as a woman (Rev. 12:1-2; cf. Gen. 37:9-11). Satan is described as a dragon that wages war against God's people, and he is said to have seven heads and ten horns (Rev. 12:3). "His seven heads and ten horns probably represent seven nations and ten rulers (17:12). Ten kings will rule under his authority, but when Antichrist rises to preeminence among them he will subdue three of them leaving only seven (Dan. 7:7-8, 20, 24; Rev. 13:1)."²⁷ Satan was thwarted when he tried to destroy Jesus at His birth (Rev. 12:4; Matt. 2:13-16), but after Jesus' ministry and victory at the cross, He was caught up to heaven where Satan cannot harm Him (Rev. 12:5; cf. Acts 1:9). Unable to defeat Christ, Satan will seek to persecute and destroy Israel, but God will protect her throughout the latter part of the Tribulation (Rev. 12:6). John then tells us about a "war in heaven" (Rev. 12:7), in which Satan is cast out (Rev. 12:8). Here we are given a glimpse into the angelic conflict that wages in unseen realms, in which God directs His holy angels to battle against the forces of darkness that are set against Him and His plan for men. Satan is regarded as the greatest enemy of God's people, and his power is sufficient to deceive "the whole world" (Rev. 12:9; cf. 13:14; 20:3, 8). John records another prophetic statement concerning the kingdom of God (Rev. 12:10), and states that believers overcome Satan: 1) by the blood the Lamb—that is, the work of the cross applied to those who trust in Jesus for salvation, 2) by the word of their testimony—that is, their faithful adherence to God's promises and commands, and 3) by loving God more than their own life (Rev. 12:11). This is followed by a command for heaven to rejoice because Satan is cast out, but there is woe to the earth because he is thrown down to them and is full of wrath, knowing he has only a short time (Rev. 12:12). Satan will begin a campaign to destroy Israel (Rev. 12:13), but God will protect her from his attacks (Rev. 12:14-16). Being unsuccessful in his efforts, he will "make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of

²⁷ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible*, Re 12:3.

Jesus” (Rev. 12:17). God provides strength for the battle to those who tenaciously hold to their faith and continue in obedience to Him.

A Brief Study of Angels

The word *angel* translates the Hebrew word מַלְאָכִים *malak* and the Greek word ἄγγελος *aggelos*, and both words mean *messenger*. The word *angel* occurs approximately 275 times throughout Scripture, and appears in 34 books. Angels are created beings (Col. 1:16), were present at the creation of the world (Job 38:4-7), are called *spirits* (Luke 9:38-39; Heb. 1:13-14), and have volition, emotion, and intelligence (Matt. 8:28-32; cf. 1 Pet 1:12). They are distinct from humans (Mark 1:23-26), do not reproduce after their kind (Mark 12:25), have great power (2 Peter 2:11), and are numerous (Heb. 12:22; Rev. 5:11).

Angels are classified as either *elect* (1 Tim. 5:21) or *fallen* (Isa. 14:12; Rev. 9:1). The former retain their holy state and service to God, whereas the latter have defected from their original place and continue in constant rebellion against the Lord. Angels, both elect and fallen, are organized into different classes, which are called “the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places” (Eph. 3:10; cf. Col. 1:16; 2:15).

Michael—whose name means “who is like God”—is the only one named as an Archangel (Jude 1:9). Gabriel—whose name means “hero of God”—appears as a special messenger of the Lord who delivered messages to Daniel (Dan. 8:16; 9:21), Zacharias (Luke 1:18-19), and Mary (Luke 1:26-38). Seraphim—who have six wings—are devoted to the worship of God (Isa. 6:1-3), whereas Cherubim—who have four wings—are devoted to protecting the Lord’s holiness (Ezek. 10:19-21). The term “angel of Yahweh” is used only in the Old Testament and refers to appearances by the preincarnate Jesus Christ (Gen. 18:1-19:29; 22:11-12; 31:11-13; 32:24-32; 48:15-16; Josh. 5:13-15; Judg. 13:19-22; 2 Kings 19:35; 1 Chron. 21:12-30; Ps. 34:7).

Satan is the chief angel who, because of pride, rebelled against God (Isa. 14:12-14; Ezek. 28:11-18). The name Satan is derived from the Hebrew שָׂטָן *Satan* (Job 1:6) and the Greek Σατανᾶς *Satanas* (Matt. 4:10), and both words mean *adversary*. Other names include the *shining one*, or *Lucifer* (Isa. 14:12), the *evil one* (1 John 5:19), the *tempter* (1 Thess. 3:5), the *devil* (Matt. 4:1), the *god of this world* (2 Cor. 4:4), the *accuser of the brethren* (Rev. 12:10), the *prince of the power of the air* (Eph. 2:2), the *serpent* (Rev. 12:9), the *great red dragon* (Rev. 12:3), and the *angel of light* (2 Cor. 11:14). Further, he is a *murderer* and *liar* (John 8:44), and is compared to a *lion* that prowls about, looking for someone to devour (1 Pet. 5:8).

Satan interacts with God and people (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-13; John 13:27; 1 Pet. 5:8; Rev. 12:10), possesses earthly kingdoms (Luke 4:5-6), is said to have “weakened the nations” (Isa. 14:12), and currently “deceives the whole world” (Rev 12:9). He

practices deception (Gen. 3:1-15; 2 Cor. 11:13-15), and has well developed strategies of warfare against Christians (Eph. 6:10-12). As a creature, Satan is confined in his abilities and relies on numerous fallen angels who carry out his will. His demons also lead political and military rebellions (Rev. 16:12-14).

Satan was judged at the cross (John 12:31; 16:11; Col. 2:14-15), and awaits his future punishment. His judgment is very near when he is cast out of heaven to the earth during the Tribulation (Rev. 12:7-12). At this time his wrath is greatest against God's people. After the return of Christ (Rev. 19:11-16) and the establishment of His kingdom on earth (Rev. 20:1-6), Satan will be confined to the abyss for a thousand years (Rev. 20:1-3). After the thousand years, Satan is released for a brief time and will again deceive the nations and lead a rebellion against God (Rev. 20:7-8), but will be quickly defeated (Rev. 20:9), and cast into the Lake of Fire, where he will be forever, with his demons and all unbelievers (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10-15).

Fallen angels are commonly referred to in Scripture as *demons*. These creatures are hostile, implacable, and irreconcilable; and they regularly wage war against elect angels and God's people. Some are imprisoned (Jude 6; Rev. 9:1-16), and others are free. During the time of Christ, they were able to identify Him as the Son of God (Matt. 8:29a), and they knew their future fate (Matt. 8:29b). Satan and demons attempt to frustrate the purpose of God (Matt. 4:1-11; cf. Dan. 10:10-14; Rev. 16:13-16). Demons can possess the bodies of men (Luke 11:24-26), and cause physical disease (Matt. 9:32-33).

The activity of Satan and demons is always under God's sovereign control. There are times when God permits Satan and demons to have their way, such as when Satan inflicted Job (Job 2:7), and sifted Peter as wheat (Luke 22:31), or when Jesus permitted demons to enter a herd of swine (Matt. 8:31-32). And, there are times when God uses evil spirits as disciplinary agents against believers, either to punish (1 Sam. 16:14-16), or humble (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

Some fallen angels are called chief princes who rule over specific geographical regions of the world (Dan. 10:13, 20). The apostle Paul communicates this idea when he wrote to the church at Ephesus, revealing, "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood [*i.e. other people*], but against the rulers [*ἀρχή arche - rulers*], against the powers [*ἐξουσία exousia – power to act, authority*], against the world forces [*κοσμοκράτωρ kosmokrator – a ruler of this world*] of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" [*τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις*] (Eph. 6:12). There are spiritual battles in heavenly places where angels war against each other, and their activity directly affects mankind (Dan. 10:1-21; Rev. 12:7-9; cf. Job 1:6; 2:1; 1 Ki. 22:1-38; 2 Thess. 2:9;

Rev. 9:1-19; 16:12-14). Though we cannot see our enemy, spiritual victory is obtained through the blood of Christ (Rev. 12:10-11), and through the knowledge of God's Word and living daily by faith (Eph. 6:12-18; 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17; cf. 2 Cor. 5:17).

Revelation 13:1-18

And the dragon [Satan; Rev. 12:9] stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast [θηρίον *therion* – a wild beast = Antichrist] coming out of the sea [sea = a symbol of evil and disruption; Isa. 57:20; Jude. 1:13]. He had ten horns [horns = world rulers; Dan. 7:24; Rev. 17:12] and seven heads [heads = nations/kings; Rev. 17:9-10], with ten crowns on his horns [crowns = authority to rule; Rev. 17:12], and on each head a blasphemous name.² The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion [reverse order from Daniel's vision - Dan. 7:7-8]. The dragon [Satan] gave the beast [Antichrist] his power and his throne and great authority [permitted by God].³ One of the heads [head = nation/king] of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound [was destroyed], but the fatal wound had been healed [revived]. The whole world was astonished and followed the beast [Antichrist].⁴ Men worshiped the dragon [Satan] because he had given authority to the beast [Antichrist], and they also worshiped the beast [Antichrist] and asked, "Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?"⁵ The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months [last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation].⁶ He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven [Dan. 7:7-8].⁷ He was given power to make war against the saints [believers living during the Tribulation] and to conquer them [military control]. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation [worldwide rule].⁸ All [unbelieving] inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast [religious control] -- all [unbelievers] whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world [cf. Eph. 1:4].⁹ He who has an ear, let him hear [i.e. spiritually receptive to John's message].¹⁰ If anyone is [destined] to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is [destined] to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.¹¹ Then I saw another beast [ἄλλο θηρίον – the False Prophet; cf. Rev. 19:20; 20:10], coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb [perhaps a picture of lesser political power than the Antichrist], but he spoke like a dragon.¹² He exercised all the authority of the first beast [Antichrist] on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed [promotes religious worship of Antichrist].¹³ And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men [like Elijah; see 1 Ki. 18:36; 2 Ki. 1:10].¹⁴ Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth [those who live in satanic darkness]. He ordered them to set up an image [see Ex. 20:4] in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived.¹⁵ He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed [image mentioned several times;

Rev. 14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4].¹⁶ He also forced everyone [all classes of humanity], small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark [χάραγμα *charagma* – to cut, engrave, carve] on his right hand or on his forehead [conspicuous places],¹⁷ so that no one could buy or sell [economic control] unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.¹⁸ This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man’s number. His number is 666.

Summary:

There are two beasts in Revelation 13: 1) the *Antichrist* (Rev. 13:1-8), and 2) the *False Prophet* (Rev. 13:13-15). *Satan*—with the help of the *Antichrist* and the *False Prophet*—will seek to control the world politically (Rev. 13:1-2), religiously (Rev. 13:3-6), militarily (Rev. 13:7), and economically (Rev. 13:16-17). John opens with a description of the Antichrist²⁸, who is described as a wild beast who rises “out of the sea” (Rev. 13:1). The *sea* is likely a reference to evil and disruption (Isa. 57:20; Dan. 7:3; Jude. 1:13). The Antichrist possesses the qualities of those beastly world rulers described in Daniel (Dan. 7:7-8), and derives his power from Satan (Rev. 13:2). It appears one of the nations under the Antichrist’s control perishes, but he miraculously revives it (Rev. 13:3), and the world worships the dragon and him (Rev. 13:4). “The apparent resurrection of this nation will be so amazing to the world that many people will give their allegiance and their worship to Antichrist (cf. vv. 8, 12; 14:9, 11; 20:4). In so doing they will also submit to Satan who is behind him. Antichrist’s ability to revive this nation will make him appear invincible.”²⁹ From his arrogance, the Antichrist blasphemes the name of God for forty-two months (Rev. 13:5-6), is permitted to kill God’s people (Rev. 13:7), and is worshipped by unbelievers (Rev. 13:8). John addresses believers living during this time to be assured that God is in control, even over their persecution and death (Rev. 13:9-10). John then witnesses the rising of another beast, who is the False Prophet, who leads a world religion that demands everyone worship the first beast (Rev. 13:11-12). The False Prophet is able to perform great miracles (Rev. 13:13), and deceives the whole world into worshipping an image of the beast (Rev. 13:14). The False Prophet also has the ability to give life to the image (Rev. 13:15a), and the authority to kill those who do not worship it (Rev. 13:15b). He then forces everyone to receive a mark in connection with the beast (Rev. 13:16), which he uses to control people’s economic choices (Rev. 13:17). The mark of the beast is also the number of a man, which is 666 (Rev. 13:18). It is possible the three numbers correspond to letters that have numerical value, thus spelling out Antichrist’s name. It’s also possible

²⁸ The Antichrist is mentioned several times throughout Scripture (Dan. 7:7-8; 9:24-27; 11:36-39; Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:3-12; 1 Jo. 2:18; Rev.13:1-8; 17:3, 7-8, 11-13; 19:19-20; 20:10).

²⁹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible*, Re 13:4.

that the number six signifies imperfection, and the tripling of the number represents the multiplication of imperfection. Lastly, we must remember that God never relinquishes control over the earth and the affairs of mankind. Though He permits Satan a period of time to have his way, eventually God will disrupt his activities and send Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet to the Lake of Fire (Rev. 19:20; 20:10).

Contrasting Good and Bad Leaders

A leader is one who influences the thoughts and actions of others in order to achieve a specific outcome. The Bible differentiates between good and bad leaders, between the righteous and the wicked. Bad leaders exclude God from their daily thoughts and activities and selfishly pursue their own desires, even if it means harming others. Below are some qualities that describe bad leaders:

1. **They trust in human resources rather than God.** “Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help *and* rely on horses, and trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but they do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the LORD!” (Isa. 31:1).³⁰
2. **They are open to lies.** “If a ruler pays attention to falsehood [i.e. intentionally listens to lies], all his ministers become wicked” (Pro. 29:12).
3. **They make people groan.** “When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when a wicked man rules, people groan” (Pro. 29:2).
4. **They oppress others.** “Like a roaring lion and a rushing bear is a wicked ruler over a poor people. A leader who is a great oppressor lacks understanding, but he who hates unjust gain will prolong his days” (Pro. 28:15-16).
5. **They are sometimes described as beasts that are empowered by Satan.** “Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea...and the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority” (Rev. 13:1-2; cf. Dan. 7:1-8).
6. **They openly attack God and His people.** “And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God...It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them” (Rev. 13:6-7).
7. **They demand to be worshipped** (Rev. 13:12), **practice deception** (Rev. 13:14), and **rob others of their economic choices** (Rev. 13:16-17).

In contrast, the good leader is first and foremost a follower of God who wears a crown of humility and derives his values and strength from the Lord. Below are some of the qualities of a good leader:

1. **He is a servant to others.** When Solomon died, his counselors advised his son, Rehoboam, “If you will be a servant to this people today, and will serve them and grant them their petition, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever” (1 Kings 12:7; cf. Matt. 20:25-28; John 13:13-17; Phil. 2:3-4).
2. **He seeks God’s righteousness as his rule for judging others.** “Give the king Your judgments, O God, and Your righteousness to the king’s son.

³⁰ Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture quotes are from the *New American Standard Bible*, 1995.

May he judge Your people with righteousness and Your afflicted with justice” (Ps. 72:1-2).

3. **He cares about the poor and needy.** “He [the king] will deliver the needy when he cries for help, the afflicted also, and him who has no helper. He will have compassion on the poor and needy, and the lives of the needy he will save. He will rescue their life from oppression and violence, and their blood will be precious in his sight.” (Ps. 72:12-14).
4. **He governs with integrity and skill.** Of David, it is written, “So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them with his skillful hands” (Ps. 78:72).
5. **He rules by wisdom.** “By me [biblical wisdom] kings reign, and rulers decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, all who judge rightly” (Pro. 8:15-16).
6. **He displays impeccable judgment.** “A divine decision is in the lips of the king; his mouth should not err in judgment” (Pro. 16:10; cf. read Deut. 17:18-20).
7. **He brings stability by adhering to justice.** “The king gives stability to the land by justice, but a man who takes bribes overthrows it” (Pro. 29:4).
8. **He governs by loyalty and truth.** “Loyalty and truth preserve the king, and he upholds his throne by righteousness” (Pro. 20:28).
9. **He governs in righteousness.** “It is an abomination for kings to commit wicked acts, for a throne is established on righteousness. Righteous lips are the delight of kings, and he who speaks right is loved” (Pro. 16:12-13).
10. **He should be honest.** “Excellent speech is not fitting for a fool, much less are lying lips to a prince” (Pro. 17:7).
11. **He punishes the wicked.** “A wise king winnows the wicked, and drives the threshing wheel over them” (Pro. 20:26).
12. **He associates with honest and gracious persons.** “He who loves purity of heart [i.e. has honest intentions] and whose speech is gracious [i.e. kind speech], the king is his friend” (Pro. 22:11).
13. **He searches to find the facts of a matter.** “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter” (Pro. 25:2; cf. 18:13).
14. **He preserves the rights of others by clear thinking.** “It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to desire strong drink, for they will drink and forget what is decreed, and pervert the rights of all the afflicted” (Pro. 31:4-5).
15. **He surrounds himself with wise counselors.** “Where there is no guidance the people fall, but in abundance of counselors there is victory” (Pro. 11:14).
16. **He educates and delegates responsibility to trusted persons** (read Ex. 18:13-26).

As believers, we are always to pray for those in leadership positions. Paul writes, “I urge that entreaties *and* prayers, petitions *and* thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity” (1 Tim. 2:1-2).

Revelation 14:1-20

And I looked, and behold, the Lamb *was* standing on Mount Zion [a proleptic vision in which John sees Jesus standing in Jerusalem], and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand [having survived through the Tribulation], having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads [those marked by God; cf. Rev. 7:4-8].² And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder [authoritative], and the voice which I heard *was* like *the sound* of harpists playing on their harps [clear and beautiful].³ And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth.⁴ These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste [Grk. *παρθένος parthenos* – lit. *virgins* –i.e. fully devoted to serving the Lord; cf. either as unmarried Jer. 16:1-2; 1 Cor. 7:32-34 or married; 2 Cor. 11:2]. These *are* the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes [totally committed]. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb [i.e. the first fruits of many Jewish people who will be saved].⁵ And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless [i.e. blameless in their message about Jesus].⁶ And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel [εὐαγγέλιον *euaggelion* – *good news message*] to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people [a final act of grace toward the rebellious];⁷ and he said with a loud voice [the content of his gospel message], “Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters.” [This is good news to those martyrs who wait for God to balance the scales of justice; Rev. 6:9-10; 19:1-2]⁸ And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality.” [Babylon represents both a city and an industry marked by rebellion and immorality]⁹ And another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or upon his hand [a sign of rebellion against God],¹⁰ he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone [Lake of Fire] in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.¹¹ “And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; and they have no rest day and night [eternal suffering], those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”¹² Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus [persevere in their faith, even to death].¹³ And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, “Write, ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!’” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them [rewards for service].”¹⁴ And I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud *was* one like a son of man [Jesus the Savior; see Dan. 7:13-14; Matt. 24:30-31], having

a golden crown on His head [Grk. *στέφανος* *stephanos* – victor’s crown], and a sharp sickle in His hand [signifying the judgment that will occur at His Second Coming].¹⁵ And another angel came out of the temple [i.e. the holy place], crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, “Put in your sickle and reap [picture of judgment], because the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe [Grk. *ξηραίνω* *xeraino* – lit. withered, overripe].”¹⁶ And He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth; and the earth was reaped [image anticipating Christ’s Second Coming; cf. Rev. 19:11-21].¹⁷ And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle.¹⁸ And 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, “Put in your sharp sickle, and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe [angels will help render judgment at the Second Coming of Jesus, cf. Matt. 13:41-42, 49-50].”¹⁹ And the angel swung his sickle to the earth, and gathered *the clusters from* the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God [Christians are spared from God’s wrath; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9].²⁰ And the wine press was trodden outside the city [picturing Armageddon; cf. 19:17-19], and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses’ bridles [about four feet high], for a distance of two hundred miles.

Summary:

Revelation chapters 14 & 15 preview the judgments in Revelation chapters 16 through 19. In Revelation chapter 14 God is preserving the righteous for blessing and preparing judgment for the wicked at Jesus’ Second Coming. The chapter opens with a scene that pictures Jesus as a Lamb standing in Zion (i.e. Jerusalem; cf. 2 Sam. 5:7), and with Him are one hundred and forty-four thousand (Rev. 14:1; cf. 7:4-8), and these faithful believers sing a new song to God (Rev. 14:2-5). John saw an angel with an eternal gospel, calling people to praise God and to worship Him as creator, pronouncing His time of judgment upon the earth has come (Rev. 14:6-7). A second angel appears, pronouncing judgment upon Babylon (Rev. 14:8), and a third angel announcing eternal judgment upon all who receive the mark of the beast (Rev. 14:9-11). John then reveals that martyred saints who die during the Tribulation will be blessed with rewards that follow their works (Rev. 14:12-13). The scene then shifts to the Second Coming of Jesus and the judgments that follow (Rev. 14:14), which judgments are aided with the help of angels who reap the earth of rebellious people who will face the wrath of God at the appearance of Jesus (Rev. 14:15-20; cf. Matt. 13:41-42, 49-50).

Revelation 15:1-8

And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, *which are* the last [ἔσχατος *eschatos* – last, final], because in them the wrath of God is finished [τελέω *teleo* – bring to an end, fulfill, complete].² And I saw, as it were, a sea of glass mixed with fire [likely a picture of God's purity and anger], and those who had come off victorious from the beast and from his image and from the number of his name [persecuted martyrs who died for their faith], standing on the sea of glass [symbolizing purity], holding harps of God [poised for worship].³ And they sang the song of Moses the bond-servant of God [a song that extolled God for His deliverance; Ex. 15:1-21] and the song of the Lamb [both songs celebrate God's victory over His enemies], saying, "Great and marvelous are Thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Thy ways, Thou King of the nations."⁴ "Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For Thou alone art holy; for all the nations will come and worship before Thee [Ps. 86:8-9; Isa. 2:1-4], for Thy righteous acts have been revealed."⁵ After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened ["testimony" = God's law, which the world rejects],⁶ and the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple [emphasizing the source of their judgment as righteous], clothed in linen, clean *and* bright, and girded around their breasts with golden girdles [angelic judges who will judge the earth].⁷ And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever.⁸ And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power [Isa. 6:1-4]; and no one [in heaven] was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished [which will be poured out in Rev. 16].

Summary:

Revelation 15 reveals that God is righteous to judge those who oppose Him and to reward His saints for being faithful to death. The chapter opens with a scene in heaven, where seven angels are given the final seven plagues of God's wrath, which are yet to be poured out on the earth (Rev. 15:1). John was shown "a sea of glass mixed with fire" in connection with believers "who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name" (Rev. 15:2). These victorious believers will sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb (Rev. 15:3a). The song of Moses was sung by the Israelites after the Lord had delivered them from Pharaoh and his army at the Red Sea (Ex. 15:1-21). Apparently the song of the Lamb will be sung by believers who are strengthened by Christ to endure the Tribulation and not to yield to the pressures of the Antichrist, which pressures will be political, social, religious, and economic. These will praise God for His works and attributes, saying, "Great and marvelous are Thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are Thy ways, Thou King of the nations. Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For Thou alone art holy; for all the

nations will come and worship before Thee, for Thy righteous acts have been revealed” (Rev. 15:3b-4). After the song of praise, John sees seven angels who come out of the heavenly temple (Rev. 15:5-6), and these are clothed in white linen (symbolizing purity), and golden girdles wrapped around their breasts (the clothing of a judge). One of the four living creatures mentioned earlier (Rev. 4:6) gives seven bowls of God’s wrath to the seven angels so they can execute His judgment upon the earth (Rev. 15:7). The scene then closes, “And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished” (Rev. 15:8). In this short chapter, John reveals seven of God’s attributes, which include:

1. Sovereignty – “Lord God” & “King of the nations”
2. Omnipotence – “the Almighty”
3. Righteousness – “Righteous”
4. Veracity – “true”
5. Justice – “the wrath of God”
6. Eternal nature – “who lives forever and ever”
7. Holiness – “Thou alone art holy”

And I heard a loud [μέγας *me-gas* - loud, fierce, great, mighty, huge, severe; cf. vs. 9, 12, 14, 17-19, 21] voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God into the earth.”² And the first *angel* went and poured out his bowl into the earth; and it became a loathsome and malignant sore upon the men [cf. Ex. 9:8-12] who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image [punishment limited to followers of the Antichrist].³ And the second *angel* poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood like *that* of a dead man [coagulated, thick in form; cf. Ex. 7:20-25]; and every living thing in the sea died [previous judgment killed 1/3 of sea life; Rev. 8:9].⁴ And the third *angel* poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters [i.e. drinking water]; and they became blood.⁵ And I heard the angel of the waters saying, “Righteous art Thou, who art and who wast, O Holy One, because Thou didst judge these things; ⁶ for they [the followers of Antichrist] poured out the blood of saints and prophets [killed God’s people], and Thou hast given them blood to drink [divine retribution; cf. Rom. 12:17-19; 2 Thess. 1:6]. They deserve it.”⁷ And I heard the altar saying, “Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments [cf. Rev. 6:9-11].”⁸ And the fourth *angel* poured out his bowl upon the sun; and it was given to it to scorch men with fire.⁹ And men were scorched with fierce [μέγας *me-gas*] heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues; and they did not repent [cf. Rev. 9:20-21], so as to give Him glory.¹⁰ And the fifth *angel* poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast; and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain [similar to the eighth judgment on Egypt; cf. Ex. 10:15],¹¹ and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.¹² And the sixth *angel* poured out his bowl upon the great [μέγας *me-gas*] river, the Euphrates [the eastern boundary line for the Promised Land, 1740 miles long; Gen. 15:18; Deut. 11:24; Josh. 1:4]; and its water was dried up, that the way might be [providentially] prepared for the kings from the east.¹³ And I saw *coming* out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast [Antichrist; cf. Rev. 13:1-10] and out of the mouth of the false prophet [Rev. 13:11-18], three unclean spirits like frogs;¹⁴ for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world [demons who influence political rulers; cf. 2 Chron. 18:18-22], to gather them together for the war of the great [μέγας *me-gas*] day of God, the Almighty.¹⁵ (“Behold, I am coming like a thief [unannounced and unwelcome]. Blessed is the one [believer living in the Tribulation] who stays awake and keeps his garments [righteous conduct], lest he walk about naked and men see his shame [compromised righteousness due to worldly pressures].”) ¹⁶ And they [the evil spirits] gathered them [rebellious rulers] together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon [Mount Megiddo – length & width = 20x14 miles].¹⁷ And the seventh *angel* poured out his bowl upon the air; and a loud [μέγας *me-gas*] voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, “It is done.”¹⁸ And there were flashes of

lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great [μέγας *megas*] earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great [μέγας *megas*] an earthquake *was it, and* so mighty [μέγας *megas*].¹⁹ And the great [μέγας *megas*] city [Jerusalem; cf. Rev. 11:8] was split into three parts, and [all] the cities of the nations fell. And Babylon the great [μέγας *megas*] was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath.²⁰ And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found [topographical changes to the planet as a result of the worldwide earthquake].²¹ And huge [μέγας *megas*] 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 [μέγας *megas*].

Summary:

Revelation 16 concludes God's wrath on the earth toward men who live in constant rebellion to Him. Revelation 16 reveals what God is going to do before the return of Christ (Rev. 19), and Revelation chapters 17 through 19 reveal who He's going to do it to. "Unlike the previous series of judgments of the trumpets and seals, each of which had a break between the sixth and seventh judgments, the seven plagues of the bowls are poured out without interruption and apparently quite rapidly."³¹ John uses the Greek adjective μέγας *megas* a dozen times emphasizing the severity of God's judgments in this final phase of the Tribulation.

Revelation 16 opens with a command to seven angels to pour out God's wrath upon the earth (Rev. 16:1). The judgments include severe sores upon mankind (Rev. 16:2), turning the oceans to blood and killing all marine life (Rev. 16:3), turning the world's drinking water to blood (Rev. 16:4), scorching men with severe heat from the sun (Rev. 16:8-9), severe darkness upon the throne of the Antichrist and his kingdom (Rev. 16:10-11), drying up the Euphrates River so the hostile kings from the east can invade Israel (Rev. 16:12-16), and a great earthquake that affects topographical changes all over the earth as well as hailstones weighing one hundred pounds (Rev. 16:17-21). Some of the judgments are similar to those which were brought on Egypt such as boils (Ex. 9:8-12; Rev. 16:2), turning water to blood (Ex. 7:20-25; Rev. 16:3), and darkness (Ex. 10:15; Rev. 16:10). God is declared righteous in the outpouring of His wrath on wicked men (Rev. 16:5-7; cf. Rom. 12:17-19; 2 Thess. 1:6). Men are so corrupt in their nature, that even though they experience God's righteous wrath toward them, they refuse to humble themselves and repent, but rather blaspheme His name (Rev. 16:9, 11, 21; cf. Rev. 9:20-21).

³¹ Charles Ryrie, *Revelation: Everyman's Bible Commentary*, 111.

The Wrath of God

When reading through the Bible, one encounters the subject of God’s wrath in numerous places (Num. 16:46; Deut. 9:7-8, 22; 29:23, 28; Ps. 7:11; Nah. 1:2; Matt. 3:7; John 3:36; Rom. 1:18; Rev. 6:16-17; 15:1; 16:1, 19). Scripture reveals, “God is a righteous judge and a God who shows **His wrath** every day” (Ps. 7:11), and “A jealous and avenging God is the LORD; the LORD is avenging and **wrathful**. The LORD takes vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies” (Nah. 1:2). The apostle Paul states, “For **the wrath of God** is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom. 1:18). “More than twenty different words occurring about 580 times express the wrath of God in the Old Testament (2 Kings 13:3; 23:26; Job 21:20; Jer. 21:12; Ezek. 8:18; 16:38; 23:25; 24:13).”³² The most common of these Hebrew words are אַף *aph* (210 times), חֵמָה *chemah* (115 times), אֶצְפָּן *qetseph* (28 times), חַרֹן *charon* (33 times), and עִבְרָה *ebrah* (24 times). The two Greek words are ὀργή *orge* (34 times) and θυμός *thumos* (18 times). “*Orge* conveys a more settled anger (John 3:36; Rom. 1:18; Eph. 2:3; 1 Thess. 2:16; Rev. 6:16), while *thumos* indicates a more passionate anger (Rev. 14:10, 19; 15:1, 7; 16:1; 19:15). Together they clearly convey the divine hostility against sin in a personal way.”³³

A Definition of God’s Wrath

God’s wrath refers to His intense hatred of sin. God’s hatred of sin is primarily born out of His attributes of righteousness and love.³⁴ Righteousness and love are eternal attributes, but wrath is not. God’s wrath is the natural response to that which is contrary to His righteousness and love. God loves righteousness and He loves His people. Concerning His righteousness it is written, “For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness; the upright will behold His face” (Ps. 11:7), and “He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the lovingkindness of the LORD” (Ps. 33:5), and “You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness” (Ps. 45:7).³⁵ Concerning His people Israel, He says, “you are precious in My sight, you are honored and I love you” (Isa. 43:4), and in another place He says, “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness” (Jer. 31:3). And of the church, it is written, “Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma” (Eph.

³² Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 339.

³³ *Ibid.*, 339–340.

³⁴ Other attributes may be involved as well, such as holiness and jealousy, but I will focus mainly on these two.

³⁵ This last verse shows the contrast between that which He loves and hates. To love something is to hate the opposite. To love righteousness is to hate sin. Jesus echoed similar language of antithesis when He said, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other” (Matt. 6:24). And to the church at Ephesus, He states, “Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate” (Rev. 2:6).

5:2), and to John it was revealed that Jesus Christ “loves us and released us from our sins by His blood” (Rev. 1:5).

To perpetually act contrary to God’s righteousness will eventually bring a response of anger, and to attack that which God loves—His people—will bring about divine retribution (Rom. 12:19; 2 Thess. 1:6; Rev. 6:9-10; 19:2). Good parents understand these concepts, for they love their children and desire that they live morally according to the righteous standard of God’s Word. Virtuous parents seek to protect their children from unhealthy values that will corrupt their minds and behavior, because they know this can destroy their life, and loving parents will rise in fury if anyone should seek to harm their children.

Examples of God’s Wrath

A few examples of God’s wrath in the OT include the worldwide flood (Genesis 6-9), the destruction of Sodom (Genesis 19), the defeat of the Egyptians (Ex. 15:7), the suppression of the rebellion of Korah (Num. 16:1-50), the Assyrian destruction of the ten tribes of Israel (2 Ki. 17:1-23), and the Babylonian destruction of the two tribes of Judah (2 Ki. 24:1-4; Jer. 25:1-11). A few examples in the NT include Jesus’ anger at the hard-heartedness of religious leaders (Mark 3:1-6), His anger at the money changers in the Temple (John 2:13-16), God’s wrath during the Tribulation (Rev. 6:16-17; 14:9-10; 15:7; 16:1), at the second coming of Jesus (Rev. 19:2, 15), and at the Great White throne judgment where unbelievers are cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11-15).

The Reasons for God’s Wrath

God’s wrath is kindled against those who are disobedient to His revelation (2 Ki. 22:13; 2 Chron. 24:18-19; 36:15-16; Ps. 78:21-22; Jer. 32:31-33; Rom. 1:18; 2:5). When writing to the Romans, Paul states, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom. 1:18). God’s revelation, both natural and special, reveals He is not friendly toward those who reject Him and perpetuate sin, especially the sin of idolatry (Deut. 28:25-25; 2 Ki. 22:17; Ps. 78:58-59; Jer. 7:17-20; 44:5-6; Rev. 9:20; 14:11). In another place Paul writes, “But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Rom. 2:5). Whenever God pours out His wrath, such as during the Tribulation, He is always declared to be righteous and true, and those who receive His righteous anger deserve what they get.

And I heard the angel of the waters saying, “Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things; for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it.” And I heard the altar saying, “Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.” (Rev. 16:5-7)

God’s Patience Delays His Wrath

God’s anger is never rash. In fact, many biblical passages reveal God is very patient and slow to anger. Scripture reveals, “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, **slow to anger**, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth” (Ex. 34:6), and “You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, **slow to anger** and abundant in lovingkindness and truth” (Ps. 86:15), and “You are a God of forgiveness, gracious and compassionate, **slow to anger** and abounding in lovingkindness” (Neh. 9:17; cf. Ps. 103:8; Jon. 4:2). God’s patience allows people time to humble themselves and turn to Him before judgment comes. Peter writes, “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is **patient toward you**, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). Though God is patient, He is not patient forever, and there eventually comes a time when His judgment comes, both in time and in eternity.

God’s Wrath at the Cross

God’s righteousness demands punishment for sin. We produce sin, but are helpless to deal with it. God alone solves our sin-problem, and the cross of Christ is that solution. At the cross God satisfied every demand of His righteousness by judging our sin in the substitute of His Son, Jesus, who bore the wrath that rightfully belongs to us (Isa. 53:6-12; Mark 10:45; Rom. 5:8-9; 1 Pet. 2:21-24; 3:18). As a result, God is propitiated by the blood of Christ (Rom. 3:21-26; Heb. 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10), and extends grace and love to undeserving sinners (John 3:16-18; Rom. 5:6-10; Eph. 2:1-9; Tit. 3:5). Those who reject Christ as Savior continue under God’s wrath (John 3:18, 36; Rom. 1:18-32; 1 Thess. 2:14-16; 5:9-10). Those who trust Jesus as their Savior receive forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:13-14), eternal life (John 10:28), and the imputation of God’s righteousness (Rom. 5:17-18; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9). Furthermore, we are reconciled to God (Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:22), have relational peace with Him (Rom. 5:1; Col. 1:20), will never know eternal condemnation (Rom. 8:1, 31-39), and will be spared from the wrath to come (Rom. 5:8-9; Eph. 2:1-7; 5:1-10; 1 Thess. 1:9-10; 5:9-10).

It should be noted there is a difference between wrath and discipline. The Christian who falls into a lifestyle of perpetual sin may know God’s discipline (Heb. 12:5-11), even to the point of death (1 Cor. 11:30; 1 John 5:16). But discipline is born

out of God's love for the believer, not His anger, "For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines" (Heb. 12:6), and "Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline" (Rev. 3:19).

Should Believers Get Angry?

Is it alright for God's people to get angry? The answer is yes and no. There is a sinful anger that God's people must avoid (Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8; Titus 1:7); however, there are times when we will experience injustice, and it is natural and valid to be angry when this happens. The most common reasons for human anger are hatred, jealousy, fear, or injustice. Because we have such limited or faulty perceptions of circumstances or behaviors, as well as the causes and/or motivations behind them, we are often told not to get angry, as it can result in sin on our part (Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8; Titus 1:7).

When writing to Christians at Ephesus, Paul stated, "Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity" (Eph. 4:26-27). Anger is wrong when it leads us to sin (i.e. revenge, lying, gossip, murder, etc.). Because we are prone to sin, we should always be slow to anger. Scripture states, "He who is **slow to anger** has great understanding, but he who is quick-tempered exalts folly" (Prov. 14:29), and "A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but the **slow to anger** calms a dispute" (Prov. 15:18), and "He who is **slow to anger** is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city" (Prov. 16:32), and "A man's discretion makes him **slow to anger**, and it is his glory to overlook an offense" (Prov. 19:11), and "Everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and **slow to anger**; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God" (Jam. 1:19-20). As Christians, we must be careful with anger, for sin crouches near the one who harbors it, tempting us to retaliate and exact revenge upon the offending party. Personal revenge is not the Christian way, for Scripture directs us, "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord" (Rom. 12:19). More so, we are to love and pray for our enemies (Luke 6:27-29), and to bless them (Rom. 12:14; 1 Pet. 3:8-9), if perhaps God may grant them saving grace (2 Tim. 2:24-26). Though God promises to avenge the innocent (2 Thess. 1:6-7; Rev. 6:9-11; 19:1-2); there may be times when He surprises us by showing grace and mercy to those who don't deserve it, such as the grace shown to Paul when he was persecuting the church (Acts 9:1-6; Gal. 1:15-16), or the grace shown to us while we were sinners (Rom. 5:6-10).

(Introduction to Revelation 17 & 18)

Babylon is named after the city of Babel, which was founded by a descendant of Noah named Nimrod, who is described as a “mighty hunter before the Lord” (Gen. 10:9). Moses tells us that Nimrod founded several cities, namely, “Babel and Erech and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar” (Gen. 10:10). Shinar is in the region of what is today known as Iraq. Moses wrote about the origin of Babylon, with its values and practices.

Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words. It came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar [modern day Iraq] and settled there [against the command of the Lord to “fill the earth” Gen. 9:1]. They said to one another [in defiance to God], “Come, let us make bricks and burn *them* thoroughly.” And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar [they used God-given resources to act contrary to God’s wishes]. They said, “Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower [artificial mountain] whose top *will reach* into heaven [a place of worship at the top of the tower], and let us make for ourselves a name [glorifying men, not God], otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth [in defiance of God’s command to “fill the earth”].” (Gen 11:1-4)

In this passage we observe these early descendants of Noah all spoke the same language and chose to settle in the land of Shinar contrary to God’s command to “fill the earth” (Gen. 9:1). After settling, they began to use God’s resources of volition, intelligence, language, and building materials to build a city for themselves, as well as a tower into heaven. All of this was done to make a name for themselves, rather than to obey and glorify God. Babylon is identified as the birthplace of organized rebellion against God, in which people used the Lord’s resources in defiance of His will. Babylon is mentioned over three hundred times in Scripture, and by the time we get to the book of Revelation, it is seen both as a city and a system that promotes religious, political, and economic agendas that are antithetical to God. Babylon is also described as a great harlot who influences all of humanity (Rev. 17:1-5), is guilty of persecuting and murdering prophets and saints (Rev. 17:6), is a dwelling place of demons and unclean spirits (Rev. 18:2), and with whom “the kings of the earth have committed *acts of immorality* with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality” (Rev. 18:3). Eventually, Babylon is completely destroyed just prior to the Second Coming of Christ (Rev. 18:2, 10, 21).

Babylonianism is a philosophy of human autonomy that permeates all aspects of society including literature, music, art, politics, economics, business, academic

institutions, and culture at large. It is a system of values that start and end with man, and is embraced by the vast majority of people who assign no serious thought of God to their discussions, plans, or projects, but who seek to use His resources independently of His wishes. Babylonianism is also the mother of all world religions, which provide people a system of beliefs and rituals whereby they can work their way to heaven by human effort. There is even a Babylonian form of Christianity, which undermines the grace of God and convinces people they are saved by good works.

Biblical Christianity is not a religion, whereby people bring themselves to God through ritual practices or good works. Rather, it presents the truth that God is holy and can have nothing whatsoever to do with sin (Hab. 1:13; 1 John 1:5), that people are helpless to save themselves (Rom. 4:1-5; 5:6-10; Gal. 2:16; Tit. 3:5), and are under His wrath (John 3:18; 36). The gospel message is that God provided a way for helpless sinners to be saved, and this is through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (1 Cor. 15:3-4), who died in our place on the cross and paid the penalty for our sins (Rom. 5:6-8; Heb. 10:10-14; 1 Pet. 3:18). The simple truth of Scripture is that we are saved by grace alone (Eph. 2:8-9), through faith alone (John 3:16), in Christ alone (John 14:6; Acts 4:12), whose substitutionary death provides forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:13-14), eternal life (John 3:16; 10:28), and the gift of righteousness (Rom. 5:17; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9).

Biblical Christianity is more than just a way to be saved. It also provides a structured philosophical framework that tells us why everything exists (i.e. the universe, mankind, evil, etc.) and helps us to see God sovereignly at work in everything, providing purpose for our lives, and directing history toward the return of Christ. This gives us hope for the future; for “according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pet. 3:13). When properly understood and applied, Scripture guards us from harmful cultural influences (Phil. 4:6-8), and directs and enriches our lives (Ps. 119:14, 111). Jeremiah wrote, “Your words were found and I ate them, and Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; for I have been called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts” (Jer. 15:16). It sets us free to enjoy God’s world and to pursue righteousness and goodness (Rom. 6:11-13; Tit. 2:11-14).

As Christians, must be careful that we do not fall into Babylonianism, either by following the lead of those who seek to silence or pervert the voice God, or be enticed by pleasures or activities that lead us to trust in people or things instead of Him. Rather, we must consciously place God at the center of our lives and pursue His glory, and humbly serve others above our own self-interests (Phil. 2:4-8).

Revelation 17:1-18

And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, “Come here, I shall show you the judgment of the great harlot [the world-system which entices God’s people away from Him] who sits on many waters [“peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues”; vs. 15],² with whom the kings of the earth committed *acts of* immorality [politicians with religious alliances to the Babylonian system], and those who dwell on the earth [unbelievers] were made drunk with the wine of her immorality [intoxicated or overwhelmed by her immoral practices].”³ And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast [the Antichrist carries her along for a while], full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns [worldly kings and kingdoms; vs. 9-12].⁴ And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet [regal attire], and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls [attractive, only on the outside; see 1 Tim. 2:9-10 for contrast], having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality [wealthy and corrupt; cf. Jer. 51:7],⁵ and upon her forehead a name *was* written, a mystery, “Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth [the originator of all false religions; cf. Gen. 11:1-9].”⁶ And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus [religion persecutes believers]. And when I saw her, I wondered greatly.⁷ And the angel said to me, “Why do you wonder? I shall tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns [the angel explains the symbol of the woman and the beast to John].”⁸ “The beast that you saw was and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and to go to destruction [reference to the Antichrist; cf. Rev. 13:3; 19:20]. And those who dwell on the earth will wonder [earth dwellers = unbelievers], whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.”⁹ “Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits [mountains = kingdoms; cf. Ps. 30:7; Dan. 2:34-35],¹⁰ and they [the mountains] are seven kings [kings/kingdoms]; five have fallen [likely Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Greece], one is [Rome], the other has not yet come [revived Roman empire]; and when he comes, he must remain a little while.”¹¹ “And the beast [Antichrist] which was and is not, is himself also an eighth [king], and is *one* of the seven, and he goes to destruction [Rev. 19:20].”¹² “And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings [cf. Dan. 7:23-24], who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour [a short time].”¹³ “These have one purpose and they give their power and authority to the beast [surrender to Satan out of political expediency].”¹⁴ “These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them [at His Second Coming; cf. Rev. 19], because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him [at His coming] *are the* called and chosen and faithful.”¹⁵ And he said to me, “The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.”¹⁶ “And

the ten horns which you saw [world rulers], and the beast [Antichrist], these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire [the world rulers and Antichrist will overthrow the harlot and establish Antichrist as god to be worshipped; cf. 2 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 13:8, 15].¹⁷ “For God has put it in their hearts [i.e. the ten kings] to execute His [sovereign] purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God should be fulfilled.”¹⁸ “And the woman whom you saw is the great city [Babylon], which reigns over the kings of the earth.”

Summary:

Babylon is called the “great harlot” (Rev. 17:1), and who entices and intoxicates the rulers and the masses of humanity “with the wine of her immorality” (Rev. 17:2). She is seen astride a scarlet beast (i.e. Antichrist), which has seven heads and ten horns (Rev. 17:3). The woman is pictured in regal attire, wearing precious jewels, holding a gold cup full of abominations and immoralities (Rev. 17:4), and on her forehead was written, “Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth” (Rev. 17:5), and she is drunk with the blood of the saints (Rev. 17:6). Religious harlotry is the seductive promotion of false religions, ecumenicalism, and immorality that draws people away from faithfulness and obedience to God (Jer. 3:6-10; Ezek. 16:30-34; Jas. 4:4). An angel then explains the vision of the woman and the beast that carries her (Rev. 17:7). John learns the beast is the Antichrist who was wounded and revived (Rev. 17:8; cf. 13:3), and the seven heads are seven mountains (Rev. 17:9), which refer to seven kings/kingdoms (Rev. 17:10). The beast is himself an eighth king who eventually goes to destruction (Rev. 17:11). The ten horns refer to ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but will receive authority to rule with the beast for a short time, and they give their power and authority to Antichrist (Rev. 17:12-13). These rulers, led by Antichrist, wage war against the Lamb of God and are defeated by Him (Rev. 17:14). The angel then explains that the waters refer to “peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues” which are dominated by Babylonianism (Rev. 17:15). Eventually, the mutual arrangement between the great harlot, the kings of the earth and beast is dissolved, and the latter will “will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire” (Rev. 17:16). This will happen according to God’s sovereign control, “For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God should be fulfilled” (Rev. 17:17). From this verse we learn about primary and secondary causes. God never causes nor condones evil; however, He can and does control the evil actions of people to accomplish His will (cf. Gen. 45:4-5; Acts 4:26-28). The sovereignty of God in controlling people and circumstances does not abnegate the responsibility of people who act contrary to His will. The mature believer learns to see the

sovereign hand of God that lies behind all people and circumstances, and lives by faith, trusting God is in control of all events (Rom. 8:28). Finally, Babylon is described as the woman who “reigns over the kings of the earth” (Rev. 17:18).

Revelation 18:1-24

After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven [the source of judgment], having great authority, and the earth was illumined with his glory. ² And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! And she has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird [cf. Gen. 15:10-11].” ³ “For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality [they participated in its rebellion against God], and the kings of the earth have committed *acts of* immorality with her [i.e. worshipped her in place of God], and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality [capitalized on her system of pleasure].” ⁴ And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, “Come out of her, my people, that you may not participate in her sins and that you may not receive of her plagues [it is possible for believers to participate in Babylonianism; cf. 1 Jo. 2:15-17];” ⁵ for her sins have piled up [like bricks] as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities [no more grace]. ⁶ “Pay her back even as she has paid, and give back *to her* double according to her deeds; in the cup which she has mixed, mix twice as much for her [divine judgment; cf. Ex. 22:4, 7, 9].” ⁷ “To the degree that she glorified herself [rather than God] and lived sensuously [satisfying only self], to the same degree give her torment and mourning; for she says in her heart, ‘I sit *as* a queen [a high, self-exalted position] and I am not a widow, and will never see mourning [false sense of complacency].’” ⁸ “For this reason in one day [very quickly] her plagues will come [surprise judgment], pestilence and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for the Lord God who judges her is strong [able to accomplish His will].” ⁹ “And the kings of the earth [world rulers], who committed *acts of* immorality and lived sensuously with her [participated in her pleasure system], will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning, ¹⁰ standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment [not wanting to suffer with her], saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’” ¹¹ “And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her [because their investments are lost], because no one buys their cargoes any more; ¹² cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls [precious jewels – things to see] and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet [costly fabrics – things to feel], 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 [costly building and furnishing materials], ¹³ and cinnamon and spice and incense and perfume and frankincense [perfumes – things to smell] and wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep [foods – things to taste], and *cargoes* of horses and chariots [transportation] and slaves and human lives [human resources].” ¹⁴ “And the fruit you long for has gone from you, and all things that were luxurious and splendid have passed away from you and *men* will no longer find them [there will be luxurious living during the Tribulation until the return of Christ].” ¹⁵ “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 [without God, the world clings to material things],¹⁶ saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, she who was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls;¹⁷ for in one hour such great wealth has been laid waste!’ And every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor [i.e. those involved in the transport of commodities and products], and as many as make their living by the sea, stood at a distance,¹⁸ and were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What city is like the great city?’¹⁹ “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!’²⁰ “Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her [heaven, and God’s people, rejoice over the destruction of Babylon].”²¹ And a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea [visual aid], saying, “Thus will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and will not be found any longer.²² “And the sound of harpists and musicians and flute-players and trumpeters will not be heard in you any longer [no more music industry]; and no craftsman of any craft will be found in you any longer; and the sound of a mill will not be heard in you any longer [no more production of goods];²³ and the light of a lamp will not shine in you any longer; and the voice of the bridegroom and bride will not be heard in you any longer [no wedding celebrations]; for your merchants were the great men of the earth [captains of industry], because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery [sin# 1 = Babylonianism teaches that meaning and purpose are found in this world and the accumulation of things].²⁴ “And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth [sin #2 = Babylonianism promotes the persecution of God’s people].”

Summary:

In Revelation 18, Babylon is pictured as a commercial center that is destroyed by God, because it promotes the glorification of self and pleasure above Him. An angel informs John that Babylon—which is noted for its uncleanness—has fallen (Rev. 18:1-2), and that the kings and merchants of earth have participated in her spiritual immorality (Rev. 18:3). God then calls for His people to “come out of her”, so they will not participate in her sin and judgments, for her sins have reached heaven, and God is about to render judgment against her (Rev. 18:4-6). Babylon is pictured as a woman who sees herself as a complacent queen who will never experience hardship, but God will judge her in one day (Rev. 18:7-8). And the kings and merchants of the earth who enjoyed her pleasures and capitalized on her practices will weep over her destruction (Rev. 18:9-10), for all her luxurious commodities and products are destroyed (Rev. 18:12-19). But heaven, and God’s people, will rejoice because of God’s righteous judgment on her, that she is forever

destroyed (Rev. 18:20-23), because she was responsible for the murder of “prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth” (Rev. 18:24).

The Old Testament revealed the coming of the Jewish Messiah, both as a Suffering Servant (Ps. 22:6, 12-18; Isa. 50:6-7; 53:1-12; Dan. 9:26; Zech. 13:7), and as a reigning descendant of David (2 Sam. 7:16; Ps. 89:3-4, 34-37), who would establish an earthly kingdom in Israel (Ps. 2:1-12; Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-5; Jer. 23:5; Dan. 2:44; 7:13-14). The New Testament clearly identifies Jesus as the promised Messiah (Matt. 1:1, 16; Luke 1:31-33; John 1:41-42).

At His first coming, Jesus repeatedly offered the earthly Davidic kingdom to Israel (Matt. 4:17, 23; 9:35; 10:7), but His offer was rejected by the Jewish leadership and the majority of people (Matt. 11:20; Matt. 12:14; 27:22-23; Mark 15:12-15; John 19:15), so the kingdom was postponed for a future time (Matt. 21:43).

After the kingdom was rejected, Jesus began to explain to His disciples that he would be crucified, buried, and resurrected after three days (Matt. 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:18-19). He then died for our sins (John 19:1-30; cf. Mark 10:45; Rom. 5:6-8; 1 Pet. 3:18), was buried (John 19:31-42), and rose again on the third day as He'd prophesied (John 20:1-31; cf. 1 Cor. 15:3-4).

After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to numerous persons, namely, Mary Magdalene and other women (John 20:10-18; Matt. 28:8-9), two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32), the disciples without Thomas (John 20:19-25), the disciples with Thomas (John 20:26-29), the disciples by the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1-23), Peter, James, and more than 500 brethren at one time (1 Cor. 15:5-7), and the disciples at Jerusalem before His ascension (Acts 1:3-9). After His ascension, Jesus also appeared to Stephen (Acts 7:56), Paul (Acts 9:1-6; 1 Cor. 15:8), and John on the island of Patmos (Rev. 1:9-18).

Prior to His crucifixion, Jesus prophesied He would return again (Matt. 16:27; 19:28; 25:31). After His resurrection and ascension, an angel confirmed to Jesus' disciples that He would come back (Acts 1:11), and this will happen after the time of Tribulation (Matt. 24:29-30; Rev. 1:7; 19:11-16; 20:1-6).

The Second Coming is distinguished from the Rapture of the Church where Christ takes all Christians to heaven (John 14:1-3; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; cf. 1 Cor. 15:51-53). The Rapture of the Church occurs just prior to the seven year Tribulation.

Revelation 19:1-21

After these things [the destruction of Babylon and the command to heaven to rejoice; [Rev. 18:20](#)] I heard, as it were, a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven [martyred Tribulational saints; [Rev. 7:9, 13-14](#)], saying, “Hallelujah! [Hallelujah = *Praise Yahweh*, occurs 4x in NT & 24x in OT] Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; ² because His judgments are true and righteous; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality [[Rev. 17-18](#)], and He has avenged the blood of His bond-servants on her [[cf. Rev. 6:9-11](#)].” ³ And a second time they said, “Hallelujah! Her smoke rises up forever and ever.” ⁴ And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures [angelic beings] fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, “Amen. Hallelujah!” ⁵ And a voice came from the throne, saying, “Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great.” ⁶ And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude and as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns [[cf. Rev. 20:4](#)].” ⁷ “Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him [in contrast to Babylonianism which glorifies self], for the marriage of the Lamb [Jesus Christ] has come and His bride has made herself ready [the Church; [cf. 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25-27](#)].” ⁸ And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints [produced righteousness; [cf. Eph. 2:10; 4:24; Col. 1:10; Tit. 2:11-14](#)]. ⁹ And he said to me, “Write, ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb [OT and Tribulation saints; [cf. John 3:29](#)].’” And he said to me, “These are true words of God.” ¹⁰ And I fell at his feet to worship him [John was awed by the prophetic vision and fell to worship the angel]. And he said to me, “Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God [John twice recorded his failure in worshipping an angel rather than God; [cf. Rev. 22:8](#)]. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” ¹¹ And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it *is* called Faithful and True [[cf. Rev. 3:14](#)]; and in righteousness He judges and wages war [as righteous Judge, Jesus declares guilt, and as Warrior, He executes punishment]. ¹² And His eyes *are* a flame of fire [signifying purity and anger], and upon His head *are* many diadems [*διάδημα diadema* – a king’s crown]; and He has a name written *upon Him* which no one knows except Himself. ¹³ And *He is* clothed with a robe dipped in blood [“dipped in blood” = signifying previous battle experience, i.e. the Flood, Sodom, Egypt, etc.]; and His name is called The Word of God [[cf. John 1:1, 14](#)]. ¹⁴ And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white *and* clean, were following Him on white horses [same as those described in vs. 8 = believers]. ¹⁵ And from His mouth comes a sharp sword [symbolizing the spoken word of God], so that with it He may smite the nations [God is militant; [cf. Ex. 14:30-31; 15:3; Ps. 24:8](#)]; and He will rule them with a rod of iron [[Ps. 2:9](#)]; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty [[Isa. 63:1-6](#)]. ¹⁶ And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “King of kings and Lord

of lords.”¹⁷ And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, “Come, assemble for the great supper of God [“great supper of God” = a time when God consumes His enemies];¹⁸ in order 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.”¹⁹ And I saw the beast [Antichrist] and the kings of the earth [world rulers] and their armies, assembled to make war against Him who sat upon the horse, and against His army [cf. Rev. 16:12-14].²⁰ And the beast was seized [Antichrist], 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; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone [these are the first two persons cast into the lake of fire = eternal punishment].²¹ And the rest were killed with the sword [the spoken word] which came from the mouth of Him who sat upon the horse [the Living Word], and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

Summary:

In Revelation 19 Jesus Christ fulfills all the prophecy of Scripture regarding His Second Coming to earth in anticipation of the establishment of His Millennial reign in righteousness. The chapter opens with a fourfold praise of God in which martyred believers and angels shout “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; because His judgments are true and righteous; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and He has avenged the blood of His bond-servants on her” (Rev. 19:1-2; cf. 3-6). The next scene is the marriage of the Lamb, which presents Jesus as the Bridegroom and the church as His bride (Rev. 19:7-9; cf. 2 Cor. 11:2). All Christians are positionally righteous in God’s sight because of His imputed righteousness (Rom. 5:17; 2 Cor. 5:21); however, the beauty of the church is here connected with her righteous acts, for she “has made herself ready” (Rev. 19:7). John explains, “It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright *and* clean” (Rev. 19:8a), which seems to refer to the good works God prepares for us to walk in (Eph. 2:10). But we must choose that righteous life, and in doing so, we adorn ourselves with beautiful attire, “for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints” (Rev 19:8b).

The delicate balance between the sovereignty of God and human responsibility is maintained in the two phrases “has made herself ready” (she did it) and “it was given to her” (God did it). The bride’s array is “fine linen,” which is explained as “the righteous acts of the saints.” In other words, the bride’s wedding garment will be made up of the righteous deeds done in life. The bride is the bride because of the righteousness of Christ; the

bride is clothed for the wedding because of her acts. Righteous acts flow from a righteous character, which is entirely of the grace of God.³⁶

John then records the first of two incidents in which he is rebuked for bowing and worshipping an angel (Rev. 19:10; cf. 22:8). Jesus then descends from heaven on a white horse (Rev. 19:11-13), with the armies of heaven (Rev. 19:14), and defeats His enemies with a word (Rev. 19:15-16). An angel invites the birds of heaven to feast upon the corpses of those who are killed (Rev. 19:17-18). Jesus defeats the Antichrist and his armies in a moment (Rev. 19:19), and seizes the Antichrist and his false prophet and throws them alive into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 19:20; cf. Rev. 20:10). And all the birds were filled with the flesh of those defeated by Christ (Rev. 19:21). The return of Christ is praiseworthy news to those who are in heaven and on the earth who love Him and look forward to His coming. However, it is bad news to those who hate him and resist His will (2 Thess. 1:3-10; Rev. 19:11-21).

Three Major Views on the Millennium (Introduction to Revelation 20)

³⁶ Charles C. Ryrie, *Revelation: Everyman's Bible Commentary*, 128.

1. The *Premillennial view* – This view regards the thousand year reign of Christ as literal and is based on a plain reading of Revelation 20:1-6.
2. The *Postmillennial view* – This view sees the church establishing the kingdom in the hearts of men through the gospel and takes a nonliteral view of Revelation 20:1-6.
3. *Amillennial view* – This view sees Christ ruling spiritually in the hearts of men and takes a nonliteral view of Revelation 20:1-6.

The early church, for the first three hundred years, believed in a literal one thousand year reign of Christ on the earth, and was clearly premillennial. This was based on a plain reading of Scripture, taking the words of the text in a straight forward manner. Some of the early Church Fathers who held to a literal thousand year reign of Christ on the earth include: **Clement of Rome** (A.D. 40-100), **Barnabas** (A.D. 40-100), **Hermas** (A.D. 40-150), **Ignatius** (A.D. 50-115), **Polycarp** (A.D. 70-167), **Papias** (A.D. 80-163), **Justin Martyr** (A.D. 100-168), **Tatian** (A.D. 130-190), **Irenaeus** (A.D. 140-202), **Tertulian** (A.D. 150-220), **Hippolytus** (A.D. 160-240), **Apollinaris** (A.D. 150-200), **Victorinus** (A.D. 240-303), and **Methodius** (A.D. 250-311). The following quotes by early Church Fathers demonstrate the premillennial view:

But I and whatsoever Christians are orthodox in all things do know that there will be a resurrection of the flesh, and a thousand years in the city of Jerusalem, built, adorned and enlarged, according as Ezekiel, Isaiah, and other prophets have promised. For Isaiah saith of this thousand years (ch. 65:17) ‘Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind; but be ye glad and rejoice in those which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem to triumph, and my people to rejoice,’ etc. Moreover, a certain man among us, whose name is John, being one of the twelve apostles of Christ, in that revelation which was shown to him prophesied, that those who believe in our Christ shall fulfill a thousand years at Jerusalem; and after that the general, and, in a word, the everlasting resurrection, and last judgment of all together. (Justin Martyr, A.D. 100-180, *Dialogue With Trypho*, chapter 80)

But we do confess that a kingdom is promised to us upon the earth, although before heaven, only in another state of existence; inasmuch as it will be after the resurrection for a thousand years in the divinely-built city of Jerusalem, ‘letdown from heaven,’ which the apostle also calls ‘our mother from above;’ and, while declaring that our citizenship is in heaven, he predicts of it that it is really a city in heaven. This both Ezekiel had knowledge of and

the Apostle John beheld. (Tertullian, A.D. 150-220, *Against Marcion*, book 3 chapter 25)

But when the thousand years shall be completed, the world shall be renewed by God, and the heavens shall be folded together, and the earth shall be changed, and God shall transform men into the similitude of angels, and they shall be white as snow; and they shall always be employed in the sight of the Almighty, and shall make offerings to their Lord, and serve Him forever. (Lactantius, A.D. 240-320, *The Divine Institutes*, book 7, chapter 26)

It was not until theologians such as Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 150-215), and Origen (A.D. 184-254), that there was a hermeneutical shift and the Bible was read largely in an allegorical, nonliteral sense. It's important to realize that allegorical interpretation is predicated on the reader's response to the text rather than giving an emphasis to what the author intended to his original audience through the use of written language. As a result, Christians began to take the thousand year reign of Christ as nonliteral. The allegorical reading of Scripture predominated throughout church history up until the time of the Protestant Reformation, at which time there was a move back to a plain, literal reading of Scripture. Though the Reformers recovered many historical doctrines of the church, there were some that were left on the shelf, including the literal millennial reign of Christ. It was not until the mid-1800's that Christian theologians recovered the literal millennial reign of Christ as taught in Scripture and held by Christians of the early church. Today, the vast majority of Christians now accept the thousand year of Christ as biblical and historical. Although, there are still many Christians—Covenant Theologians—who reject the literal millennial reign of Christ as taught in Scripture. Though I love these men and women, and am thankful for much of their sound theology, I respectfully disagree with their eschatological views, which are based on a nonliteral reading of certain biblical passages.

The Bible reveals two aspects of God's rule over His creation. The first is His universal rule in which He sovereignly decrees whatsoever comes to pass and "works all things after the counsel of His will" (Eph. 1:11). There are times when God accomplishes His will immediately without the assistance of others (such as in the creation), and other times He chooses to work mediately through creatures, both intelligent (angels and people), and simple (Balaam's donkey). Concerning God's universal rule, Scripture reveals, "The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all" (Ps. 103:19), and "Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps" (Ps. 135:6). Daniel writes, "His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom *endures* from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and *among* the inhabitants of earth" (Dan 4:34b-35a; cf. 5:21; 1 Chron. 29:11-12).

The second is God's earthly rule in which He governs through a human mediatorial administrator. The first account of such a rule is found in Genesis where the Lord assigned Adam and Eve to rule over the whole world (Gen. 1:26-28). Theirs was a mediatorial kingdom, which may be defined as "the rule of God through a divinely chosen representative who not only speaks and acts for God but also represents the people before God; a rule which has especial reference to the earth; and having as its mediatorial ruler one who is always a member of the human race."³⁷ However, through an act of disobedience (Gen. 3:1-7), Adam and Eve forfeited their rulership to Satan, a fallen angelic creature, who rules through deception (2 Cor. 11:3, 14; Rev 12:9; 20:3, 8), blindness (2 Cor. 4:3-4), and enslavement (Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13). Since the fall of Adam and Eve, Satan has had dominion over this world and is called "the ruler of this world" (John 14:30; 16:1), "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2), and "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4). When tempting Jesus, Satan offered Him "the kingdoms of the world" (Matt. 4:8-9), and they were his to give. However, the Bible also reveals that Satan has been judged (Gen. 3:15; John 16:11), and in the future will be cast out of heaven (Rev. 12:7-9), confined for a thousand years (Rev. 20:1-3), and eventually cast into the Lake of Fire forever (Rev. 20:10). It must always be remembered that God sovereignly permits Satan a limited form of rulership for a limited period of time, always restraining him and his demonic forces, if they seek to transgress the boundaries He's established for them (Job. 1:6-12; 2:1-6; Mark 15:1-13; 2 Pet. 2:4).

Subsequent to Adam and Eve, God has worked to reestablish His kingdom on earth through the promises and covenants offered to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3), the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10), the nation Israel (Ex. 19:5-6; Deut. 29:1-29; 30:1-10; Jer.

³⁷ Alva McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom* (Winona Lake, Ind. BMH Books, 2009), 41.

31:31-33), and king David (2 Sam. 7:16; Ps. 89:3-4, 34-37). When Jesus came, He repeatedly offered the earthly kingdom to Israel (Matt. 3:1-2; Matt. 4:17; 10:5-7), a literal kingdom they could physically enter into (Matt. 5:20; 6:10; Luke 19:11; Acts 1:3-6). But they rejected Him and His offer (Matt. 11:20; Matt. 12:14; Mark 15:12-15; John 19:15); therefore, the earthly kingdom was postponed for a future time (Matt. 21:43; cf. Matt. 19:28; 25:31; Luke 22:28-30; Acts 1:3-6; Rev. 20:4-6).

We are currently living in the church age, which will come to an end when the church is raptured to heaven (1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:13-18). Afterward, there will be a period of time known as the Tribulation, which will begin when the Antichrist signs a seven year peace treaty with Israel (Dan. 9:24-27; cf. Revelation chapters 6-18). The time of Tribulation will come to an end when Jesus returns to earth to put down rebellion (Rev. 19:11-21) and establish His millennial kingdom (Matt. 25:31; Rev. 11:15; 20:1-6). The word *millennium* is derived from the Latin words *mille* which means “thousand” and *annum* which means “year”. The word *millennium* translates the Greek word χίλιοι *chilioi*, which occurs six times in Revelation 20:2-7. After His second coming, Jesus will rule the whole earth, from Jerusalem, on the throne of David (2 Sam. 7:16; Ps. 89:3-4, 34-37; Jer. 23:5-6; 33:14-15; Dan. 2:44; 7:13-14, 27; Matt. 6:10; Luke 1:30-33; cf. Mark 11:9-10), He will rule absolutely with “a rod of iron” (Ps. 2:9; Rev. 19:15), and afterward His kingdom will become an eternal kingdom (Dan. 2:44; 7:27; 1 Cor. 15:24). King David himself will be resurrected to rule with Christ (Jer. 30:9; Ezek. 34:23-24). Jesus will rule the nations in righteousness, advocating for the poor and weak, as well as suppressing wickedness and rebellion (Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-9; Jer. 23:5-6; 33:14-18). People will have good health (Isa. 35:5-6), live long lives, and experience improvements in social and economic life (Isa. 65:19-25; Amos 9:13-14), and a new worship system will be implemented (see Ezekiel chapters 40-46). There will be no more war (Isa. 2:2-4; 32:17-18; Mic. 4:1-4), and harmful animals will no longer be a threat (Isa. 11:6-9; Ezek. 34:25). Israel will possess all the Promised Land (Ezek. 36:24; 39:25-29; Amos 9:15; cf. Gen. 15:18-21), and will be exalted over the Gentiles (Isa. 14:1-2; 49:22-23; 60:14-17; 61:6-7). The earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord (Isa. 11:9; Jer. 31:33-34), and the Holy Spirit will indwell all believers (Ezek. 36:27; 37:14; cf. Jer. 31:33). The Gentiles will participate in the Jewish feasts and sacrificial system (Zech. 14:16). Satan will be bound during the reign of Christ (Rev. 20:1-3), but sadly, this will not change his rebellious nature, or the nature of those who follow him (Rev. 20:7-10).

Revelation 20:1-15

And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the abyss [[a spiritual prison – Rev. 20:7](#)] and a great chain in his hand. ² And he laid hold of the

dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan [previously cast out of heaven; Rev. 12:12-13], and bound him for a thousand years [not bound today; cf. 1 Pet. 5:8],³ and threw him into the abyss [confined as other angels; cf. 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6], and shut *it* and sealed *it* over him, so that he should not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.⁴ And I saw thrones, and they [mature Christians] sat upon them, and judgment was given to them [most likely a reference to the church; cf. 1 Cor. 6:1-3; 2 Tim. 2:12]. And I *saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God [who died as martyrs during the Tribulation], and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life [resurrected at the end of Tribulation] and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.⁵ The rest of the dead [unbelievers] did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection [πρῶτος *protos* = prior, first, chief, i.e. the most important resurrection].⁶ Blessed and holy is the one [believer] who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death [i.e. Lake of Fire; see v. 14] has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign [βασιλεύω *basileuo* - future/active/indicative] with Him for a thousand years.⁷ And when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison [in the abyss],⁸ and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, [like the battle of] Gog and Magog [mentioned in Ezekiel 38-39], to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore [multitudes will be born and reject Christ throughout His Millennial reign on the earth].⁹ And they [Satan and rebellious unbelievers] came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city [Jerusalem], and fire came down from heaven and devoured them [divine destruction].¹⁰ And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also [continue to suffer]; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.¹¹ And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it [Christ; cf. John 5:22], from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.¹² And I saw the [unrighteous] dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne [of Christ], and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life; and the [unrighteous] dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds [good works ≠ God's righteousness, which is given to those who trust in Jesus as Savior; see John 6:28-29; Rom. 3:21-28; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9].¹³ And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one *of them* [all unbelievers] according to their deeds.¹⁴ And death [which came into existence in the Garden of Eden] and Hades [the place for the dead] were thrown [together] into the lake of fire. This is the second death [eternal separation], the lake of fire.¹⁵ And if anyone's name [among unbelievers]

was not found written in the book of life [and they will not be], he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Summary:

Revelation 20 reveals that Satan will be imprisoned and Jesus will reign on the earth for a thousand years (Rev. 20:1-6), and afterward will judge the devil (Rev. 20:7-10), as well as all unbelievers (Rev. 20:11-15). The chapter opens with Satan being bound in the abyss—a spiritual prison—where he is confined for a thousand years (Rev. 20:1-3a), but afterward is released for a short time (Rev. 20:3b). Tribulational saints, who were martyred for their faith, are resurrected and will reign with Christ for a thousand years (Rev. 20:4). Unbelievers will be resurrected at the end of the millennial reign of Christ, and these are not participants in the “first resurrection” (Rev. 20:5). Concerning this, John wrote, “Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years” (Rev. 20:6). After the thousand years, Satan is released from his spiritual prison and will immediately gather unbelievers to lead them in revolt against Christ and His saints (Rev. 20:7-8); however, he and his army are quickly defeated (Rev. 20:9). It is assumed that these who revolt against Christ at the end of His millennial reign are among the many children born to those who survived the Tribulation and entered the millennium with earthly bodies. Though these descendants will grow up under the reign of Christ and will outwardly submit to Him, they will harbor resentment and unbelief, and when given the opportunity to revolt, will rise up with Satan at his release and will seek to unseat Christ from His throne. “The Millennium will prove, among other things, that a nearly perfect earthly environment (Isa. 35) and universal knowledge of the Lord (Isa. 11:9) will not change human hearts. This must be done personally and voluntarily, and multitudes will never do that during this long period.”³⁸ Satan is then thrown alive into the lake of fire, where the antichrist and false prophet have been during the thousand year reign of Christ, and there he remains forever (Rev. 20:10). Finally, John witnesses a great white throne, upon which Jesus sits, and “from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them” (Rev. 20:11). John saw “the dead”—all unbelievers—standing before the throne, and books were opened, and “the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds” (Rev. 20:12). These are all people who have died throughout human history, whether on land or sea, and who have been held captive by “death and Hades” (Rev. 20:13). Then, death and Hades, as well as all unbelievers, are thrown into the lake of fire, where they will remain forever (Rev. 20:14-15). Since those who stand before the throne do not have God’s

³⁸Charles C. Ryrie, *Revelation: Everyman’s Bible Commentary*, 133-134.

righteousness within them, they are judged according to their human good works, which are not sufficient to gain them entrance into heaven (Isa. 64:6; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 3:5), and the fact that their names are not written in the book of life will ensure their assignment to the Lake of Fire forever (Rev. 20:14-15). The great white throne judgment, as well as the lake of fire, can be avoided if one will simply trust in Christ as Savior (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 16:31; Eph. 2:8-9), receive forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:13-14), and the gifts of eternal life (John 3:16; 10:28) and righteousness (Rom. 5:17; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9).

Number and Order of the Resurrections

Concerning resurrections in general, Daniel wrote, “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to

disgrace and everlasting contempt” (Dan 12:1-2). Daniel is writing in general and referring to the resurrection of believers and unbelievers. *The resurrection of believers* means the body and soul will be reunited and spend eternity with God in heaven. *The resurrection of unbelievers* means the body and soul will be reunited and spend eternity separated from God in the Lake of Fire. We learn from other biblical passages that there are several resurrections mentioned in the Bible:

1. The resurrection of Jesus (Matt. 28:1-7; Mark 16:1-11; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-18; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; Rev. 1:5).³⁹
2. The resurrection of the church at the Rapture (1 Cor. 15:51–53; 1 Thess. 4:14–17).
3. The two witnesses who are killed and resurrected during the tribulation (Rev. 11:8-11).
4. The Tribulation saints after the Tribulation (Rev. 20:4-6).
5. Old Testament saints after the Tribulation (Job 19:25-27; Isa. 26:19; Ezek. 37:12-14; Dan 12:1-2, 13).
6. The resurrection of all unbelievers at the end of the Millennium who stand before the *Great White Throne* before being thrown into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11-15). Those who are part of the second resurrection partake of the second death (Rev. 20:14).

The “first resurrection” occurs in five stages starting with Christ, and involves only believers who will live with Christ during His millennial reign and for all eternity (Rev. 20:4-6). It is called “the first resurrection” in the Bible, “not in the sense of being number one or prior to all resurrections, but in the sense that it occurs before the final resurrection, the resurrection of the wicked.”⁴⁰ The final resurrection is for unbelievers only who will be thrown into the Lake of Fire, which will occur after the millennial reign of Christ. Charles Ryrie states:

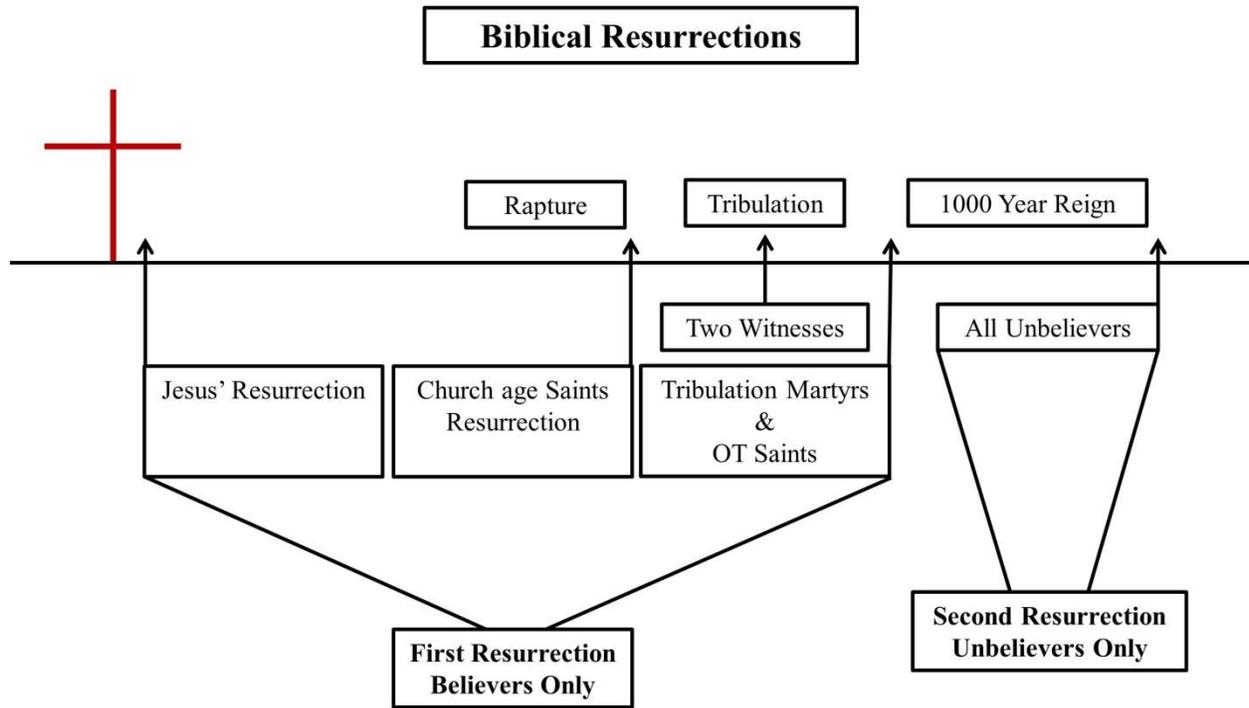
The resurrection of the just is also called the first resurrection and will occur in several stages, not all at once. The dead in Christ will be raised first at the rapture of the church (1 Thess. 4:16). The redeemed of the tribulation period who die during that time will be raised before the millennium (Rev 20:4). The redeemed of Old Testament times will also be a part of the resurrection of the just. Expositors are divided over when they will be raised, some believing that it will happen at the rapture when the church saints are raised, and others holding that it will occur at the second coming (Dan 12:2—the writer prefers the latter view)...all unsaved people of all time will be raised

³⁹Unidentified Old Testament saints were raised after Christ’s resurrection (Matt. 27:50-53). There is some question as to whether these people were resuscitated and died again like Lazarus (John 11:43-44) and Jairus’ daughter (Luke 8:52-56), or resurrected, never to die again.

⁴⁰ John F. Walvoord, *Major Bible Prophecies* (Grand Rapids: Michigan, Zondervan Publishing, 1991), 379.

after the millennium to be judged and then cast into the lake of fire forever (Rev 20:11–15). At their resurrection they will apparently be given some sort of bodies that will be able to live forever and feel the effects of the torments of the lake of fire.⁴¹

The following illustration may be helpful:



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Revelation 21:1-27

⁴¹Charles C. Ryrie, "Resurrections" *A survey of Bible doctrine*, 182-183.

Warren Wiersbe writes, “What began in Genesis is brought to completion in Revelation.”⁴²

Genesis

Revelation

Heavens and earth created, 1:1	New heavens and earth, 21:1
Sun created, 1:16	no need of the sun 21:23
The night established, 1:5	No night there, 22:5
The seas created, 1:10	No more seas, 21:1
The curse announced, 3:14–17	No more curse, 22:3
Death enters history, 3:19	No more death, 21:4
Man driven from the tree, 3:24	Man restored to paradise, 22:14
sorrow and pain begin, 3:17	No more tears or pain, 21:4

Then I saw a new [\[καινός kainos = new in a qualitative sense\]](#) heaven and a new earth [\[not the first time it is mentioned in Scripture; see Isa. 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet. 3:13\]](#); for the first heaven and the first earth passed away [\[was destroyed\]](#), and there is no longer *any* sea [\[no oceans, but still rivers; cf. Rev. 21:6; 22:1-2\]](#).² And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem [\[which previously had been compared to Sodom; Rev. 11:8\]](#), coming down out of heaven from God [\[perhaps what Jesus mentioned in John 14:1-3\]](#), made ready as a bride adorned for her husband [\[beautiful\]](#).³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne [\[of Jesus\]](#), saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them [\[for all eternity\]](#), and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,⁴ and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes [\[show of compassion\]](#); and there will no longer be *any* death [\[no more separation\]](#); there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain [\[things associated with the present world\]](#); the first things have passed away.”⁵ And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new [\[He was the first creator; cf. John 1:3; Col. 1:16\]](#).” And He said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.”⁶ Then He said to me, “It is done [\[γίνομαι ginomai – perf/act/ind = i.e. the New Creation is complete\]](#). I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost [\[cf. John 4:10-11\]](#).”⁷ “He who overcomes [\[by faith in](#)

⁴² Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2, 621.

Jesus; see [John 6:28-29, 40](#); [1 John 5:4-5](#)] will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.⁸ “But for the [\[unbelievers whose lives are characterized as\]](#) 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 [\[cf. Rev. 20:11-15\]](#).”⁹ Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, “Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.”¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God [\[which is beautiful, like a bride at her wedding\]](#),¹¹ having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like [\[comparative words\]](#) a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper.¹² It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names *were* written on them, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel.¹³ *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.¹⁴ And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them *were* the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb [\[though distinguished in the eternal state, Israel and the Church will live together in unity\]](#).¹⁵ The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall.¹⁶ The city is laid out as a square [\[like the Sacrificial Altar, the High Priest’s breastplate, and Holy of Holies; Ex. 27:1; 28:16; 2 Chron. 3:8\]](#), and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal [\[would roughly cover an area from Texas to North Dakota and Oklahoma to New York\]](#).¹⁷ And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards [\[216 feet thick\]](#), *according to* human measurements, which are *also* angelic measurements.¹⁸ The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.¹⁹ 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;²⁰ the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst.²¹ And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was [\[made from a\]](#) a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.²² I saw no temple in it [\[which was used to point people to God\]](#), for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple [\[God Himself is personally present all the time\]](#).²³ And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp *is* the Lamb.²⁴ The [\[believing\]](#) nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it [\[perhaps multitudes of believers who were born during the millennium and enter into eternity, yet live outside the New Jerusalem\]](#).²⁵ In the daytime (for there will be no night there) [\[perhaps implying we’ll never sleep\]](#) its gates will never be closed;²⁶ and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it;²⁷ and nothing unclean, and no one who

practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Summary:

John witnessed the destruction of the current heavens and earth and the creation of a new heaven and earth (Rev. 21:1; cf. 2 Pet. 3:10-13), and this included the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven (Rev. 21:2). The new Jerusalem could be what Jesus mentioned in John 14:1-3. The new creation will be free from any sin, sickness, pain, tears, or death, and will be a perfect environment where people will live and commune with God (Rev. 21:3-4). Jesus is the one who will accomplish these things, and the one who overcomes will inherit these blessings (Rev. 21:5-7), but unbelievers will be rejected (Rev. 21:8). An angel then showed John the beauty of Jerusalem which descends upon the new earth (Rev. 21:9-14), which city is fifteen hundred miles square (Rev. 21:15-16), with walls that are 72 yards thick (Rev. 21:17). It's possible the city could be shaped either like a pyramid or a cube. The material of the city consists of precious stones and jewels (Rev. 21:18-21). There will be no temple in the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:22), and the presence of God the Father and the Son will illumine the city (Rev. 21:23). The nations of the world will walk by the light of Jerusalem (Rev. 21:24-25), and will bring their glory into it (Rev. 21:26), and nothing unclean will ever appear in it (Rev. 21:27).

Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal [without pollution], coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, ² in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life [First seen in the Garden of Eden, Gen. 2:9; 3:22-24, and later Promised to believers, Rev. 2:7], bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing [θεραπεία *therapeia* – healing, care, health] of the nations. ³ There will no longer be any curse [affecting the planet; cf. Gen. 3:17-21]; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; ⁴ they will see His face, and His name *will be* on their foreheads. ⁵ And there will no longer be *any* night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever. ⁶ And he said to me, “These words are faithful and true”; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must soon take place [or happen quickly]. ⁷ “And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.” ⁸ I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things [as a witness]. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things [cf. Rev. 19:10]. ⁹ But 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.” ¹⁰ And he said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. ¹¹ “Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy.” ¹² “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward *is* with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done [salvation is by grace / rewards are by works; cf. 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:10-11]. ¹³ “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end [all creation begins and ends with Christ].” ¹⁴ Blessed are those [believers] who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. ¹⁵ Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying [i.e. all unbelievers]. ¹⁶ “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.” 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 wishes take the water of life without cost [salvation is free to those who want it]. ¹⁸ I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; ¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book [such activity would indicate unbelief]. ²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming quickly.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus [John agrees]. ²¹ The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

Summary:

Revelation 22 provides a further description of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 22:1-5), as well as a closing epilogue to the book (Rev. 22:6-21). The chapter opens with a scene in which John is shown “a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Rev. 22:1). On either side of the river is the tree of life, which bears “twelve *kinds of* fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations” (Rev. 22:2). There will not be any curse upon the creation, for “the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; they will see His face, and His name *will be* on their foreheads” (Rev. 22:3-4). And there will be no need of the light of a lamp, or of the sun, “because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever” (Rev. 22:5). The angel then tells John, “these words are faithful and true” (Rev. 22:6), which means they can be accepted as fact. The theme of the book is reiterated in verse 7, where we are told that Jesus is coming quickly (cf. 12, 20), and there is a blessing pronounced upon those who take seriously the words of this prophecy (Rev. 22:7). In a moment of emotional fervor, John then falls at the feet of the angel and worships him, and for a second time is rebuked and told to “worship God” (Rev. 22:8-9; cf. 19:10). John is instructed not to seal up the words of this prophecy (Rev. 22:10), and is informed that people, both the wicked and the righteous, will continue as they are (Rev. 22:11). Jesus then states that He is “coming quickly” and will reward each person according to his deeds (Rev. 22:12; cf. 1 Cor. 3:10-15; 2 Cor. 5:10-11). As the “Alpha and Omega” (Rev. 22:13), the eternal One, He can promise and fulfill His word. He then contrasts the righteous with the wicked. The former have the right to eat from the “tree of life” (Rev. 22:14), whereas the wicked are those “outside” of God’s blessing (Rev. 22:15). Jesus’ word is confirmed through His messenger to the churches. He then describes Himself as “the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star” (Rev. 22:16; cf. Matt. 1:1). The Holy Spirit and the church (called a “bride”) extend an offer of salvation to any who will heed, saying, “let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost” (Rev. 22:17). The book closes with a pronouncement of cursing to anyone who adds or subtracts from the words of this prophecy (Rev. 22:18-19), and a final word that Jesus is “coming quickly” (Rev. 22:20). John then writes, “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen” (Rev. 22:21).