

The Book Of Revelation



**A Study Guide With Introductory Comments,
Summaries, And Review Questions**

Student Edition

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To God Be The Glory!

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This study guide was designed for adult Bible classes, though it might be suitable for junior and senior high classes as well. Some have used it for personal devotions, and others in small study groups.

- **Points to ponder** for each chapter are things I emphasize during the class.
- **Detailed outlines** for each chapter might be useful for sermon or class preparation.
- **Review questions** are intended to reinforce key thoughts in each chapter. There is a “teacher’s edition” available with answers included.

The Book Of Revelation

Introduction

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place.” (Re 1:1)

So begins the book of Revelation, one of the most challenging books in the Bible. It is the first book that many new to the Bible want to study, while it is often neglected by mature Christians. It has been used by false teachers and prophets to lead people into doomsday cults. Yet when properly handled, it can be a wonderful blessing to those who read and meditate upon it.

Who wrote this book? How is it unique? How should we interpret it? Why should we study it? These are questions we will seek to answer in this introduction.

Unique Nature Of The Book

Revelation is certainly different from other books of the New Testament. It is also very different from any kind of writing that is familiar to most people today. Unfortunately, this has caused some people to shy away from the book; or on the other hand, to misuse it in propagating wild and fanciful theories. Most people conclude it is just too mysterious to understand. But it was actually written to make things clearer! The word “revelation” in the Greek is **apokalupsis**, which means “an uncovering” or “unveiling.” It is therefore a book designed to uncover or unveil, not conceal.

Part of the challenge in understanding the book is that it is written in a style not familiar to modern man. It is an example of what is called “**apocalyptic literature**” which was quite popular from 200 B.C. to 200 A.D. As such, it was a type of literature well known to the Jews and Christians of the first century church. Features of apocalyptic literature include the use of highly symbolic or figurative language (cf. “signified”, **Re 1:1**). It was normally written in times of persecution, usually depicting the conflict between good and evil.

There are other examples of apocalyptic literature in the Bible. In the Old Testament, for example, the books of **Ezekiel**, **Daniel**, and **Zechariah** each contain elements of this style of writing. In the New Testament, **Matthew 24** contains apocalyptic elements.

Understanding The Book

The early church likely did not have the problem understanding the book as we do today. They were well acquainted with the style of apocalyptic literature. They were living at a time when the symbols of the book were likely familiar to them (similar to how a picture of a donkey fighting an elephant would be understood by us as depicting conflict between the Democratic and Republican parties). In fact, I believe the book was originally intended to be understood by a casual hearing, as implied by the opening beatitude:

“Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.” (Re 1:3)

This verse suggests a setting in which one is reading while others listen. The listeners were expected to understand enough to be blessed by what they heard.

Our difficulty with this book is due to our unfamiliarity with apocalyptic literature as a method of communicating a message. We are also far removed from the historical and cultural context of the times which would make the symbolism easier to understand. To properly interpret the book, we must try to understand the historical context in which it was written. We must also interpret it in a manner that would have been meaningful to those to whom it was first addressed. It also behooves us to pay close attention to those passages or statements which are clear and easy to understand.

Methods Of Interpretation

Different methods of interpreting the book generally fall into four views:

The “preterist” view - The book refers to events that were fulfilled in the first century A.D., or shortly thereafter. It was written primarily to encourage the original readers. Its value for today would therefore be didactic (teaching the value of faithfulness to God).

The “historicist” view - The book provides a panoramic view of the experience of the church as it proceeds throughout history. This view finds in the book such events as the rise of Catholicism, Islam, the Protestant reformation, world wars, etc., ending with the return of Christ. As such it would encourage Christians no matter when they lived.

The “futurist” view - Apart from the first few chapters, the book depicts events which immediately precede the second coming of Christ. Therefore most of the book has yet to be fulfilled (or is being fulfilled now), and its value is primarily for Christians who will be living at the time Jesus returns.

The “idealist” view - The book does not deal with any specific historical situation. Instead, it is simply enforcing the principle that good will ultimately triumph over evil. As such the book is applicable to any age.

Preferred Method Of Interpretation

I believe a proper interpretation of the book incorporates some of all these views. In my estimation, the “preterist” view has the most merit for the following reasons:

- The book was written specifically to seven churches in Asia (modern Turkey) - **Re 1:4**
- Its purpose was to uncover or reveal “things which must shortly come to pass” - **Re 1:1,3; 22:6,10**
- John was told, “Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand” - **Re 22:10**

Compare the last two points with **Daniel 8:26**, where Daniel was told to “seal up” his vision, “for it refers to many days in the future”. We know that his vision was fulfilled within several hundred years. John, however, was told “do not seal” what he had seen, “for the time is at hand”. How could this be, if the bulk of Revelation refers to what has yet to occur almost two thousands later? This is a problem I see with the “futurist” view, which places primary fulfillment of the book thousands of years after its composition.

Place yourself in the position of those Christians in the churches of Asia in the first century. They were told that the things described in the Revelation would “shortly come to pass”, which should comfort them. But according to the “futurist” view, it has been nearly 2000 years and much of the book has yet to be fulfilled! That would be like someone today writing that something is soon coming to pass, when in reality it will be 4000 A.D. before it

does! How would a book depicting events to occur thousands of years in the future comfort those who were suffering in the first century A.D.?

This is not to say there are no “futurist” elements in the book. I understand **chapters 20-22** to deal with the ultimate destiny of the redeemed, which would have been of great interest and comfort to the Christians suffering in the first century.

My approach to the book, therefore, will be primarily from the **preterist** viewpoint, with occasional elements from other viewpoints.

The Author

John, identified as one “who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ” (**Re 1:1-2**). While debated by some, he was most likely **the apostle John**, brother of James, and author of the gospel of John and three epistles. His authorship of this book is supported by the testimony of Justin Martyr (165 A.D.), Clement of Alexandria (220 A.D.), Hippolytus (236 A.D.), and Origen (254 A.D.).

Date Of The Book

Dating when the book was written is not without controversy. When one dates the book will certainly have a bearing upon one’s interpretation of the book, especially if one follows the “preterist” view. Two dates are usually proposed:

- An “early date”, around **64-68 A.D.**, during the reign of the Roman emperor, Nero
- A “late date”, around **95-96 A.D.**, during the reign of emperor Domitian

The external evidence (evidence outside the book itself) is inconclusive. In support for the late date, appeal is often made to a statement of Iraneus who lived in the late 2nd century A.D. His statement is rather ambiguous, however, and can be understood in several ways (see *Redating The New Testament*, by John A. T. Robinson, for a detailed examination of Iraneus’ quotation).

In support for the early date, the Syriac version of the New Testament (dating back to the 2nd century A.D.) says the book was written during the reign of Nero. The Muratorian Fragment (170-190 A.D.) and the Monarchian Prologues (250-350 A.D.) claim that Paul wrote to seven churches following the pattern of John’s example in Revelation, placing the book of Revelation even before some of the Pauline epistles (*Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Vol. 12; p. 406).

Because of the contradictory nature of the external evidence, I place more weight on the internal evidence (evidence from within the book itself). I believe the book itself supports a date of 70 A.D., before the destruction of Jerusalem and during the reign of Vespasian.

This internal evidence includes the following:

- In **Re 11:1-14** the temple, which was demolished in August of 70 A.D., is still standing. Advocates of the “late date” naturally understand this passage in a strictly figurative sense. While somewhat figurative, the allusion to the crucifixion of our Lord (**Re 11:8**) compel us to think of the historical Jerusalem (Philip Schaff).
- In **Re 17:9-11**, we find mention of EIGHT “kings”. If these “kings” are emperors of Rome, then starting with Augustus the first FIVE were: Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius and Nero (who died June 9, 68 A.D.). Nero’s death left the empire in an uproar. This may be the “deadly wound” in **Re 13:3,12,14**. Three men (Galba, Otho,

and Vitellius) tried vainly to consolidate power over the empire, but it was Vespasian who restored order in 70 A.D. Thus, the “deadly wound” was healed, and Vespasian would be the SIXTH “king” (or the “one is” in **Re 17:10**). This would make Titus the SEVENTH emperor and Domitian the EIGHTH.

- Notice carefully, that in **Re 17:8,11** John was told that the beast “*is not*”. It “*was*”, and “*is about to come*” (ASV), but at the time the Revelation was being given, the beast “**IS NOT**”! If we understand (as I do) that the “beast” represents imperial Rome as personified in its emperors Nero and Domitian, then Revelation could NOT have been written during the reigns of either Nero or Domitian!
- The condition of persecution that had been experienced already by those in the book are similar to that mentioned by Peter. He wrote to the Christians in Asia Minor also, just a few years before (cf. **1Pe 1:1**). They were undergoing persecution similar to that described in **Re 2 & 3** (cf. **1Pe 1:6; 4:12; 5:9**); i.e., persecution by the Jews with the help of Roman authorities, something that had been going on since the days of Paul’s first missionary journey.

Therefore I suggest the internal evidence indicates that the Revelation was given during the reign of VESPASIAN, the SIXTH emperor, while the “*beast is not*”. This would place the date of the book around **the spring of 70 A.D.** (as suggested by Philip Schaff, *History Of The Church*, Vol. I). A date between the death of Nero in 68 A.D. and the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. was also favored by F. J. A. Hort, J. B. Lightfoot, and B. F. Westcott (John A. T. Robinson, *Redating The New Testament*, p. 224). Another advocate of an early date is F. F. Bruce.

Referring to Philip Schaff, who at one time held the “late date”, I find his following quotation to be of interest:

“The early date is best suited for the nature and object of the Apocalypse, and facilitates its historical understanding. Christ pointed in his eschatological discourses to the destruction of Jerusalem and the preceding tribulation as the great crisis in the history of the theocracy and the type of the judgment of the world. And there never was a more alarming state of society.”

“The horrors of the French Revolution were confined to one country, but the tribulation of the six years preceding the destruction of Jerusalem extended over the whole Roman empire and embraced wars and rebellions, frequent and unusual conflagrations, earthquakes and famines and plagues, and all sorts of public calamities and miseries untold. It seemed, indeed, that the world, shaken to its very center, was coming to a close, and every Christian must have felt that the prophecies of Christ were being fulfilled before his eyes.”

“It was at this unique juncture in the history of mankind that St. John, with the consuming fire in Rome and the infernal spectacle of the Neronian persecution behind him, the terrors of the Jewish war and the Roman interregnum around him, and the catastrophe of Jerusalem and the Jewish theocracy before him, received those wonderful visions of the impending conflicts and final triumphs of the Christian church. His was truly a book of the times and for the times, and administered to the persecuted brethren the one but all-sufficient consolation: Maranatha! Maranatha!” (*History of The Christian Church*, Vol. I, pp. 836-837)

The Purpose Of The Book

Its purpose is clearly stated at the beginning and end of the book (cf. **Re 1:1,3; 22:6,10**):

To reveal “things which must shortly come to pass”

In particular, it is a revelation from Christ Himself of the judgment to come upon those who were persecuting His people (cf. **Re 6:9-11; 16:5-7**). This judgment was directed especially toward those who had been deceived by Satan to attack the Church of Christ. As stated by Philip Schaff:

“Undoubtedly he had in view primarily the overthrow of Jerusalem and heathen Rome, the two great foes of Christianity at that time.”

Again, I would suggest that the purpose of the book is to reveal how Christ was going to bring judgment on Jerusalem and Rome for rejecting God and persecuting His people. This judgment occurred with the destruction of Jerusalem in the fall of 70 A.D., and with the final cessation of persecution by Rome in 313 A.D. when Constantine became an emperor supportive of Christianity.

In fulfilling this purpose, the book is designed to warn and comfort. For erring disciples, it is **a book of warning** (“repent” or else, cf. **Re 2:5,16**). For faithful disciples, it is **a book of comfort** (“blessed” are those who “overcome”, cf. **Re 1:3; 2:7; 3:21; 14:13; 22:14**).

Key Verse

If there is one verse that summarizes the **theme** of the book of Revelation, it is this one:

“These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.” (Re 17:14)

Outline

INTRODUCTORY MATERIAL (Re 1:1-3:22)

1. Introduction (Re 1:1-20)
 - a. Prologue and blessings (Re 1:1-3)
 - b. Greetings and doxology (Re 1:4-6)
 - c. Prophecy and proclamation (Re 1:7-8)
 - c. Vision of Christ among the lampstands (Re 1:9-20)
2. Letters to the seven churches of Asia (Re 2:1-3:22)
 - a. The church at Ephesus (Re 2:1-7)
 - b. The church at Smyrna (Re 2:8-11)
 - c. The church at Pergamos (Re 2:12-17)
 - d. The church at Thyatira (Re 2:18-29)
 - e. The church at Sardis (Re 3:1-6)
 - f. The church at Philadelphia (Re 3:7-13)
 - g. The church at Laodicea (Re 3:14-22)

I. VISIONS OF JUDGMENT AGAINST JERUSALEM (Re 4:1-11:19)

A. THE THRONE SCENE (Re 4:1-5:14)

1. God on the throne (Re 4:1-11)
2. The Lamb worthy to open the scroll (Re 5:1-14)

B. THE OPENING OF SEVEN SEALS (Re 6:1-8:1)

1. First seal: The white horse and its rider (Re 6:1-2)
2. Second seal: The red horse and its rider (Re 6:3-4)
3. Third seal: The black horse and its rider (Re 6:5-6)
4. Fourth seal: The pale horse and its riders (Re 6:7-8)
5. Fifth seal: The martyrs under the altar (Re 6:9-11)
6. Sixth seal: Cataclysmic disturbances (Re 6:12-17)
7. Interlude (Re 7:1-17)
 - a. Sealing of the 144,000 on earth (Re 7:1-8)
 - b. The great multitude in heaven (Re 7:9-17)
8. Seventh seal: Silence in heaven (Re 8:1)

C. THE SOUNDING OF SEVEN TRUMPETS (Re 8:2-11:19)

1. Seven angels prepare to sound their trumpets (Re 8:2-6)
2. First trumpet: Third of vegetation destroyed (Re 8:7)
3. Second trumpet: Third of sea creatures and ships destroyed (Re 8:8-9)
4. Third trumpet: Third of rivers and springs become bitter, many die (Re 8:10-11)
5. Fourth trumpet: Third of sun, moon, and stars struck, affecting day and night (Re 8:12)
6. Three-fold woe announced (Re 8:13)
7. Fifth trumpet (first woe): Locusts from the bottomless pit, sent to torment men (Re 9:1-12)
8. Sixth trumpet (second woe): Four angels with an army of two hundred million, killing a third of mankind (Re 9:13-21)
9. Interlude (Re 10:1-11:14)
 - a. The angel with the little book (Re 10:1-11)
 - b. The two witnesses and destruction of Jerusalem (Re 11:1-13)
10. Seventh trumpet (third woe): The victory of Christ and His kingdom proclaimed (Re 11:14-19)

II. VISIONS OF JUDGMENT AGAINST ROME (Re 12:1-19:21)**A. THE GREAT CONFLICT (Re 12:1-14:20)**

1. The Woman, Child, Dragon, and rest of the Woman's offspring (Re 12:1-17)
2. The beast from the sea (Re 13:1-10)
3. The beast from the land (Re 13:11-18)
4. The Lamb and the 144,000 on Mount Zion (Re 14:1-5)
5. Proclamations of three angels (Re 14:6-13)
6. Reaping the earth's harvest, and the grapes of wrath (Re 14:14-20)

B. THE SEVEN BOWLS OF WRATH (Re 15:1-16:21)

1. Prelude to pouring out the seven bowls of wrath (Re 15:1-8)
2. First bowl: Sores on those who worshipped the beast and his image (Re 16:1-2)
3. Second bowl: Sea turns to blood, all sea creatures die (Re 16:3)
4. Third bowl: Rivers and springs turn to blood (Re 16:4-7)
5. Fourth bowl: Men are scorched by the sun (Re 16:8-9)
6. Fifth bowl: Pain and darkness upon the beast and his kingdom (Re 16:10-11)
7. Sixth bowl: Euphrates dried up, three unclean spirits gather the kingdoms of the earth for the battle at Armageddon (Re 16:12-16)

8. Seventh bowl: Great earthquake, great city divided, Babylon is remembered, cataclysmic events (Re 16:17-21)

C. THE FALL OF BABYLON, THE HARLOT (Re 17:1-19:10)

1. The scarlet woman and the scarlet beast (Re 17:1-6)
2. The mystery of the woman and beast explained (Re 17:7-18)
3. The fall of Babylon the great proclaimed and mourned (Re 18:1-24)
4. The exaltation in heaven over the fall of the great harlot (Re 19:1-5)
5. The announcement of the marriage supper of the Lamb (Re 19:6-10)

D. THE DEFEAT OF THE BEAST AND FALSE PROPHET (19:11-21)

1. Christ the victorious warrior and King of kings (Re 19:11-16)
2. The beast, his armies and false prophet (land beast) are defeated (Re 19:17-21)

III. VISIONS OF THE FUTURE AND BEYOND (Re 20:1-22:5)

A. THE REIGN OF CHRIST AND HIS SAINTS (Re 20:1-6)

1. Satan bound for a thousand years, unable to deceive nations (Re 20:1-3)
2. Saints (martyrs and faithful) reign with Christ (Re 20:4-6)

B. THE RELEASE AND DEFEAT OF SATAN (Re 20:7-10)

1. Satan released to deceive the nations once more (Re 20:7-8)
2. Makes one last effort, but defeated once for all (Re 20:9-10)

C. THE FINAL JUDGMENT (Re 20:11-15)

1. Great white throne judgment, with earth and heaven no more (Re 20:11-13)
2. Death and Hades cast into the lake of fire, along with those whose names were not in the Book of Life (Re 20:14-15)

D. ETERNAL DESTINY OF THE REDEEMED (Re 21:1-22:5)

1. The new heaven and new earth, God dwelling with His people in the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven (Re 21:1-8)
2. The New Jerusalem described (Re 21:9-27)
3. The water of life, tree of life, throne of God and the Lamb (Re 22:1-5)

CONCLUDING MATERIAL (Re 22:6-21)

1. The time is near, do not seal up the book (Re 22:6-11)
2. The testimony of Jesus, the Spirit, and the bride (Re 22:12-17)
3. Warning not to tamper with the book, and closing prayers (Re 22:18-21)

Review Questions

- 1) **What is this book called? (1:1)**
- 2) **What is the meaning of the Greek word (apokalupsis) translated “revelation”?**
- 3) **What style of literature is the book of Revelation?**

- 4) What are some of the typical features of such literature?
- 5) What is important to know to properly interpret the book?
- 6) What are the four major views of interpreting the book?
- 7) Which view is suggested in this introduction?
- 8) Who is the author of this book? (1:1-2)
- 9) What dates are usually suggested for the book?
- 10) Which date is suggested in this study? (and by Schaff, McGuiggan, and others)
- 11) What is the purpose of the book? (1:13; 22:10,16)
- 12) Who do I propose to be the two major enemies used by Satan?
- 13) What is the key verse that summarizes the book?
- 14) From the outline above, what are the three main divisions of the book?

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The Book Of Revelation

Chapter One

The Revelation of Jesus Christ begins with a clear statement of origin and purpose. Given to Jesus by God to show His servants things which must soon take place, it is designed to bless those who read, hear and keep the words of the prophecy (1-3). John then addresses the seven churches in Asia (western Turkey), offering grace and peace from each member of the Godhead with descriptive terms which become more significant later in the epistle (4-6). His greeting is followed with a declaration concerning the Lord's coming, and a self-designation as expressed by the Lord Himself (7-8).

At this point John explains how he was commissioned to record the Revelation. While on the island of Patmos (likely in exile for preaching the word of God), he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day when he heard a loud voice behind him. The voice identified itself as "the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last", and then charged him to write what he saw to seven churches in Asia (9-11). Turning to see the voice, John saw seven golden lampstands and in their midst the Son of Man. Describing the awesome appearance of the Son of Man and his own reaction, John then records how Jesus comforted and then charged him to write what he has seen and will see (12-19). The chapter ends with the Lord's explanation that the seven stars in His right hand represent the angels (messengers?) of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands signify the seven churches themselves (20).

Points To Ponder

- That the book was written to specific churches of things that would soon take place
- The implications of what is said about Jesus, in the greeting by John and in the words of Jesus Himself

Outline

I. INTRODUCTION (1-8)

A. INTRODUCTION AND BENEDICTION (1-3)

1. Introducing the Revelation of Jesus Christ (1-2)
 - a. Which God gave Him to show His servants
 - b. Regarding things which much shortly take place
 - c. Sent and signified by His angel
 - d. To His servant John, who bore witness...
 - 1) To the word of God
 - 2) To the testimony of Jesus Christ
 - 3) To all things that he saw
2. The benediction (3)
 - a. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear this prophecy
 - b. Blessed are those who keep those things written in it, for the time is near

B. GREETINGS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES (4-6)

1. From John, to the seven churches in Asia (4a)

2. With grace and peace (**4b-6**)
 - a. From Him who is and who was and who is to come
 - b. From the seven Spirits who are before His throne
 - c. From Jesus Christ
 - 1) The faithful witness
 - 2) The firstborn from the dead
 - 3) The ruler over the kings of the earth
 - 4) Who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood
 - 5) Who made us kings and priests to His God and Father

-- To Whom be glory and dominion forever and ever!

C. ANNOUNCEMENT OF CHRIST'S COMING (7)

1. He is coming with clouds
 2. Every eye will see Him, and they also who pierced Him
 3. All the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him
- Even so, Amen (so be it)

D. THE SELF-DESIGNATION (8)

1. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End"
2. "Who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty"

II. THE VISION OF THE SON OF MAN (9-20)

A. JOHN'S CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING UP TO THE VISION (9-10a)

1. Their brother and companion (**9a**)
 - a. In tribulation
 - b. In the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ
2. On the island called Patmos (**9b**)
 - a. For the word of God
 - b. For the testimony of Jesus Christ
3. In the Spirit on the Lord's Day (**10a**)

B. WHAT HE HEARD BEHIND HIM (10b-11)

1. A loud voice, as of a trumpet (**10b**)
2. Saying to him... (**11**)
 - a. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last"
 - b. "What you see, write in a book"
 - c. "Send it to the seven churches which are in Asia..."

C. WHAT HE SAW, AND HIS REACTION (12-17a)

1. Turning to see the voice, he saw... (**12-16**)
 - a. Seven golden lampstands
 - b. In the midst of the seven lampstands, One like the Son of Man
 - 1) Clothed with a garment down to the feet, girded about the chest with a golden band
 - 2) His head and hair white as wool, white as snow
 - 3) His eyes like a flame of fire
 - 4) His feet like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace
 - 5) His voice as the sound of many waters
 - 6) In His right hand, seven stars

- 7) Out of His mouth, a sharp two-edged sword
- 8) His countenance like the sun shining in its strength
- 2. Seeing Him, John fell at His feet as dead (17)

D. THE LORD'S WORDS TO JOHN (17b-20)

- 1. "Do not be afraid" (17b-18)
 - a. "I am the First and the Last"
 - b. "I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen."
 - c. "I have the keys of Hades and of Death."
- 2. "Write..." (19)
 - a. "The things which you have seen"
 - b. "The things which are"
 - c. "The things which will take place after this"
- 3. "The mystery of the seven stars...and the seven golden lampstands" (20)
 - a. "The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches"
 - b. "The seven lampstands...are the seven churches"

Review Questions

- 1) What are the main points of this chapter?
- 2) What was Jesus intending to show His servants? (1)
- 3) How is John described in verse 2?
- 4) Who is this book designed to bless? Why? (3)
- 5) To whom was the book addressed? (4,11)
- 6) How is God described in the greeting from John? The Holy Spirit? (4)
- 7) How is Jesus Christ described by John in this greeting? (5-6)
- 8) What is said about the coming of Christ? (7)

- 9) How does the Lord designate Himself? (8)**
- 10) How does John identify himself to His readers? (9a)**
- 11) Where and when did John receive the Revelation? (9b-10)**
- 12) What did he hear a loud voice say? (11)**
- 13) When he turned to see the voice, what did he see? (12-13)**
- 14) How does John describe the Son of Man? (13-16)**
- 15) What was John's reaction when he saw Him? What was he first told? (17)**
- 16) How does the Son of Man identify Himself? (17-18)**
- 17) What was John told to write? (19)**
- 18) What is the explanation of the seven stars and seven golden lampstands? (20)**

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Chapter Two

In this chapter John is instructed to write to four churches in Asia: **Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, and Thyatira**. The Lord generally follows the same format: His self-designation, commendation, condemnation and related warning, exhortation and promise. Each letter closes with the admonition, *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”* This suggests the letters were not just for the personal benefit of the churches addressed.

The church at **Ephesus** is commended for its steadfastness, especially against false apostles. But while standing for the truth, they had lost their first love. Exhorted to repent and be restored by doing the “first works”, they are warned that their “lampstand” would be removed if they did not repent (1-7).

The church at **Smyrna** is commended for being “rich” despite their tribulation and poverty. Unlike most churches, there are no words of condemnation directed toward it. While they would experience a little persecution, they are exhorted to remain faithful to death (8-11).

The church at **Pergamos** is also praised for its steadfastness, but faulted for allowing false teachers in their midst. The Lord threatens to come and fight with the sword of His mouth if there is no repentance (12-17).

The church at **Thyatira** is also commended, for their last works are more than their first. But they too have a false teacher and followers which jeopardize the condition of the church. Despite giving this “Jezebel” time to repent, she has not and so the Lord intends to make her and her followers an example before the other churches (18-29).

I find noteworthy the connection between these letters with what was seen in chapter one, and what will be seen in succeeding chapters. In most cases the Lord’s self-designation borrows something from the vision of the Son of Man in chapter one, which relates somehow with the particular message in which it is found. Also, we will see how most of the promises to those who overcome will be fulfilled in the unfolding of the visions that begin in chapter four.

Points To Ponder

- The condition of each church: their strengths and weaknesses, the warnings and promises given
- How the fulfillment of most promises is described later in the visions to come

Outline

I. LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS (1-7)

A. THE LORD’S SELF-DESIGNATION (1)

1. “He who holds the seven stars in His right hand”
2. “Who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands”

B. COMMENDATION (2-3,6)

1. For their works, labor and patience
 - a. They cannot bear those who are evil, having tested those who say they are apostles but were liars
 - b. Their perseverance, patience and labor for His name's sake, not growing weary
2. They hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, as does the Lord

C. CONDEMNATION AND WARNING (4-5)

1. Condemnation
 - a. The Lord has something against them
 - b. They have left their first love
2. Warning
 - a. Remember from where they have fallen
 - b. Repent and do the first works
 - c. Or the Lord will come quickly and remove their lampstand from its place

D. EXHORTATION AND PROMISE (7)

1. Hear what the Spirit says to the churches
2. To him who overcomes, He will give to eat from the tree of life in the midst of the Paradise of God

II. LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA (8-11)

A. THE LORD'S SELF-DESIGNATION (8)

1. "The First and the Last"
2. "Who was dead, and came to life"

B. COMMENDATION (9a)

1. For the works, tribulation, and poverty
2. But they are rich

C. EXHORTATION AND PROMISE (9b-11)

1. The Lord knows those who claim to be Jews but are a synagogue of Satan
2. Do not fear what they are about to suffer
 - a. The devil is about throw some into prison, that they may be tested
 - b. They will have tribulation ten days
3. Be faithful unto death, and He will give them a crown of life
4. Hear what the Spirit says to the churches
5. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death

III. LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN PERGAMOS (12-17)

A. THE LORD'S SELF-DESIGNATION (12)

1. "Who has the sharp two-edged sword"

B. COMMENDATION (13)

1. He knows their works, and where they dwell, where Satan's throne is
2. For holding fast to His name
3. For not denying His faith even when Antipas was killed among them

C. CONDEMNATION AND WARNING (14-16)

1. Condemnation
 - a. They have those who hold the doctrine of Balaam
 - 1) Who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before Israel
 - 2) To eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality
 - b. They have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which He hates
2. Warning
 - a. Repent or He will come to them quickly
 - b. He will fight against them with the sword of His mouth

D. EXHORTATION AND PROMISE (17)

1. Hear what the Spirit says to the churches
2. To him who overcomes, He will give...
 - a. Some of the hidden manna to eat
 - b. A white stone with a new name written on it which no one knows except he who receives it

IV. LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN THYATIRA (18-29)**A. THE LORD'S SELF-DESIGNATION (18)**

1. "The Son of God"
2. "Who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass"

B. COMMENDATION (19)

1. For their works, love, service, faith, and patience
2. Their last works are more than the first

C. CONDEMNATION AND WARNING (20-24)

1. Condemnation
 - a. They allow that woman Jezebel
 - 1) Who calls herself a prophetess
 - 2) To teach and beguile His servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols
 - b. Whom the Lord had given time to repent of her sexual immorality, but she did not
2. Warning
 - a. He will cast her into a sickbed
 - b. Those who commit adultery with her will have great tribulation, unless they repent
 - c. He will kill her children with death; and the churches will know that He searches the minds and hearts
 - d. He will give to each one according to their works
 - e. For those in Thyatira who do not follow her doctrine, or have not known the depths of Satan, as they call it, He places on them no other burden

E. EXHORTATION AND PROMISE (25-29)

1. Hold fast what they have till He come
2. To him who overcomes and keeps His works until the end...
 - a. He will give power over the nations, just as He received from the Father
 - b. He will give the morning star

3. Hear what the Spirit says to the churches

Review Questions

- 1) **What are the main points of this chapter?**

- 2) **What pattern is generally followed in these letters to the churches?**

- 3) **What is often the basis for the Lord's self-designation in the letters? (1,8,12,18)**

- 4) **For what does the Lord commend the church in Ephesus? (2-3)**

- 5) **For what does the Lord condemn them? (4)**

- 6) **What solution does Jesus give for restoring their first love? (5)**

- 7) **What warning does Jesus give the church in Ephesus? (5)**

- 8) **For what else does Jesus commend them? (6)**

- 9) **For what does the Lord commend the church in Smyrna? (9)**

- 10) **Who was guilty of blasphemy in Smyrna? (9)**

- 11) **Why were they not to fear what they were about to suffer? (10)**

- 12) **For what does the Lord commend the church in Pergamos? (13)**

- 13) **What is said about where they dwell? (13)**

14) For what does the Lord condemn them? (14-15)

15) What warning does Jesus give the church in Pergamos? (16)

16) For what does the Lord commend the church in Thyatira? (19)

17) For what does the Lord condemn them? (20)

18) What does the Lord say about the woman who calls herself a prophetess? (21-23)

19) What exhortation does He give the church at Thyatira? (25)

20) What exhortation is given at the end of each letter? (7,11,17,29)

21) List the promises given in this chapter to those who overcome (7,11,17,26-28)

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Chapter Three

The Lord continues His letters to the churches in Asia, with this chapter containing those written to Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. The church in **Sardis** is rebuked for having a name that they are alive, when in reality they are dead. With their works not perfected before God, they are exhorted to be watchful and to strengthen the things which remain. They are also told to remember how they had received and heard in the past, to hold fast and repent. Otherwise, the Lord will come upon them as a thief in the night. Notice is taken, however, of a few in Sardis who had not defiled their garments and are still worthy, who are promised to walk with the Lord in white (**1-6**).

The church in **Philadelphia** is promised an open door that none can shut because they had kept the Lord's word and not denied His name. Their enemies, those who claim to be Jews but are not, will be made to worship before them, and the church will be kept from the trial that was about to test those on the earth. With an announcement of His quick coming, they are exhorted to hold fast what they have that none take their crown (**7-13**).

The church of **Laodicea** is then described as lukewarm, for which the Lord threatens to spew them out of His mouth. While claiming to be rich, they are blind to their true condition. Therefore the Lord counsels them to buy from Him those things they truly need. His strong words are indicative of His love for them, and the fact that He stands ready to re-enter their hearts if they will open to Him (**14-22**).

As before, each letter ends with wonderful promises to those who overcome. In most cases, the manner in which the promises are to be fulfilled is illustrated in the visions to come.

Points To Ponder

- To examine the last three of seven letters to the churches in Asia
- To glean what we can about the condition of each church: their strengths and weaknesses, the warnings and promises given

Outline

I. LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN SARDIS (1-6)

A. THE LORD'S SELF-DESIGNATION (1a)

1. "He who has the seven Spirits of God" - cf. **Isa 11:1-2; Zech 4:1-10; Re 1:4; 4:5**
2. "...and the seven stars"

B. CONDEMNATION AND WARNING (1b-3)

1. Condemnation
 - a. They have a name that they are alive, but they are dead
 - b. Their works have not been found perfect before God
2. Warning
 - a. Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain and are ready to die
 - b. Remember how they had received and heard

- c. Hold fast and repent
- d. If they don't watch, the Lord will come upon them as a thief

C. COMMENDATION (4)

1. There are few names in Sardis who have not defiled their garments
2. They shall walk with Him in white, for they are worthy

D. PROMISE AND EXHORTATION (5-6)

1. He who overcomes...
 - a. Shall be clothed in white garments
 - b. The Lord will not blot his name from the Book of Life
 - c. The Lord will confess his name before My Father and His angels
2. Hear what the Spirit says to the churches

II. LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN PHILADELPHIA (7-13)

A. THE LORD'S SELF-DESIGNATION (7)

1. "He who is holy, He who is True"
2. "He who has key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens" - cf. **Isa 22:22**

B. COMMENDATION (8)

1. The Lord has set an open door before them and none can shut it
2. For they have a little strength, have kept His word, and not denied His name

C. PROMISE AND EXHORTATION (9-13)

1. Concerning the "synagogue of Satan" (who claim to be Jews, but are not)...
 - a. He will make them come and worship before their feet
 - b. He will make them know that He has loved those in Philadelphia
2. Because the church has kept His command to persevere...
 - a. He will keep them from the hour of trial
 - b. Which is coming to test those who dwell on the earth
3. Behold, He is coming quickly!
 - a. Hold fast what they have
 - b. That no one may take their crown
4. He who overcomes, the Lord will...
 - a. Make him a pillar in the temple of His God, and he shall go out no more
 - b. Write on him:
 - 1) The name of His God
 - 2) The name of the city of His God, the New Jerusalem which comes down out of heaven from His God
 - 3) His new name
5. Hear what the Spirit says to the churches

III. LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN LAODICEA (14-22)

A. THE LORD'S SELF-DESIGNATION (14)

1. "The Amen, the Faithful and True Witness"
2. "The Beginning of the creation of God"

- 7) **What had the Lord done for those in Philadelphia? Why? (8)**

- 8) **What was the Lord going to do to those who claimed to be Jews but were actually the synagogue of Satan? (9)**

- 9) **What did the Lord say He would do for those in Philadelphia? Why? (10)**

- 10) **What warning and exhortation does He then give? (11)**

- 11) **What promise does the Lord give to him who overcomes? (12)**

- 12) **For what does the Lord condemn those at Laodicea? (15-16)**

- 13) **What does the Lord say He would do because of their lukewarmness? (16)**

- 14) **What had they claimed? What was their true condition? (17)**

- 15) **What does the Lord counsel them to do? (18)**

- 16) **What justification does the Lord give for such a strong rebuke? (19)**

- 17) **What does He say to such Christians? (19,20)**

- 18) **What will be granted to him who overcomes? (21)**

19) What exhortation is given at the end of each letter in this chapter? (6,13,22)

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Chapter Four

The visions of Revelation now begin in earnest. Upon seeing a door standing open in heaven and hearing a trumpet-like voice promising to show him of things which must take place, John is transported to **the throne room of God**. He describes what he hears and sees with vivid and colorful imagery. The One on the throne radiates like jasper and sardius stones, surrounded by an emerald rainbow. The colors may reflect the characteristics of God, such as holiness, righteousness, justice, and mercy, or they may simply signify His splendor and majesty. (1-3).

John takes special note of **twenty-four elders** clothed with white robes and crowns of gold, sitting on thrones around the throne of God. Summers and Hailey suggest that they depict the twelve patriarchs of Israel and the twelve apostles, who represent the redeemed of both covenants now united in Christ. Note that in **Rev 5:8-9** they do seem to speak in behalf of the redeemed (4).

From the throne proceeded lightning, thunder, and voices, which may illustrate divine power and judgments coming from God. Before the throne are **seven lamps** of fire, explained as the seven Spirits of God. This likely symbolizes the Holy Spirit in His work of illumination and revelation of God's word to man (Summers). A **sea of glass** like crystal is also before the throne, perhaps symbolizing the transcendence of God that presently separates God and His people (5-6a).

There are **four living creatures**, similar in some respects and yet different in others, united in their constant praise of God for His eternal holiness. Though not exactly like the cherubim seen by Ezekiel (cf. **Ezek 1, 10**), they appear to serve similar functions. Hailey suggests they may be a special order of heavenly beings, perhaps the highest and closest to the throne, who serve God's majestic will (6b-8). As the four living creatures praise Him who sits on the throne, the twenty-four elders join in by falling down, casting their crowns before the throne, and praising God as the Eternal Creator (9-11).

This scene, along with that in chapter five, appears designed to set the stage for what follows. At the outset, we are shown the first guarantee of ultimate victory: **God is on His throne!** (Summers) The praise offered by the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders reinforce the truth that the One on the throne (and in ultimate control) is none other than the Lord God Almighty, Eternal and Holy, the Creator who holds all things together. He is therefore worthy of glory, honor and power! He is the one to revere, not some man!

Points To Ponder

- The implication of the vision of God on His throne
- How this vision along with the one in chapter five sets the stage for what follows

Outline

I. THE THRONE SCENE (1-8)

A. JOHN TAKEN TO HEAVEN (1)

1. After seeing the Lord and hearing the letters addressed to the seven churches
2. Upon seeing a door standing open in heaven, and hearing a trumpet-like voice
 - a. Being told "Come up here"
 - b. In which he will see "things which must take place after this"

B. HE DESCRIBES THE THRONE SCENE (2-8)

1. The One on the throne
 - a. Like a jasper (sparkling white)
 - b. And a sardius stone (fiery red) in appearance
 - c. With an emerald rainbow (various shades of green) around the throne
2. The twenty-four elders
 - a. Sitting on twenty-four thrones around the throne
 - b. Clothed in white robes
 - c. With crowns of gold on their heads
3. Other elements around the throne
 - a. Lightnings, thunderings, and voices proceeding from the throne
 - b. Seven lamps (the Seven Spirits of God) burning before the throne
 - c. A sea of glass, like crystal, before the throne
 - d. Four living creatures in the midst and around the throne
4. The four living creatures
 - a. Unique characteristics
 - 1) The first was like a lion
 - 2) The second was like a calf
 - 3) The third had a face like a man
 - 4) The fourth was like a flying eagle
 - b. Similar characteristics
 - 1) Each had six wings
 - 2) Full of eyes in front and back, around and within
 - 3) Do not rest day or night, praising the holiness of the Eternal God

II. GOD PRAISED AS THE CREATOR (9-11)

A. PROMPTED BY THE LIVING CREATURES (9)

1. Whenever they give glory, honor, and thanks
2. To Him who sits on the throne, the Eternal One

B. OFFERED BY THE TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS (10-11)

1. Who fall down before Him who sits on the throne
2. Who worship Him who lives forever
3. Who cast their crowns before the throne
4. Who proclaim God worthy to receive glory, honor, and power
 - a. For He created all things
 - b. And by His will they exist and were created

Review Questions

1) What are the main points of this chapter?

2) When the Lord finished with His letters to the churches, what did John see? (1)

- 3) What did John hear? What was he told he will see? (1)**

- 4) What was the first thing he noticed? (2)**

- 5) How does John describe the appearance of the One on the throne? (3)**

- 6) What is the color of the rainbow around the throne? (3)**

- 7) What is around the throne? (4)**

- 8) What proceeds from the throne? (5)**

- 9) What stands before the throne? (5)**

- 10) What lies before the throne? (6)**

- 11) What is seen in the midst and around the throne? How are they described? (6-8)**

- 12) What do they proclaim without rest, day and night? (8)**

- 13) When the creatures offer glory, honor, and thanks to God, what happens? (9-10)**

- 14) Why do the twenty-four elders deem God worthy of glory, honor, and power? (11)**

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Chapter Five

The scene that began in chapter four continues. Whereas the theme of chapter four can be stated as “**God is on His throne!**”, the theme of this chapter may be called “**Worthy is the Lamb!**”

John’s attention is drawn to a **scroll** in the right hand of God. Written on the inside and on the back, it is sealed with seven seals. A strong angel proclaims “*Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?*” At first there seems to be none in heaven and on earth deemed worthy to open the scroll or look at it. This prompted John to weep (1-4).

But one of the twenty-four elders tells him not to weep, for One described as “*the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David*” (cf. **Gen 49:9-10; Isa 11:10**) has prevailed so to be able to open the scroll and loose its seals. In the midst of the throne and of the living creatures and the elders, John sees a **Lamb** standing as though slain (i.e., Jesus - cf. **Jn 1:29**), with **seven horns** and **seven eyes**. The seven eyes are explained as the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth (cf. **Zech 4:10**). As suggested before (cf. **Re 1:4; 3:1; 4:9**) they represent the Holy Spirit, while the seven horns are indicative of great strength (cf. **Deu 33:17; 1Sa 2:10**). The Lamb is then seen as taking the scroll out of God’s right hand (5-7).

Taking the scroll prompts the four living creatures and twenty-four elders to fall down before the Lamb. Each possessing a **harp** (perhaps symbolizing praise, Hailey) and **golden bowls of incense** which depict the prayers of the saints, they sing a new song praising the Lamb as worthy to take the scroll. They proclaim His worthiness on the basis of being slain and redeeming by His blood those from every nation who are made kings and priests to God who shall reign on the earth (cf. **Re 1:5-6; 2:26-27; 1Pe 2:9**). The voices of **thousands of angels** around the throne then join in with their praise of the Lamb who was slain as worthy to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessing. Finally, **every creature** in heaven, earth, and sea join in with praise for both Him who sits on the throne (God) and the Lamb (Jesus). To which the four living creatures say “*Amen!*” and the twenty-four elders fall down and worship (8-14).

This awesome scene should certainly encourage the faithful Christian. As stated by Ray Summers:

“Such a scene was calculated to bring new courage and new hope to the hearts of John’s first readers, the persecuted Christians of Asia; it brings the same cheer to Christian hearts in any age. Believing in the power of God (Ch. 4) and the redeeming love of God (Ch. 5), there is no enemy or force of evil which Christians need to fear. They can enter the conflict or endure the evil knowing that God is still on his throne; he has not laid aside his scepter; he has not abandoned his throne to any other.”

What will the scroll reveal? I believe it divulges God’s righteous indignation upon those who rejected His Christ and persecuted His people. Also, how His suffering saints would eventually overcome. As long as the scroll was sealed, the workings of God was still a mystery. But as the seals are broken (**Re 6:1-8:1**), we have: “*the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants -- things which must shortly take place.*” (**Re 1:1**)

Points To Ponder

- What is revealed about the Lamb (Jesus), and what His death accomplished
- The impact this scene would have had on the persecuted Christians in Asia

Outline

I. THE SCROLL AND THE LAMB (1-7)

A. THE SCROLL IN GOD'S RIGHT HAND (1-4)

1. Written on the inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals
2. The proclamation by the strong angel
 - a. "Who is worthy?"
 - b. "To open and the scroll and to loose its seals?"
3. The initial response
 - a. No one, in heaven, on the earth, under the earth!
 - b. No one, able to open the scroll, or to look at it!
4. John's reaction: "So I wept much, because no one was found worthy..."

B. THE ONE WORTHY TO OPEN THE SCROLL (5-7)

1. Comforting words of the elder to John
 - a. "Do not weep"
 - b. "Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David"
 - c. He "has prevailed"
 - 1) "To open the scroll"
 - 2) "To loose its seven seals"
2. John's description of the Lamb
 - a. Standing in the midst of the throne, the four living creatures, and the elders
 - b. A Lamb as though it had been slain
 - 1) Having seven horns
 - 2) With seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent into all the earth
 - c. Who takes the scroll out of God's right hand

II. THE LAMB IS PRAISED (8-14)

A. BY THE FOUR LIVING CREATURES AND TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS (8-10)

1. Each having:
 - a. A harp
 - b. Golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints
2. They sang a new song...
 - a. The Lamb is worthy!
 - 1) To take the scroll
 - 2) To open its seals
 - b. Because:
 - 1) He was slain
 - 2) He has redeemed them to God by His blood out of every tribe, tongue, people and nation
 - 3) He has made them kings and priests to God, to reign on the earth

B. BY THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS OF ANGELS (11-12)

1. Their voices heard around the throne, along with the living creatures and the elders
2. Saying with a loud voice:
 - a. Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
 - b. To receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessing

C. TOGETHER WITH HIM WHO SITS ON THE THRONE (13-14)

1. John now hears those in heaven, on earth, under the earth, and in the sea saying:
 - a. "Blessing and honor and glory and power..."
 - b. "Be to Him who sits on throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!"
2. Upon which:
 - a. The four living creatures said "Amen!"
 - b. The twenty-four elders fell down and worshipped Him who lives forever and ever

Review Questions

- 1) What are the main points of this chapter?
- 2) What did John see in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne? (1)
- 3) What did a strong angel proclaim with a loud voice? (2)
- 4) How did John react when it seemed none was worthy to open the scroll? (3-4)
- 5) What did one of the twenty-four elders then say to John? (5)
- 6) What did John see? (6)
- 7) Where was the Lamb? What did He do? (6-7)
- 8) What happened when the Lamb had taken the scroll? (8-9a)
- 9) What did they proclaim in this "new song"? (9)
- 10) Why did they deem the Lamb worthy? (9-10)

11)What did John then see and hear? (11)

12)What were they saying? (12)

13)What does John hear next? (13)

14)What happens then? (14)

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Chapter Six

In this chapter the Lamb looses six of the seven seals on the scroll. **The first four seals** reveal four horses and their riders (cf. **Zec 6:1-8**), commonly referred today as “The Four Horsemen Of The Apocalypse”. Notice what is said about the different riders:

“...**a crown was given to him...**” (the rider on the white horse)

“...**it was granted to the one...there was given to him...**” (the rider on the red horse)

“...**a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying**” (the rider on the black horse)

“...**power was given to them...**” (riders on the pale horse - Death and Hades)

Who had the power to give a crown, to grant such authority? Who in the midst of the four living creatures might have spoken? Who had power to give to Death and Hades? When we consider that Jesus is the ruler of the kings of the earth (**Re 1:5**), that He has the keys of Hades and of Death (**Re 1:18**), and that He was in the midst of the four living creatures (**Re 5:6**), it seems clear that the answer is Christ! In other words, the horses and their riders were acting upon the authority and power given them by Christ. Therefore I suggest the following explanations for **the first four seals (1-8)**:

The white horse and its rider - Represents *military conquest*, such as God used to bring judgment upon Assyria (**Isa 10:5-7,12-13,15-16**) and Babylon (**Isa 13:17-20**).

The red horse and its rider - Represents *civil war*, in which people would kill one another, such as God used in His judgment against Egypt (**Isa 19:1-4**).

The black horse and its rider - Represents *famine*, where necessities (wheat and barley) would be scarce, while luxuries (oil and wine) might be in abundance but of little interest to the hungry. God had used famine in His judgment upon Israel (**Jer 14:11-12**).

The pale horse and its riders (Death and Hades) - Represents *death* brought about by the sword, hunger, death (pestilence), and beasts of the earth. Such severe judgments God had brought upon Jerusalem in the past (**Eze 5:17; 6:12; 14:21**).

Some see the fulfillment of these things in the Roman advance on Jerusalem during A.D. 67-70, as described by Flavius Josephus in his book, *The Wars Of The Jews* (Bass, Gentry).

With **the fifth seal (9-11)** we are told *why* God would bring such judgment. Souls have been slain for the word of God and their testimony, and when the time is right the wicked will be avenged (cf. **Lk 18:7-8**). Meanwhile, souls of the slain are comforted with white robes and rest. Who were these souls? Perhaps Christians who had already paid the supreme price for following Jesus, such as Stephen (**Ac 7:54-8:2**), James (**Ac 12:1-2**), Antipas (**Re 2:13**).

The sixth seal (12-17) describes cosmic disturbances and the despair of those trying to hide from God’s wrath. Is this scene depicting the end of time (cf. **2Pe 3:7-12**)? The language is reminiscent of that describing God’s judgment upon Babylon (**Isa 13:1-22**) and Samaria (**Hos 10:7-8**). Jesus used similar language to warn people of the impending destruction of Jerusalem (**Lk 23:28-30**). Therefore I believe it refers to judgment upon *unbelieving Israel* for persecuting God’s people in the 1st century. The guilty would not escape the Lamb’s wrath! Who would stand in that day? The answer is in the next chapter.

Points To Ponder

- The meaning of the four horses and their riders
- The reason for the judgment and wrath described in this chapter

Outline

I. THE FOUR HORSES AND THEIR RIDERS (1-8)

A. FIRST SEAL - RIDER ON THE WHITE HORSE (1-2)

1. The Lamb opens the first seal
2. One of the four living creatures says "Come"
3. John sees a white horse and its rider
 - a. The man had a bow
 - b. A crown was given to him
 - c. The man went out conquering and to conquer

B. SECOND SEAL - RIDER ON THE RED HORSE (3-4)

1. The Lamb opens the second seal
2. The second living creature says "Come"
3. John sees a fiery red horse and its rider
 - a. The rider was granted to take peace from the earth, and for people to kill one another
 - b. A great sword was given to him

C. THIRD SEAL - RIDER ON THE BLACK HORSE (5-6)

1. The Lamb opens the third seal
2. The third living creature says "Come"
3. John sees a black horse and its rider
 - a. A pair of scales is in the hand of the rider
 - b. A voice in the midst of the four living creatures says "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine."

D. FOURTH SEAL - RIDER ON THE PALE HORSE (7-8)

1. The Lamb opens the fourth seal
2. The fourth living creature says "Come"
3. John sees a pale horse and its rider
 - a. On the horse sits Death, and Hades followed with him
 - b. Power was given to them over a fourth of the earth
 - c. Power to kill with the sword, with death, and by beasts

II. THE SOULS UNDER THE ALTAR (9-11)

A. THE FIFTH SEAL - SOULS UNDER THE ALTAR (9-10)

1. The Lamb opens the fifth seal
2. John sees under the altar those who had been slain
 - a. For the word of God
 - b. For the testimony they held
3. They cried with a loud voice:

- a. "How long, O Lord, holy and true"
- b. "Until you judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

B. THEIR CONSOLATION (11)

1. A white robe was given to each of them
2. They were told to rest a little while longer, until both their fellow servants and brethren would be killed

III. COSMIC DISRUPTIONS IN THE DAY OF THE LAMB'S WRATH (12-17)

A. THE SIXTH SEAL - COSMIC DISRUPTIONS (12-14)

1. The Lamb opens the sixth seal
2. Cataclysmic events occur:
 - a. A great earthquake
 - b. Sun becomes black as sackcloth of hair
 - c. Moon became like blood
 - d. Stars fall to the earth, like ripe figs shaken from a tree by a mighty wind
 - e. Sky receded as a scroll when rolled up
 - f. Every mountain and island moved out of its place

B. THE REACTION OF MANKIND (15-17)

1. Great and small, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and rocks of the mountains
2. They cry out to the mountains and rocks:
 - a. "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!"
 - b. "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

Review Questions

- 1) **What are the main points of this chapter?**

- 2) **Who opens each of the seals in this chapter? (1,3,5,7,9,12)**

- 3) **What is seen when the first seal is opened? What was given to him? (1-2)**

- 4) **What is seen when the second seal is opened? What was given to him? (3-4)**

- 5) **What is seen when the third seal is opened? What is heard? (5-6)**

- 6) **What is seen when the fourth seal is opened? What was given to them? (7-8)**

7) What is seen when the fifth seal is opened? What are they saying? (9-10)

8) How are they consoled? (11)

9) What is seen when the sixth seal is completed? (12-14)

10) What do the people on earth try to do? What do they say? (15-17)

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Chapter Seven

Between the sixth and seventh seals, there is an interlude in which John sees two visions. They may be designed to answer the question raised at the end of the previous chapter: *“For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”* (**Re 6:17**)

In **the first vision** John sees four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the winds from blowing on the earth, sea, or on any tree. An angel arises from the east having the seal of the living God, who cries out to the other four angels not to harm the earth, etc., until the servants of God have been sealed on their foreheads. John then hears the number of those who are sealed. They are 144,000 of all the tribes of the children of Israel, with 12,000 from each tribe. Of interest is the fact that Ephraim and Dan are not mentioned, while Levi and Joseph are counted as tribes. This suggests to many that the 144,000 of Israel is symbolic (**1-8**).

The second vision reveals a large innumerable multitude of all nations standing before the throne and the Lamb. Clothed with white robes and palm branches in their hands, they cry out *“Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”* They are joined in their praise by angels, the elders, and four living creatures. John is then told by one of the elders that those arrayed in white robes have come out of the great tribulation, with their robes washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. Before the throne of God, they serve Him day and night in His temple. Future blessings are then described: God will dwell among them, they shall be free from hunger, thirst, and the heat of the sun. The Lamb will shepherd them and lead them to fountains of living waters, and God will wipe all tears from their eyes (**9-17**).

What do the two visions mean? The 144,000 of Israel sealed on earth may represent faithful Jewish Christians in Palestine leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. They are sealed and thereby spared from God’s wrath (cf. **Eze 9:1-11**). Eusebius says that Jewish Christians were able to flee to Pella before the Romans overwhelmed Jerusalem, just as Jesus urged His disciples to do in **Lk 21:20-24**.

The second vision provides hope for any who must pass through “the great tribulation” (not just Israel, but *“of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues”*), for it would not be limited to Palestine, but would spread throughout the Roman empire. Provided they have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, they are assured that they will serve God in His temple in “the intermediate state” (between death and the resurrection). They are also promised future blessings in “the eternal state” (after the resurrection and judgment, cf. **Re 7:16-17** with **Re 21:1-4**).

Thus it would be Jewish Christians in Palestine, and Christians among all nations willing to remain faithful, who would be able to stand in the day of God’s wrath!

Points To Ponder

- The identity of the two groups in the two visions seen in this chapter
- The comfort promised those who would pass through the great tribulation

Outline

I. THE 144,000 SEALED ON EARTH (1-8)

A. THE ANGELS RESTRAINED (1-3)

1. John saw four angels at the four corners of the earth
 - a. Holding the four winds of the earth
 - b. That the winds would not blow on the earth, sea, or any tree
2. John saw another angel ascending from the east
 - a. Crying with a loud voice to the four angels granted to harm the earth and sea
 - b. Instructing them not to harm the earth, sea, or trees until the servants of God were sealed on their foreheads

B. THE 144,000 SEALED (4-8)

1. John "heard" the number of those sealed
2. Those sealed were 12,000 each of the tribes of Israel:

a. Judah	g. Simeon
b. Reuben	h. Levi
c. Gad	i. Issachar
d. Asher	j. Zebulun
e. Naphtali	k. Joseph
f. Manasseh	l. Benjamin

II. THE GREAT MULTITUDE IN HEAVEN (9-17)

A. JOHN SEES A GREAT MULTITUDE (9-12)

1. Which none could number, from all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues
2. Standing before the throne and before the Lamb
 - a. Clothed with white robes
 - b. With palm branches in their hands
3. Crying with loud voices: "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"
4. Angels, the elders, and the four living creatures also join in with praise
 - a. Falling on their faces before the throne and worshipping God
 - b. Ascribing blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power, and might to God

B. THE GREAT MULTITUDE IDENTIFIED (13-17)

1. Asked by one of the elders, John puts the question back to him
2. The elder identifies the great multitude:
 - a. Those who come out of the great tribulation
 - b. Who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb
 - c. Who are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple
3. The elder describes their future blessedness:
 - a. The One on the throne will dwell with them
 - b. They shall not hunger nor thirst anymore; the sun nor any heat shall strike them
 - c. The Lamb will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of water
 - d. God will wipe away every tear from their eyes

Review Questions

- 1) What are the main points of this chapter?**

- 2) What does John see next? (1)**

- 3) What did an angel ascending from the east cry out? (2-3)**

- 4) Who and how many were sealed? (4)**

- 5) In the list of those sealed, what two tribes of Israel are missing? (5-8)**

- 6) What two names are used for tribes which were not normally listed among the twelve tribes of Israel? (5-8)**

- 7) After the 144,000 are sealed, what does John see next? (9-10)**

- 8) Who else joins in with praise to God? (11-12)**

- 9) Who does the elder identify as the great multitude? (13-14)**

- 10) What future blessings are they promised to receive? (15-17)**

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Chapter Eight

Following the “interlude” of the previous chapter, in which reassuring and comforting scenes concerning the saints were seen, **the seventh seal** is now opened. For about a half hour, there is silence in heaven (1).

In contrast to all that happened before, the silence must have been striking! Possibly it signifies awe in heaven for what has already been revealed, or for what is about to be revealed. When God acts, those on earth should be in awe (cf. **Hab 2:20; Zec 2:13**). Should we not expect a similar reaction from His creatures in heaven (**Zep 1:7**)?

Seven angels are seen standing before God to whom are given **seven trumpets**. Before they sound the trumpets, **another angel with a golden censer** comes and stands before the altar. To this angel is given much incense to offer along with **the prayers of the saints** upon the golden altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense and the prayers of the saints ascend before God from the angel’s hand. Then the angel takes the censer, fills it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. Noises, thunderings, lightnings and an earthquake follow, and the seven angels with the seven trumpets prepare to sound (2-6).

The scene appears to suggest that the sounding of the seven trumpets and the things to follow is God’s response to the prayers of the saints. It is reminiscent of what Jesus taught in His parable of the persistent widow: *“And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them?”* (**Lk 18:7**; cf. also **Re 6:9-10**).

As the first four angels sound their trumpets in turn, the **environment** in particular is impacted:

- The first trumpet - Hail and fire, mingled with blood, are thrown to earth; a third of the trees and all the green grass were burned up (7).
- The second trumpet - Something like a great burning mountain is thrown into the sea, turning a third of it into blood; a third of the sea creatures died, and a third of the ships were destroyed (8-9).
- The third trumpet - A great burning star named Wormwood falls on a third of the rivers and springs of water; a third of the waters became wormwood (a bitter wood) and many men died from the bitter water (10-11).
- The fourth trumpet - A third of the sun, moon, and stars are struck, so that a third of them were darkened; thus a third of the day and night did not shine (12).

The first four trumpets may signify **natural calamities** that God would use in His judgment **against apostate Israel** who oppressed His people. They are reminiscent of the Egyptian plagues (cf. **Exo 9-10**), brought now against herself that is later called “Egypt” (**Re 11:8**). That only a third is affected, along with the symbolism of trumpets, suggests that the purpose of these judgments would be to warn, giving many opportunity to repent.

Before the final three trumpets sound, an angel (or eagle, in some mss) flies through the midst of heaven with loud voice proclaiming a **three-fold woe** on the inhabitants of the earth (13). While the first four trumpets were bad enough, the worst was yet to come!

Points To Ponder

- The opening of the seventh seal, the angel with the golden censor, and the sounding of the first four trumpets
- The possible significance of the silence in heaven and the first four trumpets

Outline

I. THE SEVENTH SEAL - SILENCE IN HEAVEN (1)

A. THE LAMB OPENS THE SEVEN SEAL (1a)

B. SILENCE IN HEAVEN FOR ABOUT HALF AN HOUR (1b)

II. PREPARATION FOR THE SOUNDING OF THE SEVEN TRUMPETS (2-6)

A. SEVEN ANGELS PREPARED (2)

1. Seven angels who stand before God
2. To them were given seven trumpets

B. THE ANGEL WITH THE GOLDEN CENSER (3-6)

1. Came and stood before the altar
2. Was given much incense to offer...
 - a. With the prayers of all the saints
 - b. Upon the golden altar before the throne
3. The smoke of the incense and the prayers of the saints...
 - a. Ascended before God
 - b. From the angel's hand
4. The angel took the censer...
 - a. Filled it with fire from the altar
 - b. Threw it to the earth
 - Accompanied by noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake
5. The seven angels with the seven trumpets then prepared themselves to sound

III. THE FIRST FOUR TRUMPETS (7-12)

A. THE FIRST TRUMPET: VEGETATION STRUCK (7)

1. Hail and fire, mingled with blood, thrown to the earth
2. A third of the trees burned up, and all green grass burned up

B. THE SECOND TRUMPET: SEAS STRUCK (8-9)

1. Something like a great burning mountain thrown into the sea
2. A third of the sea became blood; a third of the creatures in the sea died; a third of the ships destroyed

C. THE THIRD TRUMPET: RIVERS AND SPRINGS STRUCK (10-11)

1. A great burning star fell on a third of the rivers and springs of water
2. Named Wormwood, a third of the waters became wormwood; many men died from the bitter water

D. THE FOURTH TRUMPET: HEAVENS STRUCK (12)

1. A third of the sun, moon, and stars struck
2. A third of them were darkened, so that third of the day and night did not shine

IV. THREE-FOLD WOE ANNOUNCED (13)**A. AN ANGEL (EAGLE?) FLYING THROUGH HEAVEN (13a)****B. PRONOUNCING A THREE-FOLD WOE (13b)**

1. "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth"
2. "Because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"

Review Questions

- 1) **What are the main points of this chapter?**

- 2) **What happened when the Lamb opened the seventh seal? (1)**

- 3) **What did John see next? (2)**

- 4) **What did another angel do? What was given him? Why? (3-4)**

- 5) **What did the angel then do with the censer? What then happened? (5-6)**

- 6) **Describe what happened when the first angel sounded (7)**

- 7) **Describe what happened when the second angel sounded (8-9)**

- 8) **Describe what happened when the third angel sounded (10-11)**

- 9) **Describe what happened when the fourth angel sounded (12)**

10)What did John next see and hear? (13)

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Chapter Nine

Following the ominous warning of the angel (eagle) in the previous chapter, the fifth angel sounds his trumpet. John sees a star fallen from heaven, to whom is given the key to the bottomless pit. As the pit is opened, smoke rises that darkens the sun and air. Then **locusts with power like scorpions** came out of the smoke, to whom was given power to harm only those who did not have the seal of God on their forehead. Their power was limited only to torment, not kill, and only for five months. Even so, men wished they could die. John describes the appearance of the locusts, and identifies their king as the angel of the bottomless pit whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek is Apollyon, both meaning “destruction”. Thus ends the first “woe”, with two more to come (**1-12**).

When the sixth angel sounds his trumpet, John hears a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God. It tells the sixth angel to release four angels who have been bound at the river Euphrates. These angels had been prepared for the hour, day, month and year, to kill a third of mankind. At this point John hears the number of an **army of two hundred million horsemen**. Describing the colorful breastplates of those on the horses, he also relates how the lion-like heads of the horses blew fire, smoke and brimstone which killed a third of mankind. They also did much harm with serpent-like tails. Despite these two “woes”, the rest of mankind did not repent of their idolatry, murders, sorceries, sexual immoralities and thefts (**13-21**).

As one can imagine, attempts to interpret these visions have been many and some quite fanciful. Together with the first four trumpets, I suggest the fifth and sixth trumpets signify **tools at God’s disposal to bring wrath** upon the persecutors of His people. Though allowed to go only so far, Satan’s influence can have the effect of weakening a nation from within. There is also the threat of external invasion by enemy forces. Therefore I concur with others that the vision of locusts from the bottomless pit symbolizes the **hellish rottenness and internal decadence** that would weaken the enemies of God’s people from within. The two hundred million horsemen symbolize **external invasion** as another instrument God would use. Together with natural calamities, (depicted in the first four trumpets), these combined to bring down apostate Israel (cf. **Mt 12:43-45; Lk 21:20-24**).

As Christians in John’s day were oppressed by what seemed to be invincible opponents, visions like these would remind them that those “*who do not have the seal of God on their forehead*” (**Re 9:4; 7:3**) would be susceptible to God’s wrath.

Points To Ponder

- The sounding of the fifth and sixth trumpets
- The significance of the visions when the two trumpets sounded

Outline

I. THE FIFTH TRUMPET: LOCUSTS FROM THE BOTTOMLESS PIT (1-12)

A. THE “STAR” FALLEN FROM HEAVEN (1-2)

1. With the sounding of the fifth trumpet...
 - a. John saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth
 - b. To whom was given the key to the bottomless pit
2. When the bottomless pit was opened...
 - a. Smoke like that of a great furnace arose out of the pit
 - b. The sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke

B. THE "LOCUSTS" AND THEIR POWER (3-10)

1. Out of the smoke locusts with great power came upon the earth
 - a. Power like scorpions
 - b. Commanded not to harm the grass, any green thing, or any tree
2. The extent and nature of their power
 - a. Could harm only those who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads
 - b. Could not kill, but only torment them for five months
 - c. Men will seek death, but death will flee from them
3. The locusts described
 - a. Their shape like horses prepared for battle
 - b. On their heads were crowns of something like gold
 - c. Their faces were like those of men
 - d. Their hair was like women's hair
 - e. Their teeth was like lions' teeth
 - f. With breastplates like those of iron
 - g. The sound of their wings like chariots with many running horses
 - h. With tails like scorpions, and stings in their tails (though limited in power)

C. THE "KING" OVER THEM (11-12)

1. The angel of the bottomless pit
2. Whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon
- The first of three woes is past; two more to come

II. THE SIXTH TRUMPET: THE TWO HUNDRED MILLION ARMY (13-21)

A. THE FOUR ANGELS BOUND AT THE EUPHRATES (13-15)

1. With the sounding of the sixth trumpet...
 - a. John heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God
 - b. Speaking to the sixth angel who had the trumpet
 - c. Telling him to release the four angels bound at the river Euphrates
2. The four angels released...
 - a. Who had been prepared for the hour, day, month, and year
 - b. Who were to kill a third of mankind

B. THE ARMY OF TWO HUNDRED MILLION HORSEMEN (16-19)

1. John heard the number of them
2. What he saw in the vision...
 - a. Those on the horses had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, sulfur yellow
 - b. The horses had heads like those of lions
 - c. Out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone
3. The power of this great army...
 - a. A third of mankind killed by the fire, smoke, and brimstone

13) Who was killed by the smoke, fire, and brimstone? (18)

14) Where was the power to do harm in the horses? (19)

15) Of what did those who were not killed not repent? (20-21)

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Chapter Ten

Just as there was an interlude between the sixth and seventh **seals** that included two visions designed to comfort the saints, so we find an interlude between the sixth and seventh **trumpets** with three visions that would have similar effect.

Chapter ten contains the first vision in this second interlude, in which John describes a mighty angel coming down from heaven and standing with his right foot on the sea and his left on the land. Of particular note is **a little book** in the angel's hand. When the angel cried out with lion-like voice, **seven thunders** uttered their voices, but John is forbidden by a voice from heaven to write the things which the thunders uttered. At this point the mighty angel swears by God that there will be delay no longer, for when the seventh angel sounds his trumpet the mystery of God will be finished, as God declared to His servants the prophets (1-7).

Then the voice from heaven tells John to take the book from the angel. As he does so, the angel tells him to eat the book, with a warning that while it will be sweet as honey in his mouth, it will make his stomach bitter. When John eats the book, he is told that he must again prophesy about many peoples, nations, tongues and kings (8-11).

The significance of **eating the little book** is clear enough, for it symbolizes John mastering the contents of the message (cf. **Eze 2:1-3:11**). As to its contents, it may pertain to the prophecies of **chapters 12-22**, which certainly contains prophecies of peoples, nations, kings, etc. While the sounding of the seventh trumpet would indicate the mystery of God was finished regarding the judgment of **Israel**, John would be shown more things to proclaim regarding the judgment of **Rome** starting in **chapter 12**.

The significance of the **seven thunders** may forever remain an enigma. Summers believes that John was forbidden to record their utterances because there would be delay no longer and the time for warning was over. Hailey suggests that it may indicate that God has many unrevealed weapons in His arsenal of judgments to be used at His discretion, and that man cannot know all of God's ways.

This vision appears designed to impress upon John that with the sounding of the seventh trumpet his work will not be over. Indeed, in **chapters 12-22** we shall see the revelation of God's judgment against pagan Rome and ultimately the world.

Points To Ponder

- The first vision of the interlude between the sounding of the sixth and seven trumpets
- The significance of the little book given to John to eat

Outline

I. THE MIGHTY ANGEL WITH THE LITTLE BOOK (1-7)

A. THE ANGEL, THE BOOK, AND THE SEVEN THUNDERS (1-4)

1. John describes another mighty angel coming down from heaven

- a. Clothed with a cloud
- b. A rainbow on his head
- c. His face like the sun
- d. His feet like pillars of fire
- e. A little book in his hand
- f. His right foot on the sea, his left foot on the land
- g. Who cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars
- 2. When the angel cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices
 - a. John prepared to write what he heard
 - b. But a voice from heaven instructs him to seal up the things uttered by the seven thunders, and not write them

B. THE ANGEL AND HIS OATH (5-7)

- 1. John sees the angel lift his hand to heaven
- 2. The angel swears by God that there will be delay no longer
 - a. For in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be finished
 - b. As God declared to His servants the prophets

II. JOHN EATS THE LITTLE BOOK (8-11)

A. JOHN IS INSTRUCTED TO EAT THE BOOK (8-9)

- 1. The same voice from heaven instructs him to take the book from the angel's hand
- 2. He is told to eat the book, which will be sweet as honey in his mouth, but will make his stomach bitter

B. JOHN EATS THE BOOK (10-11)

- 1. Taking it from the angel's hand, he ate it
- 2. It was sweet as honey in his mouth, but his stomach became bitter
- 3. He is told: "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings."

Review Questions

1) What are the main points of this chapter?

2) How does John describe the angel which comes down from heaven? (1-2)

3) When the angel cried out, what happened? (3)

- 4) **What did John start to do? What was he told? (4)**

- 5) **What did the mighty angel swear by God? (5-7)**

- 6) **What is John then told to do? (8)**

- 7) **What is he told to do with the book? What did he do with the book? (9-10)**

- 8) **What was he then told? (11)**

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Chapter Eleven

As the interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets continues, two more visions are seen. The first involves John himself as he is given a reed and told to **measure the temple of God, the altar, and those worshipping there**. He is instructed, however, not to measure the court outside the temple, for it has been given to the Gentiles who will tread underfoot the holy city for forty-two months (1-2). This vision may illustrate that while the city of Jerusalem will undergo great persecution during the Jewish War, which lasted about 3 ½ years (42 months), the true temple of God will not be destroyed (the church, cf. **1Co 3:16; Ep 2:19-22**).

Then there is the vision of **the two witnesses**, which falls into three sections. With power they prophesy 1,260 days (42 months), clothed in sackcloth. Identified as the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the throne of God, they have the power to devour with fire from their mouths those who wish to harm them. They also have power to stop the rain during the days of their prophesying, to turn water to blood, and to strike the earth with plagues (3-6). But when their testimony is completed, the beast from the bottomless pit makes war with them and kills them. For three and half days their bodies lie in the street of the great city that is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt (where Jesus was crucified, i.e., Jerusalem). Those who had been tormented by the two prophets rejoice, make merry and exchange gifts (7-10). However, after three and a half days they are raised to life and ascend into heaven, bringing great fear on those who saw them. In the same hour a great earthquake occurs in which a tenth of the city fell and 7000 men were killed. The rest were afraid and gave glory to God (11-13).

The two witnesses are reminiscent of Moses and Elijah, also Joshua and Zerubbabel (cf. **Zec 3-4**) perhaps even John the Baptist and Jesus, but I do not believe they portend two literal persons. Rather, they represent the witness of the church, with the number two signifying the strength of their witness (e.g., “two or more witnesses”). When their testimony is completed, there will be a time of persecution by “the beast” (later identified as Rome, **Re 17:7-17**) and those of “the great city” (already identified as Jerusalem, **Re 11:8**). However, the witnesses (i.e., the church) will be victorious, symbolized by their resurrection and ascension to heaven.

The interlude ended, it is time for the third woe and final trumpet. As **the seventh angel sounded**, loud voices in heaven proclaimed “*The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!*” The twenty-four elders then fell on their faces and worshiped God, giving thanks to Him for having taken His great power and reigned. While the nations were angry, His wrath has come. So also has the time come for the dead to be judged (which may refer to the martyrs, who were now vindicated, cf. **Re 6:9-11**), His servants the prophets and the saints to be rewarded, and for the destruction of those who destroy the earth. Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, with the ark of the covenant in the temple, accompanied by lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake and hail (15-19).

The physical temple in Jerusalem, which along with the ark (that had disappeared long before) was once the focal point of God’s worship and reign, is no more. Now the temple and the ark are seen in heaven, perhaps symbolizing that the worship and reign of God has

become universal rather than localized in a physical city and nation (cf. **Jn 4:20-24**).

We have reached **the climax of the first half of the Revelation**, in which we have been shown judgment against unbelieving Israel, especially the city of Jerusalem. Through the visions of the seven seals and seven trumpets we learn of the arsenal at God's disposal: conquest, war, famine, pestilence, natural calamities, moral decay, external invasion. Just as God used such instruments in His dealings with the nations in the Old Testament, so His Son would use His power to reign over the nations with a rod of iron (cf. **Re 1:5; 2:27; 3:21**). Truly, *"The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"* (**Re 11:15**). The destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, as foretold by Jesus in **Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21**, exemplified the power of His reign over the nations. His victory over Rome described later in Revelation will confirm His power and dominion as King of kings and Lord of lords (cf. **Re 17:14**).

We have also seen visions designed to comfort the saints being oppressed by their enemies, especially martyrs. God has taken notice of their suffering, and while persecution may temporarily be their lot, victory will ultimately be theirs! Those who suffer death at the hands of their enemies are promised salvation and the blessing of being in the presence and care of the Lord. Nothing can totally stop their witness, and nothing can keep God from remaining true to His covenant with them!

Points To Ponder

- The remaining visions in the interlude between the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpets, and what happens when the seven trumpet sounds
- The significance of these visions, and possible explanations of what they mean as we summarize what we have seen in the first half of the book of Revelation

Outline

I. MEASURING THE TEMPLE OF GOD (1-2)

A. THE COMMAND TO MEASURE THE TEMPLE AND ITS OCCUPANTS (1)

1. John is given a reed like a measuring rod
2. Told to measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there

B. THE COMMAND NOT TO MEASURE THE OUTER COURT (2)

1. Told not to measure the court outside the temple
2. For it has been given to the Gentiles, who will tread the holy city under foot forty-two months

II. THE TWO WITNESSES (3-14)

A. PROPHESYING FOR 1260 DAYS (3-6)

1. Two witnesses given power to prophesy, clothed in sackcloth
2. Identified as the two olive trees and two lampstands standing before God
3. Those trying to harm them are devoured by fire from their mouths
4. Having power:
 - a. To shut heaven so no rain falls during their prophesying
 - b. To turn water to blood
 - c. To strike the earth with plagues as they desire

B. KILLED AND DEAD FOR THREE AND A HALF DAYS (7-10)

1. Their testimony finished, the beast will kill them
 - a. The beast that ascends from the bottomless pit
 - b. Who will make war against them and overcome them
2. Their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city
 - a. Spiritually called Sodom and Egypt
 - b. Where our Lord was crucified
3. The peoples, tribes, tongues, and nation who dwell on the earth
 - a. Will see their bodies three and a half days
 - b. Will not allow them to be put into graves
 - c. Will rejoice over them, make merry, and exchange gifts, because the two prophets had tormented those who dwell on the earth

C. RAISED AND ASCENDED TO HEAVEN (11-14)

1. After three and a half days, the breath of life from God entered them
2. They stood, and great fear fell on those who saw them
3. A loud voice from heaven tells them to "Come up here"
4. They ascend to heaven in a cloud as their enemies saw them
5. In that same hour there was an earthquake
 - a. A tenth of the city fell
 - b. Seven thousand men were killed
 - c. The rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven
6. The second woe is past; the third woe is coming quickly

III. THE SEVENTH TRUMPET: THE KINGDOM PROCLAIMED (15-19)**A. VICTORY PROCLAIMED (15)**

1. The seventh angel sounded his trumpet and there were loud voices in heaven
2. Saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"

B. THE TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS WORSHIP GOD (16-18)

1. The elders fell on their faces and worshiped God
2. Giving thanks to the Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come
3. Because He has taken His great power and reigned
4. The nations were angry, and His wrath has come
5. The time has come
 - a. That the dead should be judged
 - b. That His servants the prophets, the saints, and those who fear His name, should be rewarded
 - c. That He should destroy those who destroy the earth

C. THE TEMPLE OF GOD OPENED IN HEAVEN (19)

1. The temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple
2. There were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail

Review Questions

- 1) What are the main points of this chapter?

- 2) What was John given and told to measure? (1)
- 3) What was he told to leave out? Why? (2)
- 4) What were the two witnesses to do? (3)
- 5) How are they identified? (4)
- 6) What happens to those who try to harm them during this time of prophesying? (5)
- 7) What power do these two witnesses have? (6)
- 8) What will happen when they finish their testimony? (7)
- 9) Where will their dead bodies lie? (8)
- 10) How long will people see their dead bodies? (9)
- 11) How will those on the earth react to their deaths? Why? (10)
- 12) What happened to the two witnesses after three and a half days? (11-12)
- 13) What happened in that same hour? (13)

14) What was heard when the seventh angel sounded his trumpet? (15)

15) What did the twenty-four elders do? (16)

16) For what did they give thanks? (17)

17) As expressed in their praise, what had come? (18)

18) What was then opened in heaven, and what was seen in it? (19)

19) What then followed? (19)

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Chapter Twelve

With this chapter the transition is made from Christ's judgment on Jerusalem (**chs. 6-11**) to His judgment on Rome (**chs. 13-19**). To expedite the transition, we are told of Satan's effort to destroy the work of Christ and His church.

We read of his failed attempt to prevent **the male Child** from being born and assuming His rightful place of authority as ruler of the nations (**1-6**).

An effort to usurp that authority by waging war in heaven is thwarted, resulting in **the devil** and his angels being cast to earth. That prompts a loud voice in heaven to proclaim that salvation, strength, the kingdom of God and the power of His Christ has come. Because the accuser (i.e., the devil) has been cast down, those in heaven who overcame by the blood of Jesus and their testimony, and who did not love their lives to the death, could rejoice. But woe is proclaimed to those on the earth, because now the devil has come down to them and he knows his time is short (**7-12**).

At first the dragon's efforts are directed toward **the woman** who gave birth to the child. However, she is given wings to fly to her place in the wilderness where she is nourished for a time, times, and half a time (1,260 days, cf. **v.6**). Even the earth helped the woman, so enraging the dragon that he went to make war with the rest of **her offspring**, identified as those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ (**13-17**).

While the identities of the male child and the dragon are rather evident, who is the woman and the rest of her offspring? I suggest the woman represents the spirit of faithfulness in God's messianic community (perhaps best exemplified by Mary) who kept covenant with God. Called "the daughter of Zion" in prophecy (cf. **Mic 4:10; 5:2ff; Isa 66:7ff**), she produced not only Christ, but His first disciples as well, beginning with the faithful Jewish Christian community that escaped the fall of Jerusalem by fleeing into the wilderness (cf. **Re 12:13-16**). Satan therefore changed his attention from Jewish Christians in Palestine to Christians in Roman lands, i.e., the woman's offspring (cf. **Re 12:17**).

Thus the chapter reveals why a period of great tribulation was about to come upon Christians, especially **in Asia Minor** (cf. **Re 2:10**). Satan was frustrated by being thwarted at every turn. Cast down to the earth, he would make every attempt to destroy the disciples of Jesus. Forces he would use are introduced in chapter thirteen.

Points To Ponder

- The primary force behind the persecution coming upon the early Christians
- Why the persecution of the early church was so intense

Outline

I. THE WOMAN, THE CHILD, AND THE DRAGON (1-6)

A. THE WOMAN WITH CHILD (1-2)

1. A great sign appeared in heaven, in which woman is clothed:
 - a. With the sun

- b. With the moon under her feet
- c. A garland of twelve stars on her head
- 2. Being with child, she cried out in labor and pain to give birth

B. THE DRAGON READY TO DEVOUR THE CHILD (3-4)

- 1. Another great sign appeared in heaven: a great, fiery red dragon
 - a. With seven heads, ten horns, seven diadems on the heads
 - b. With a tail which threw a third of the stars of heaven to the earth
- 2. Standing before the woman, ready to devour the child as soon as it is born

C. THE OUTCOME OF THE CHILD AND THE WOMAN (5-6)

- 1. The male child is born
 - a. Who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron
 - b. Who was caught up to God and His throne
- 2. The woman fled into the wilderness
 - a. Where she has a place prepared by God
 - b. Where she is fed for 1,260 days

II. SATAN THROWN OUT OF HEAVEN (7-12)

A. A WAR IN HEAVEN (7-9)

- 1. Between Michael and his angels, and the dragon and his angels
- 2. The dragon and his angels did not prevail
 - a. No place was found for them in heaven any longer
 - b. The dragon and his angels were cast to the earth
 - c. The dragon identified
 - 1) That serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan
 - 2) Who deceives the whole world

B. A LOUD VOICE IN HEAVEN (10-12)

- 1. Proclaiming victory for Christ and His brethren
 - a. Salvation, strength, the kingdom of God, and the power of Christ have come
 - 1) For the accuser of the brethren has been cast down
 - 2) Who had accused them before God day and night
 - b. How the brethren overcame the accuser:
 - 1) By the blood of the Lamb
 - 2) By the word of their testimony
 - 3) They did not love their lives to the death
- 2. A call to rejoice, along with a warning
 - a. For those in heaven, rejoice!
 - b. For the inhabitants of the earth and sea, woe!
 - 1) For the devil has come down to them having great wrath
 - 2) Knowing that he has only a short time

III. THE FAILED ATTEMPT TO PERSECUTE THE WOMAN (13-17)

A. THE DRAGON'S ATTEMPT TO PERSECUTE THE WOMAN (13-16)

- 1. Cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child
- 2. But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle
 - a. That she might fly into the wilderness to her place

- b. Where she is nourished for a time, times, and half a time
- c. Safe from the presence of the serpent
- 3. The serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman
 - a. Hoping to cause her to be carried away
 - b. But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing up the flood

B. THE DRAGON'S INTENT TO PERSECUTE HER OFFSPRING (17)

- 1. Enraged with the woman he cannot reach, the dragon goes to make war with the rest of her offspring
- 2. The rest of her offspring identified:
 - a. Those who keep the commandments of God
 - b. Those who have the testimony of Jesus Christ

Review Questions

- 1) **What are the main points of this chapter?**

- 2) **What great sign appeared in heaven? (1-2)**

- 3) **What other sign then appeared in heaven (3-4)**

- 4) **What child was born? What happened to the child? (5)**

- 5) **What happened to the woman? (6)**

- 6) **What happened in heaven? Who did not prevail? (7-8)**

- 7) **Who was this dragon? What was done with him and his angels? (9)**

- 8) **What did a loud voice proclaim in heaven about Christ and the dragon? (10)**

- 9) How had the brethren overcome the dragon? (11)**
- 10) What are those who dwell in heaven told? (12)**
- 11) Why was woe proclaimed to the inhabitants of the earth and sea? (12)**
- 12) Cast down to the earth, who did the dragon persecute next? (13)**
- 13) What was given the woman? Why? (14)**
- 14) How long was she nourished? (14)**
- 15) How did the serpent try to persecute the woman? Who helped her? (15-16)**
- 16) Enraged by his inability to persecute the woman, who did the dragon go to make war with next? (17)**

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Chapter Thirteen

This chapter reveals two agents the dragon (Satan) would use in carrying out his war against the people of God.

The first is **the beast from the sea**. Described by John as having seven heads and ten horns, there were ten crowns on his horns and on his heads a blasphemous name. The beast was like a leopard, with feet like a bear and a mouth like a lion. One of the heads of the beast appeared mortally wounded, but was healed. To this beast the dragon gave his power, his throne, and great authority, and all the world marveled and worshiped the beast. Given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies against God, His name, His tabernacle, and those dwelling in heaven, the beast was also granted to make war against the saints for forty-two months. All on the earth worshiped him, except those whose names were in the Lamb's Book of Life. With this description of the beast and his activities, John gives a word of caution to the saints (**1-10**).

John then saw **the beast from the land**, having two horns like a lamb and speaking like a dragon. With the same authority as the first beast, this second beast causes all to worship the first by deceiving them with great signs. Telling them to make an image to the first beast, he was given power to make the image speak and put to death those who would not worship it. This second beast also causes all to receive a mark on their right hands or on their forehead, without which they cannot buy or sell. John then adds a word of wisdom, in which he tells those with understanding to calculate the number of the beast, which is the number of a man: **666 (11-18)**.

The identity of the first beast from the sea becomes clearer when we get to chapter seventeen. I agree with those who say this beast from the sea is the Roman Empire, personified in its persecuting emperors. The beast from the earth or land may represent the Roman Concilia, a committee set up in Asia Minor where the seven churches were located to enforce emperor worship at the time the Revelation was given (Summers). This they did by requiring a certificate that proved the bearer had been seen sacrificing to the idol of the emperor, without which one could not buy or sell in the marketplace.

The significance of 666 should not be underestimated, as John encourages those with understanding to calculate the number. Unfortunately, through many ingenuous and fanciful ways people have come up with the number to represent just about anyone (e.g., the Pope, Hitler, Ronald Reagan). Keeping the context of Revelation and its time in view, the number 666 may be a cryptogram referring to "Lateinos" (which in Greek can be calculated to 666); and in turn points to the ruler of the Latin or Roman empire (Schaff, *History Of The Christian Church*, Vol. 1, p. 177). In Hebrew the number can be calculated to mean "Nero Caesar" (Adams). Taken more symbolically, the number may simply signify evil raised to its highest power (Hailey, Summers) as was the case in emperors like Nero and Domitian.

Points To Ponder

- The two "beasts" that Satan would use in making war against the saints
- The number of the beast and its mark consistent with the context of Revelation

Outline

I. THE BEAST FROM THE SEA (1-10)

A. THE BEAST DESCRIBED (1-3a)

1. Seen by John as rising up out of the sea
2. Having seven heads, ten horns, with ten crowns on his horns, and on his heads a blasphemous name
3. Like a leopard with feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion
4. His power, throne, and great authority given him by the dragon
5. One of his heads was mortally wounded, but healed

B. THE ACTIVITY INVOLVING THE BEAST (3b-8)

1. All the world marveled and followed the beast
 - a. Worshipping the dragon who gave authority to the beast
 - b. Worshipping the beast because of his apparent invincibility
2. What the beast was given
 - a. A mouth speaking great things and blasphemies
 - b. Authority to continue (make war) for forty-two months
3. With this authority:
 - a. He blasphemed God, His name, His tabernacle, and those dwelling in heaven
 - b. He was granted to make war with the saints and overcome them
 - c. He was given authority over every tribe, tongue, and nation
 - d. All who dwell on earth would worship him, unless their names are in the Book of Life of the Lamb

C. A NOTE OF CAUTION (9-10)

1. If anyone has an ear, let him hear
2. He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword
3. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints

II. THE BEAST FROM THE LAND (11-18)

A. THIS BEAST DESCRIBED (11)

1. Seen by John as coming up out of the earth
2. With two horns like a lamb, but speaking like a dragon

B. THE ACTIVITY OF THIS BEAST (12-17)

1. He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence
2. He causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast
 - a. Performing great signs, making even fire come down from heaven
 - b. Deceiving the world by the signs
3. He tells the world to make an image to the first beast
 - a. To which he is granted power to give breath
 - b. So the image could both speak and cause those who do not worship it to be killed
4. He causes all to receive a mark on the right hand or on their foreheads
 - a. Without which none can buy or sell
 - b. Which is the name of the beast, or the number of his name

C. A NOTE OF WISDOM (18)

1. Let those with understanding calculate the number of the beast
2. For it is the number of a man: His number is 666

Review Questions

- 1) **What are the main points of this chapter?**
- 2) **What physical characteristics of the beast from the sea are mentioned? (1-3)**
- 3) **What did the dragon give the beast from the sea? (2)**
- 4) **How did the world respond to the beast from the sea? (3-4)**
- 5) **What else was given to the beast from the sea? (5)**
- 6) **When he opened his mouth, what did the beast blaspheme? (6)**
- 7) **What was granted to the beast from the sea? (7)**
- 8) **Who would worship this beast from the sea? (8)**
- 9) **What note of caution is given at this point? (9-10)**
- 10) **What were the physical characteristics of the beast from the land? (11)**
- 11) **What did the beast from the land do? (12-14)**

12) What was granted to the beast from the land? (15)

13) What did the beast from the land require all to receive? Why? (16-17)

14) What note of wisdom is given at this point? (18)

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Chapter Fourteen

Following the troubling description of the beasts in the previous chapter, this chapter provides scenes which appear designed to reassure the saints to remain faithful to God.

First there is **the Lamb and 144,000** having the Father's name written on their foreheads, standing on Mount Zion. Singing a new song before the throne, the four living creatures, and the elders, the great company is described as male virgins, redeemed from the earth as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. They follow the Lamb wherever He goes, and are without fault before the throne of God (**1-5**). I suggest this is a picture of the saints triumphant in heaven (perhaps the blessedness of faithful Jewish Christians first depicted in **Re 7:1-8**; cf. also **He 12:22-24**). Both the number and descriptive terms are symbolic, illustrating the blessedness promised for those who will persevere in their faithfulness to God.

Next comes **three angels and their proclamations**. The first angel and his proclamation may indicate that the gospel will continue to be spread (despite the efforts of the dragon and the beasts). People should therefore fear God and worship Him (not Caesar), for the hour of God's judgment has come (**6-7**). The proclamation of the second angel announces the fall of Babylon, described later in great detail (**8**). The third angel proclaims the terrible judgment and eternal torment to befall those who worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark (**9-11**). The three proclamations are then followed by an explanation that the patience of the saints consists of keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, with a voice from heaven telling John to write of the blessedness of those who die in the Lord (**12-13**).

The chapter concludes with a depiction of **two harvests**. The first shows the Son of Man on a white cloud reaping the harvest of the earth (**14-16**). The second depicts an angel reaping the grapes of the vine of the earth, which are then thrown into the great winepress of the wrath of God, producing a river of blood almost two hundred miles long (**17-20**). These two harvests may be different ways of describing the same judgment about to come upon those who follow the beast, or the first may depict that Jesus will safely harvest His own while God's wrath is being poured out on His enemies. I do not believe either represents that which will occur when Jesus comes at the end of time (though they may certainly foreshadow that great event). Instead, like the angelic proclamations they reassured the Christians of John's day that God's hour of judgment was soon to come upon their enemies (e.g., the Roman empire).

Points To Ponder

- The series of scenes depicted in this chapter
- How they may have provided comfort to the Christians of John's day

Outline

I. THE 144,000 ON MOUNT ZION (1-5)

A. STANDING WITH THE LAMB (1)

1. 144,000 together with the Lamb on Mount Zion
2. With the Father's name written on their foreheads

B. SINGING A NEW SONG (2-3)

1. John heard a voice from heaven
 - a. Like the voice of many waters
 - b. Like the voice of loud thunder
2. John heard the sound of harpists playing their harps
3. The 144,000 sang a new song
 - a. Before the throne, the four living creatures and the elders
 - b. Which none could learn except the 144,000 redeemed from the earth

C. DESCRIBED MORE FULLY (4-5)

1. They are virgins, who had not defiled themselves with women
2. They follow the Lamb wherever He goes
3. They were redeemed from among men, the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb
4. They are without fault before the throne of God, with no guile in their mouths

II. THREE ANGELIC PROCLAMATIONS (6-13)

A. THE FIRST PROCLAMATION (6-7)

1. By an angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel
 - a. To preach to those who dwell on the earth
 - b. To every nation, tribe, tongue, and people
2. Saying with a loud voice...
 - a. "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come"
 - b. "Worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water"

B. THE SECOND PROCLAMATION (8)

1. By another angel which followed the first
2. Saying...
 - a. "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city"
 - b. "Because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication"

C. THE THIRD PROCLAMATION (9-11)

1. By a third angel which followed the first two
 2. Saying with a loud voice...
 - a. "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand..."
 - b. "He himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation"
 - c. "He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone..."
 - 1) "In the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb"
 - 2) "The smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever"
 - 3) "They have no rest day or night"
- "Who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name"

D. A WORD OF WISDOM AND A BEATITUDE (12-13)

1. Here is the patience of the saints: those who keep...
 - a. The commandments of God
 - b. The faith of Jesus
2. A voice from heaven saying...
 - a. "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'"
 - b. "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."

III. THE TWO HARVESTS (14-20)

A. REAPING THE EARTH'S HARVEST (14-16)

1. The Son of Man sitting on a white cloud
 - a. With a golden crown on His head
 - b. With a sharp sickle in His hand
2. An angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice...
 - a. "Thrust in Your sickle and reap"
 - b. "For the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe"
3. He who sat on a cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and it was reaped

B. REAPING THE GRAPES OF WRATH (17-20)

1. An angel came out of the temple in heaven, also having a sharp sickle
2. Another angel, having power over fire, cried with a loud voice to the angel with the sickle...
 - a. "Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth"
 - b. "For her grapes are fully ripe"
3. So the angel...
 - a. Thrust his sickle into the earth
 - b. Gathered the vine of the earth
 - c. Threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God
4. The winepress was trampled outside the city
 - a. Blood came out of the winepress
 - b. Up to the horses' bridles, for 1600 furlongs

Review Questions

- 1) **What are the main points of this chapter?**

- 2) **What does John see standing on Mount Zion? (1)**

- 3) **What does John hear? (2)**

- 4) **What were the 144,000 singing, and where? (3)**

- 5) **Who could learn the song? (3)**

- 6) How are the 144,000 described? (4-5)

- 7) What did the first of three angels have? What did it say? (6-7)

- 8) What did the second angel say? (8)

- 9) What did the third angel say? (9-11)

- 10) What does John say is the patience of the saints? (12)

- 11) What did a voice from heaven say? What did the Spirit say? (13)

- 12) In the first of two harvests, who did the harvesting and what was reaped? (14-16)

- 13) In the second harvest, who did the harvesting and what was reaped? (17-18)

- 14) What was done with the grapes? What was produced? (19-20)

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Chapter Fifteen

With the main adversaries identified (the dragon, the sea beast, the land beast, and Babylon) and the people of God reassured of ultimate victory (chs. **12-14**), the full outpouring of God's wrath is about to be shown. Chapter fifteen is a "prelude" to the seven bowls of wrath described in the next chapter.

We are introduced to **seven angels who have the seven last plagues** in which the wrath of God is complete (**1**). Before the seven angels are given their bowls, however, John sees those victorious over the beast standing on a fiery sea of glass having harps of God. Singing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb, they praise God for His righteous judgments (**2-4**). This scene is reminiscent of the Israelites praising God for their victory over the Egyptians after crossing the Red Sea (cf. **Exo 14:30-15:21**).

The seven angels with the seven plagues then proceeded out of the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven, clothed in bright linen and chests girded with gold bands. One of the four living creatures gave them seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God. At that point the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and His power, preventing anyone from entering the temple until the seven plagues were completed (**5-8**). Perhaps this scene was designed to convey that the time of God's longsuffering was over, and the outpouring of His wrath was the result of fulfilling the covenant He had with His people. God is about to avenge His saints!

Points To Ponder

- How the stage is set for the final outpouring of God's wrath on the beast and those who follow him
- The comforting scene of those victorious over the beast as they praise His righteous judgment

Outline

I. **PRELUDE TO THE SEVEN BOWLS OF WRATH (1-4)**

A. **A GREAT AND MARVELOUS SIGN IN HEAVEN (1-2)**

1. John sees seven angels
 - a. Having the seven last plagues
 - b. In which the wrath of God is complete
2. John sees a sea of glass mingled with fire, and a great multitude
 - a. It is those who have the victory over the beast, his image, his mark, and the number of his name
 - b. They are standing on the sea of glass, with harps of God

B. **SINGING THE SONG OF MOSES AND OF THE LAMB (3-4)**

1. The multitude is singing the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb
2. A song which praises the Lord God Almighty, King of the saints
 - a. For His great and marvelous works

- b. For the truth and justice of His ways
- c. For He is worthy of reverence and glory
- d. And all nations shall come and worship before Him, for the manifestations of His judgments

II. SEVEN ANGELS AND SEVEN BOWLS OF WRATH (5-8)

A. THE SEVEN ANGELS (5-6)

1. The temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven is opened
2. Out come the seven angels having the seven plagues
 - a. Clothed in pure bright linen
 - b. Having their chests girded with golden bands

B. THE SEVEN GOLDEN BOWLS (7-8)

1. One of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels:
 - a. Seven golden bowls
 - b. Full of the wrath of God who lives forever
2. The temple was filled with smoke
 - a. From the glory of God and from His power
 - b. No one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues were completed

Review Questions

- 1) **What are the main points of this chapter?**

- 2) **What great and marvelous sign did John see in heaven? (1)**

- 3) **Who was standing on a sea of glass mingled with fire? (2)**

- 4) **What were they doing? (3)**

- 5) **For what were they praising the Lord God Almighty? (3-4)**

- 6) **What did John see after these things? (5-6)**

- 7) **What did one of the four living creatures give to the seven angels? (7)**

- 8) **What happened to the temple at that point? (8)**

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Chapter Sixteen

In this chapter the full outpouring of wrath upon the enemies of God is depicted. The seven angels with the seven bowls pour out “the seven last plagues” (**Rev 15:1**). Notice that these are not partial judgments, as with the seven trumpets described earlier (chs. **8-11**). In the pouring out of these plagues “the wrath of God is complete” (**Rev 15:1**).

In the **first four bowls**, God’s wrath is poured out on the earth, the sea, the rivers and springs, and the sun. Affected by these plagues are those who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image.

God’s judgment upon them is proclaimed righteous and just, because they had been guilty of shedding the blood of saints and prophets. Amazingly, their response is to blaspheme God, and refuse to repent and give Him glory (**1-9**).

The **fifth bowl** is poured out on the throne of the beast and his kingdom, resulting in darkness. The painful suffering of the wicked continue, as does their blasphemy and refusal to repent of their deeds (**10-11**). The **sixth bowl** is poured out on the river Euphrates, preparing the way for the kings from the east. John then saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. Described as the spirits of demons, they perform signs and gather the kings of the earth to the place called **Armageddon**, for the battle of the great day of God. At this point Jesus speaks both a warning and blessing, for those who watch and keep their garments will be blessed, as He is coming as a thief (**12-16**).

The **seventh bowl** is poured out and a loud voice from the temple in heaven cries out, “It is done!” The declaration is followed by thunderings, lightnings, and a great earthquake. The great city was divided into three parts, and cities of the nations fell. Great Babylon was remembered by God, to give her the cup of the wine of His wrath. Every island fled away, the mountains were not found, and great hail from heaven fell upon men. The latter caused men to blaspheme God, unwilling to repent of their evil deeds (**17-21**).

The seven bowls of wrath depict a judgment upon **pagan Rome** that is more final than the judgment depicted earlier with the seven seals and seven trumpets against **unbelieving Jerusalem (Re 6-11)**. While God would not destroy unbelieving Jerusalem completely, the judgment against pagan Rome as a world empire would be total.

Chapters 17-19 will elaborate upon the judgments upon the beast, the false prophet, and Babylon, identifying them in more detail, and describing their ultimate downfall.

Points To Ponder

- What happens when the seven bowls of wrath are poured out
- Upon whom the seven bowls are poured, and why

Outline

I. THE PRONOUNCEMENT (1)

A. BY A LOUD VOICE FROM THE TEMPLE (1a)**B. TO THE SEVEN ANGELS TO POUR OUT THE BOWLS OF WRATH (1b)****II. THE SEVEN BOWLS OF WRATH (2-21)****A. FIRST BOWL: TERRIBLE SORES (2)**

1. The bowl is poured out upon the earth
2. Loathsome and foul sores came upon those who had the mark of the beast and who worshipped his image

B. SECOND BOWL: SEA OF BLOOD (3)

1. The bowl is poured out on the sea, turning it to the blood of a dead man
2. Every living creature in the sea died

C. THIRD BOWL: RIVERS AND SPRINGS OF BLOOD (4-7)

1. The bowl is poured out on the rivers and springs, turning them to blood
2. The angel of the waters declares God's justice
 - a. His judgments are righteous
 - b. For it is just due upon those who shed the blood of saints and prophets
3. Another voice from the altar also proclaims God's judgments as true and righteous

D. FOURTH BOWL: MEN SCORCHED (8-9)

1. The bowl is poured out on the sun, giving the fourth angel power to scorch men with fire
2. Men were scorched with great heat
 - a. They blasphemed the name of God who had power over these plagues
 - b. They did not repent or give glory to Him

E. FIFTH BOWL: PAIN AND DARKNESS (10-11)

1. The bowl is poured out on the throne of the beast, his kingdom became full of darkness
2. Men gnawed their tongues because of the pain
 - a. They blasphemed God
 - b. They did not repent

F. SIXTH BOWL: KINGDOMS GATHERED AT ARMAGEDDON (12-16)

1. The bowl is poured out on the great river Euphrates
 - a. Its water was dried up
 - b. Preparing the way for the kings of the east
2. Three unclean spirits like frogs appear
 - a. Out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet
 - b. Which are spirits of demons, performing signs
 - c. Who gather the kings of the earth to the battle of that great day of God Almighty
3. Jesus offers both a warning and a blessing
 - a. He is coming as a thief
 - b. Blessed is he who watches and keeps his garments, lest he walks naked and others see his shame

4. The unclean spirits gather the kings of the earth to the place called Armageddon

G. SEVENTH BOWL: GREAT EARTHQUAKE; THE GREAT CITY DIVIDED AND BABYLON REMEMBERED; CATAclysmic EVENTS (17-21)

1. The bowl is poured out on the air
 - a. Followed by a loud voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, declaring, "It is done!"
 - b. There were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and a mighty earthquake unlike any before
2. The great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell
3. Great Babylon was remembered, to receive the cup of the wine of the fierceness of God's wrath
4. Great cataclysmic events occur
 - a. Every island fled away and the mountains were not found
 - b. Great hail fell upon men, and they blasphemed God because of the hail

Review Questions

- 1) What are the main points of this chapter?
- 2) What did a loud voice from the temple say to seven angels? (1)
- 3) Upon what was the first bowl poured out? What happened? (2)
- 4) Upon what was the second bowl poured out? What happened? (3)
- 5) Upon what was the third bowl poured out? What happened? (4)
- 6) Why did the angel of the waters proclaim God's judgments as just? (5-6)
- 7) Upon what was the fourth bowl poured out? What happened? (8-9)
- 8) Despite these judgments, how did men respond? (9)
- 9) Upon what was the fifth bowl poured out? What happened? (10)
- 10) What again is said about the response to these judgments? (11)

11) Upon what was the sixth bowl poured out? What happened? (12)

12) What did John see next? (13)

13) What were these, and what was their mission? (14)

14) What warning and beatitude did Jesus give at this point? (15)

15) Where were the kings of the earth gathered? (16)

16) Upon what was the seventh bowl poured out? What happened? (17)

17) What then occurred? (18-21)

18) How did people respond to the plague of the hail? (21)

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Chapter Seventeen

This is a key chapter, for the mystery of the great harlot and the beast is explained, and one's understanding of this chapter will affect their interpretation of the rest of the book.

John is carried away into the wilderness where he is shown **the great harlot "Babylon"**, with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication and the inhabitants of the earth were drunk with the wine of her fornication. She is seen sitting on a **scarlet beast** with seven heads and ten horns. She is dressed in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, precious stones and pearls. In her hand is a gold cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. On her forehead is written:

**MYSTERY,
BABYLON THE GREAT,
THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS
AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH**

Seeing the woman drunk with the blood of the saints (Old Testament saints?) and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus, John marvels with great amazement (1-6).

The angel then proceeds to tell John the mystery of the woman and the beast that carries her. He begins with the beast first, described as one who **"was, is not, and is to come"** (ESV). This beast will ascend out of the bottomless pit (cf. **Re 11:7**) and go to perdition (cf. **Re 19:20**). The **seven heads** of the beast represent seven mountains upon which the woman sits. There are **seven kings**, five of whom have fallen, one is, and the other has yet to come. The beast is then described as the **eighth king**, though of the seven. The **ten horns** represent ten kings who give their power and authority to the beast, make war against the Lamb, and eventually turn on the harlot herself. **The harlot** is finally described as that "great city" (cf. **Re 14:8; 16:19**) which reigns over the kings of the earth (7-18).

As indicated in the introductory material, my understanding of this book focuses on the fact that John is given this revelation at a time when the beast **"is not"** (**Re 17:8,11**). Whatever explanation one gives for the beast, it did not exist at the time of the Revelation! It had existed, and was to come, but at the time John was shown the vision, it **"is not"**.

One plausible explanation is that the seven (actually eight) kings represent Roman emperors, starting with Augustus. This would make Nero the fifth king, whose death in 68 A.D. left the empire in an uproar and may be the "deadly wound" referred to **Re 13:3,12,14**. Discounting Galba, Otho, and Vitellius whose insignificant reigns were short-lived during the turmoil, the sixth king (**"one is"**) would be Vespasian who restored order to the empire. This would make Titus the seventh emperor and Domitian the eighth. The beast that **"was, and is not, and will ascend"** (NKJV) therefore depicts the persecuting Roman emperor, seen first in the person of Nero (the beast who **"was"**) and later in the person of Domitian (the beast who **"will ascend"**). The **ten kings** who gave their power and authority to the beast appear to be vassal kings that supported the emperor in times of persecution.

The identity of the harlot is still an open question in my own mind. I used to lean toward the view that the harlot represents **Jerusalem**, often supported in her persecution of the church by the Roman empire but then destroyed herself by Rome in A.D. 70. It is interesting

to compare such verses as **Re 17:6; 18:20,24; 19:2** with Jesus' statements in **Mt 23:31-39**. As foretold by Jesus in both Matthew and Revelation, God was about to avenge His apostles and prophets on this city *"who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her"* (**Re 18:20; Mt 23:37**). I still believe that Jerusalem is the focus of **chapters 6-11**.

Many understand the harlot to represent the commercial and immoral spirit of **Rome** (not the literal city itself, for she was never destroyed as described in later chapters) which was instrumental in opposing the people of God. There is much to be said for this view. **Re 17:2,18; 18:3,9,11** certainly seem to fit Rome. I now lean toward this view in keeping with the main idea of Rome as the focus of **chapters 13-19**.

While the identity of the beast, the kings, and the harlot might be unclear in the minds of some, the outcome of the conflict described in this chapter is certain. In what may be described as the theme of this book, we are told that:

***"These will make war with Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful."** (Re 17:14)*

Comforting words indeed to those early Christians who were persecuted by both the Roman emperor and unbelieving Jerusalem!

Points To Ponder

- The importance of this chapter in interpreting the book of Revelation
- That the beast "is not" when the Revelation was given to John
- The identity of the great harlot and the scarlet beast

Outline

I. THE SCARLET WOMAN AND THE SCARLET BEAST (1-6)

A. JOHN IS APPROACHED BY AN ANGEL (1-2)

1. One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls
2. Who offers to show him the judgment of the great harlot
 - a. Which sits on many waters
 - b. With whom kings of the earth have committed fornication
 - c. With whom inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication

B. JOHN IS SHOWN THE SCARLET WOMAN ON THE SCARLET BEAST (3-6)

1. He is carried away by the angel in the Spirit into the wilderness
2. There he sees a woman sitting on a scarlet beast
 - a. The scarlet beast
 - 1) Full of names of blasphemy
 - 2) Having seven heads and ten horns
 - b. The woman
 - 1) Arrayed in purple and scarlet
 - 2) Adorned with gold, precious stones, and pearls
 - 3) In her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication
 - 4) On her forehead the name written:

- a) MYSTERY
- b) BABYLON THE GREAT
- c) THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH
- 5) Drunk with:
 - a) The blood of the saints
 - b) The blood of the martyrs of Jesus
- 3. He marveled with great amazement when he saw her

II. THE MYSTERY OF THE WOMAN AND BEAST EXPLAINED (7-18)

A. THE ANGEL OFFERS TO EXPLAIN THE MYSTERY (7)

- 1. Asking John why he marveled
- 2. Saying that he will tell him the mystery
 - a. Of the woman
 - b. Of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that carries her

B. THE BEAST EXPLAINED (8-14)

- 1. The beast that John saw:
 - a. Was, is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition
 - b. Will be marveled by those by those whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world when they see it
- 2. The mind which has wisdom:
 - a. The seven heads are seven mountains upon which the woman sits
 - b. There are also seven kings
 - 1) Five have fallen, one is, the other has yet to come
 - 2) When the seventh comes, he must continue a short time
 - c. The beast that was, and is not, is himself the eighth
 - 1) He is of the seven
 - 2) He is going to perdition (destruction)
 - d. The ten horns are ten kings
 - 1) Who have received no kingdom as yet
 - 2) But receive authority for one hour with the beast
 - 3) Who are of one mind, and give their power and authority to the beast
 - e. These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them
 - 1) For He is Lord of lords and King of kings
 - 2) Those with Him are called, chosen, and faithful

C. THE WOMAN EXPLAINED (15-18)

- 1. The waters upon which she sits are peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues
- 2. The ten horns (ten kings) on the beast
 - a. Will hate the harlot
 - 1) Make her desolate
 - 2) Eat her flesh and burn her with fire
 - b. For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose
 - 1) For them to be of one mind
 - 2) To give their kingdom to the beast
 - Until the words of God are fulfilled
- 3. The woman John saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth

Review Questions

- 1) What are the main points of this chapter?**

- 2) What did the angel tell John he would be shown? (1)**

- 3) How does the angel describe this woman? (2)**

- 4) List the description of the woman as seen by John (3-6)**

- 5) What was John's reaction to seeing the woman? (6)**

- 6) What does the angel offer to tell John? (7)**

- 7) How is the beast described? (8)**

- 8) What does the seven heads of the beast represent? (9-10)**

- 9) What is said of the seven kings? (10)**

- 10) What is said of the beast that was and is not? (11)**

- 11) What do the ten horns represent? (12)**

- 12) What else is said of the ten kings and the beast? (13-14)**

13) Why will the Lamb overcome the beast and the ten kings? (14)

14) What do the waters upon which the harlot sits represent? (15)

15) What will the ten horns (kings) do to the harlot? (16)

16) Why will they do this? (17)

17) How is the woman finally described? (18)

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Chapter Eighteen

In this chapter we find the fall of “Babylon the great” proclaimed, and the great mourning over her by those in the world. **The fall of Babylon is proclaimed** by an angel with great authority, who illuminated the earth with his glory. The reasons for her fall include how the nations and kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and how the merchants have become rich through her abundance. Meanwhile, a voice from heaven calls for the people of God to come out of her lest they receive the plagues to come upon her. Her judgment will involve death, mourning, famine, and utter destruction by fire, for it is the Lord God who judges her (**1-8**).

The fall of Babylon is mourned by the kings of the earth who committed fornication with her, and the merchants and sea-traders who had become rich by her. They all cry out “*Alas, alas, that great city...*” as they observe her judgment. They bemoan that in just one hour her riches came to nothing and she has become desolate. On the other hand, heaven itself, along with the apostles and prophets, are called to rejoice, because God has avenged them on her (**9-20**).

Finally, a mighty angel throws a large stone into sea to depict with what great violence Babylon will be thrown down. The sounds and sights of music, crafts, even weddings will be gone. **The fall of Babylon is justified**, for her merchants were great, by her sorcery the nations were deceived, and in her was found the blood of prophets, saints, and all those slain on the earth (**21-24**).

What is this chapter describing? If the date of the book suggested in the introduction is correct (spring, 70 A.D.), and **Jerusalem** is indeed the “harlot”, then this chapter likely refers to its destruction by the Romans in August, 70 A.D. This would be in harmony with **Re 17:16**, where those who first supported the harlot eventually turned on her. So it was with Jerusalem, who depended upon the approval of the Roman authorities to persecute the church, and later became the object of Roman persecution herself. Very fitting is the depiction of Jerusalem as a harlot, for she who should have been a great spiritual city had become a great commercial center by virtue of the roads that passed through her between Europe, Asia and Africa. Her spiritual adultery was also manifested by rejecting the many prophets and apostles sent to her (cf. **Mt 23:31-39** with **Re 17:6; 18:20,24; 19:2**).

But if **Rome** (in particular her commercial and immoral spirit) is the “harlot”, then this chapter may describe the fall of Rome in 476 A.D. The statements in **Re 18:3,9-19** (“all the nations...” and “the merchants of the earth...”) seem to fit Rome better than Jerusalem. The fall of “Babylon, the harlot” was due to her treatment of apostles, prophets, and saints (**Re 18:20,24**). When Revelation was written, Rome had already killed Peter and Paul, and by the time of Rome’s fall, there had been at least ten periods of persecutions by Rome against the church. Rome, like Jerusalem, certainly qualifies as “Babylon, the harlot!”

Points To Ponder

- The pronouncement and depiction of the fall of “Babylon the great”
- The reasons why Babylon would receive such terrible judgment

- The identity of “that great city Babylon, that mighty city”

Outline

I. THE FALL OF BABYLON PROCLAIMED (1-8)

A. BY AN ANGEL FROM HEAVEN (1-3)

1. John sees an angel coming down from heaven
 - a. Having great authority
 - b. Illuminating the earth with his glory
2. The angel cries mightily with a loud voice
 - a. Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen
 - b. She has become...
 - 1) A dwelling place of demons
 - 2) A prison for every foul spirit
 - 3) A cage for every unclean and hated bird
 - c. With her...
 - 1) The nations have drunk of the wine of her fornication
 - 2) The kings of the earth have committed fornication
 - 3) The merchants of the earth have become rich

B. BY A VOICE FROM HEAVEN (4-8)

1. Calling God’s people to come out of her
 - a. Lest they share in her sins and her plagues
 - b. For her sins have reached to heaven and God has remembered her iniquities
 2. Calling for judgment to be rendered her
 - a. Render her just as she rendered them
 - b. Repay her double according to her works
 - c. In the cup she has mixed, mix double for her
 - d. To the degree she glorified herself and lived luxuriously...
 - 1) Give her torment and sorrow
 - 2) For she says in heart that she is a queen and will not see sorrow as a widow
 - e. Her plagues will come in one day...
 - 1) Death, mourning, and famine
 - 2) Utterly burned with fire
- For great is the Lord God who judges her

II. THE FALL OF BABYLON MOURNED (9-20)

A. BY THE KINGS OF THE EARTH (9-10)

1. Those who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her
2. They shall weep and lament when they see the smoke of her burning
3. They shall stand afar off for fear of her torment, saying...
 - a. “Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city!”
 - b. “For in one hour your judgment has come.”

B. BY THE MERCHANTS OF THE EARTH (11-17a)

1. They shall weep and mourn over her
2. For no one buys their merchandise anymore
3. All that they longed for, both rich and splendid, they shall find no more

4. The merchants shall stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing..
 - a. "Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls!"
 - b. "For in one hour such great riches came to nothing."

C. BY THE TRADERS AND TRAVELERS ON THE SEA (17b-19)

1. They stood at a distance, crying when they saw the smoke of her burning, "What is like this great city?"
2. Throwing dust on their heads, they cried out, weeping and wailing..
 - a. "Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth!"
 - b. "For in one hour she is made desolate."

D. BUT NOT BY THE HOLY APOSTLES AND PROPHETS (20)

1. They are to rejoice over her
2. For God has avenged them on her

III. THE FALL OF BABYLON JUSTIFIED (21-24)

A. THE EXTENT OF HER FALL ILLUSTRATED (21-23a)

1. By a mighty angel..
 - a. Who took a stone like a great millstone and cast it into the sea
 - b. Who then proclaims "Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore."
2. Neither shall be heard or seen in her...
 - a. The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters
 - b. A craftsman of any craft
 - c. The sound of a millstone
 - d. The light of a lamp
 - e. The voice of bridegroom and bride

B. THE EXTENT OF HER FALL JUSTIFIED (23b-24)

1. For her merchants were the great men of the earth
2. For by her sorcery all the nations were deceived
3. For in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who slain on the earth

Review Questions

1) What are the main points of this chapter?

2) Who proclaims the fall of Babylon? (1-2)

3) What is said concerning nations, kings and merchants in regards to Babylon? (3)

- 4) **What does a voice from heaven implore the people of God? Why? (4-5)**

- 5) **To what degree will Babylon be judged? (6-7)**

- 6) **What plagues will come to her in one day? Her ultimate end? (8)**

- 7) **What first group is described as mourning the fall of Babylon? (9)**

- 8) **What will they say as they see the smoke of her burning from a distance? (10)**

- 9) **What second group is described as mourning the fall of Babylon? Why? (11)**

- 10) **What will they say as they stand afar off, weeping and wailing? (16-17a)**

- 11) **What third group is described as mourning the fall of Babylon? (17b)**

- 12) **What do they say as they see the smoke of her burning? (18-19)**

- 13) **Who is told to rejoice over the fall of Babylon? Why? (20)**

- 14) **What did a mighty angel do and say? (21)**

- 15) **What did the angel say would not be seen or heard in Babylon anymore? (22-23a)**

16) What two reasons are given for her downfall? (23a-24)

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Chapter Nineteen

This chapter illustrates the ultimate defeat of the enemies of God's people. John hears a great multitude in **heaven rejoicing over the fall of Babylon**. The multitude is joined by the twenty-four elders and four living creatures, and a voice from the throne calling upon all God's servants to praise Him (1-5).

John then hears **heaven rejoicing in preparation for the marriage of the Lamb**. His wife has made herself ready, and she is adorned in fine linen, signifying the righteous acts of the saints. John is then told to write that those invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb are truly blessed. John falls down to worship the one speaking to him, but is immediately rebuked and told to worship God (6-10).

The scene quickly changes as John sees heaven opened and **Christ the warrior king on a white horse**, followed by the armies in heaven on white horses. Described in terms reminiscent of His appearance in the first three chapters, He is ready to strike the nations and rule them with a rod of iron, even as He treads the winepress of the fierce wrath of Almighty God. As inscribed on His robe and His thigh, Jesus is truly "*King of kings and Lord of Lords*" (11-16).

With an angel standing in the sun and inviting the birds to gather for the supper of the great God, John then sees the beast and his forces gathered to make war against Christ and His army. But immediately **the beast and the false prophet** (the earth beast of **Re 13:11-18**) **are captured and cast alive into the lake of fire**. Their armies are killed with the sword proceeding from the mouth of Christ, and all the birds were filled with their flesh (17-21).

This chapter appears designed to reinforce the idea that **Christ in His kingly rule will defeat those who have been persecuting His people**. Just as Babylon the harlot would be destroyed, so the beast and false prophet would be overcome. If the latter two represent the Roman empire in its persecution against the church, this section with its vivid imagery would have been fulfilled by 313 A.D. when Constantine brought an end to Roman persecution.

Points To Ponder

- The great joy in heaven over the fall of Babylon
- The excitement over the preparation for the marriage of the Lamb and His wife
- The victory Christ would have over the beast, the false prophet and their armies

Outline

I. HEAVEN REJOICES OVER THE FALL OF BABYLON (1-5)

A. A GREAT MULTITUDE IN HEAVEN (1-3)

1. Praising God, attributing salvation, glory, honor, and power to Him
2. Declaring His judgments on the great harlot as true and righteous
 - a. For she corrupted the earth with her fornication
 - b. He has avenged the blood of His servants which she shed

3. Praising God, for her smoke rises up forever and ever

B. THE TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS AND FOUR LIVING CREATURES (4)

1. Falling down and worshipping God who sits on the throne
2. Saying "Amen, Alleluia!"

C. A VOICE FROM THE THRONE (5)

1. Calling upon all God's servants and those who fear Him
2. Calling upon both small and great to praise God

II. PREPARATION FOR THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB (6-10)

A. A GREAT MULTITUDE IN HEAVEN (6-8)

1. Sounding like many waters and mighty thunderings
 - a. Praising the Lord God Omnipotent for His reign
 - b. Calling to be glad and rejoice and give God glory
2. For the marriage of the Lamb has come
 - a. His wife has made herself ready
 - b. She was arrayed in fine linen, which is the righteous acts of the saints

B. A FELLOW SERVANT (9-10)

1. Telling John to write: "Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!"
2. Proclaiming: "These are the true sayings of God."
3. When John fell at his feet to worship him, he is rebuked
 - a. "See that you do not do that!"
 - b. "I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus."
 - c. "Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

III. CHRIST THE WARRIOR KING ON A WHITE HORSE (11-16)

A. HIS AWESOME DESCRIPTION (11-13)

1. As heaven opened, John sees Him sitting on a white horse
 - a. He is called Faithful and True
 - b. In righteousness He judges and makes war
2. As seen by John:
 - a. His eyes were like a flame of fire
 - b. On His head were many crowns
 - c. He had a name written that no one knew but Himself
 - d. Clothed with a robe dipped in blood
 - e. His name is called The Word of God

B. HIS GREAT RULE AND REIGN (14-16)

1. Followed by the armies of heaven
 - a. Clothed in fine linen, white and clean
 - b. Sitting on white horses
2. From His mouth, a sharp sword to strike the nations
 - a. He Himself will rule the nations with a rod of iron
 - b. He Himself treads the winepress of Almighty God's fierceness and wrath

3. On His robe and thigh a name written: "King of kings, and Lord of lords"

IV. THE FALL OF THE BEAST, THE FALSE PROPHET, AND THEIR FORCES (17-21)

A. THE DECLARATION OF AN ANGEL (17-18)

1. John sees an angel standing in the sun, crying with a loud voice
2. Speaking to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven:
 - a. "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God."
 - b. "...eat the flesh of kings...captains...mighty men...horses...all people, free and slave, both small and great"

B. THE END OF THE BEAST AND FALSE PROPHET (19-21)

1. John saw the beast, the kings of the earth and their armies, gathered to make war against Him who sat on the horse and His army
2. John saw the beast and false prophet captured
 - a. The false prophet who worked signs in the presence of the beast
 - b. By which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image
 - Both were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone
3. The rest of their forces were killed
 - a. With the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse
 - b. All the birds were filled with their flesh

Review Questions

- 1) **What are the main points of this chapter?**

- 2) **What did John hear a great multitude in heaven saying? (1)**

- 3) **Why are God's judgments on the harlot proclaimed as true and righteous? (2)**

- 4) **What else does this great multitude in heaven say? (3)**

- 5) **Who else joins and with a cry of "Amen! Alleluia!"? (4)**

- 6) **What does a voice from throne proclaim? (5)**

- 7) **What did the voice of a great multitude cry out next? (6-7)**

8) In what was the Lamb's bride adorned? (8)

9) What was John then told? (9)

10) As John fell down to worship the one who spoke to him, what was he told? (10)

11) List the descriptive features of the One sitting on a white horse (11-16)

12) What did an angel standing in the sun say to the birds? (17-18)

13) What did John see next? (19)

14) What happened to the beast and the false prophet? (20)

15) What happened to the rest of their armies? (21)

The Book Of Revelation

Chapter Twenty

Previous chapters have illustrated the defeat of agents used by Satan to persecute God's people. One by one we have seen the fall of Babylon, the beast, the false prophet, and the armies they had gathered. What about Satan, the dragon who gave authority to the beast in his efforts to wage war against the saints (**Re 12:17-13:7**)? And what of those killed by the agents of Satan?

This chapter reveals **the binding of Satan** for “a 1000 years”. It most likely depicts a long period of time in which Satan is no longer able to deceive the nations as he did during the time of the Roman empire (cf. **Re 13:14; 20:3**). It began following the end of Roman persecution and would continue for some time in the future. During this period, John sees **souls reigning with Christ**, who were beheaded for their faithfulness to Jesus and the word of God. No mention is made of reigning on the earth, so my conclusion is that they reign with Christ in heaven during this period (cf. **Re 2:26-27; 3:21**). This “*first resurrection*” may be a special blessing for the martyrs of Christ during the intermediate state (between death and the bodily resurrection at the end of time), while **Re 7:9-17** may describe the intermediate state for the average Christian. Truly those who had been beheaded for the witness of Christ are “*blessed and holy*” (**1-6**)!

After the “1000 years” are over, **Satan is released** for a short time where he once again seeks to “*deceive the nations*” to persecute the people of God (cf. **Re 13:14; 20:3,8,10**). The mention of “*Gog and Magog*” is likely an apocalyptic reference to forces of evil at Satan's disposal during this time, not any particular nation or nations. But **the final attempt of Satan** is quickly thwarted by the Lord, and the devil is cast into the lake of fire, where the beast and false prophet were (cf. **Re 19:20**). If any section of Revelation pertains to the time just prior to the Lord's final coming, I believe it to be this one. The description is brief, for the book was written for the benefit of Christians in Asia Minor about things to shortly come to pass (cf. **Re 1:1-4; 22:6,10**). Those Christians would not experience this last attempt of Satan. But to assure them (and us!) that Satan would ultimately be defeated, we have the description found in these few verses (**7-10**).

The chapter closes with a description of **the final judgment**. Before the great white throne and Him who sat on it, all the dead are judged. Books are opened, including the Book of Life, and judgment is based upon their works. None escape the judgment, for the sea, Death, and Hades give up all the dead that are in them. Death and Hades are cast into the lake and fire, described as the “*second death*”. The same end is given to those whose names were not written in the Book of Life (**11-15**).

Points To Ponder

- The binding, future release, and ultimate defeat of Satan
- The “thousand year” reign described in this chapter, and who will reign with Christ
- The criteria used in the final judgment, and the importance of the Book of Life

Outline

I. THE THOUSAND YEAR REIGN (1-6)

A. SATAN BOUND FOR 1000 YEARS (1-3)

1. John sees an angel come down from heaven
 - a. Having the key to the bottomless pit
 - b. With a great chain in his hand
 2. The angel binds Satan for a thousand years
 - a. Casting him into the bottomless pit, shutting him up and setting a seal on him
 - b. So that he should deceive the nations no more for a thousand years
- But afterward he will be released for a little while

B. SAINTS REIGN WITH CHRIST FOR 1000 YEARS (4-6)

1. John sees souls upon thrones, to whom judgment was committed
 - a. Who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and the word of God
 - b. Who had not worshiped the beast or his image
 - c. Who had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands
2. These souls lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years
 - a. The rest of the dead not live again until the thousand years were finished
 - b. This is the first resurrection
 - 1) Blessed and holy are those who have a part in the first resurrection
 - 2) Over such the second death has no power
 - 3) They shall be priests of God and of Christ
 - 4) They shall reign with Christ a thousand years

II. SATAN'S FINAL ATTEMPT AND DEFEAT (7-10)

A. HIS RELEASE FROM PRISON (7-8)

1. After the thousand years were completed
2. He will go out to deceive the nations
 - a. Those in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog
 - b. To gather them to battle

B. HIS FINAL ATTEMPT AND DEFEAT (9)

1. To have the nations surround the camp of the saints and the beloved city
2. But fire from God out of heaven devoured those Satan had deceived

C. HIS ETERNAL TORMENT (10)

1. The devil who deceived the nations was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone
2. The same place where the beast and the false prophet are
3. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever

III. THE FINAL JUDGMENT (11-15)

A. THE ONE ON THE GREAT WHITE THRONE (11)

1. John sees a great white throne and Him who sat on it
2. Before Whose face the earth and heaven fled away so no place was found for them

10)What will happen before they succeed? (9)

11)What will happen to the devil? (10)

12)What does John see next? What about the earth and the heaven? (11)

13)Who does John see standing before the throne? What was opened (12)

14)How were the dead judged? (12)

15)Who had given up the dead? (13)

16)What is the lake of fire called? Who was cast into it? (14-15)

The Book Of Revelation

Chapter Twenty-One

Following the Judgment scene at the end of the previous chapter, **the eternal destiny of the redeemed is now revealed**. The motif of a new heaven and new earth, along with the New Jerusalem, is used to provide great hope and comfort to Christians. This is certainly nothing new, for both the Old and New Testaments provided similar pictures to increase anticipation of the future (cf. **Isa 65:17-25; 66:22-24; He 11:10,13-16; 13:14; 2Pe 3:13**). In each case, the eternal destiny of God's faithful is described in terms that provided the greatest meaning and encouragement to the people of that dispensation. Here we see the destiny of the redeemed in terms depicting fellowship with God and protection by God.

John first sees **all things made new**. There is **a new heaven and a new earth**, for the first heaven and first earth are no more (cf. **Re 20:11**). He sees **the holy city, New Jerusalem**, *"coming down out of heaven from God."* A loud voice from heaven declares that God will dwell with His people and be their God. God, who is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, will comfort His people by removing all that causes pain, and provide the fountain of the water of life freely to him that thirsts. While those who overcome inherit all things and enjoy the blessings of being God's children, the wicked and unfaithful have their part in the lake of fire and brimstone (cf. **Re 19:20; 20:10,14-15**) which is defined as the second death (**1-8**).

One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls (cf. **Re 15:7; 16:1**) then carries John to a great and high mountain, to show him *"the bride, the Lamb's wife"*. This is none other than the great city, **the New Jerusalem**, which is seen *"descending out of heaven from God."* It is a city having the glory of God, and the bulk of the chapter describes its prominent features. A great and high wall surrounds the city. Standing about 216 feet high and made of jasper, the wall has twelve pearly gates upon which are the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, with an angel at each gate. The wall has twelve foundations, each made of precious stones of various colors, upon which are the names of the twelve apostles. The city itself, made of pure gold like clear glass, is 1500 miles long in its length, breadth, and height. The street of the city is also pure gold, like transparent glass (**9-21**).

The glory of the holy city is described further by noting that there is no temple, for God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. There is no need for the sun or moon, for the glory of God and the Lamb illuminate the city. Its gates are never shut, there is no night there, and the nations of the saved along with the kings of the earth bring their honor and glory into it. Only those written in the Lamb's book of life enter this glorious city, ensuring that it remains free from any abomination and defilement (**22-27**).

Points To Ponder

- The eternal destiny of the redeemed, in terms depicting fellowship with God and protection by God
- The new heaven and new earth (cf. **2Pe 3:13**), along with the holy city, New Jerusalem *"coming down out of heaven from God"* (cf. **Re 3:12; 21:2,10**)
- The detailed imagery used to describe the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem

Outline

I. ALL THINGS MADE NEW (1-8)

A. THE NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH (1)

1. John sees a new heaven and a new earth
2. The first heaven and earth had passed away, and there was no sea

B. THE NEW JERUSALEM (2)

1. John saw the holy city coming down out of heaven
2. It was prepared as a bride adorned for her husband

C. THE PROCLAMATION FROM HEAVEN (3-4)

1. "The tabernacle of God is with men"
 - a. "He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people"
 - b. "God Himself will be with them and be their God"
2. "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes"
 - a. "There shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying"
 - b. "There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away"

D. THE PROCLAMATION FROM THE ONE WHO SAT ON THE THRONE (5-8)

1. "Behold, I make all things new"
 - a. "Write, for these words are true and faithful"
 - b. "It is done!"
2. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End"
 - a. "I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts"
 - b. "He who overcomes shall inherit all things"
 - 1) "I will be his God"
 - 2) "He shall be My son"
3. "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars..."
 - a. "Shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone"
 - b. "Which is the second death"

II. THE NEW JERUSALEM (9-21)

A. JOHN IS SHOWN THE HOLY CITY (9-11)

1. By one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the last plagues
 - a. Who offered to show John "the bride, the Lamb's wife"
 - b. Who carried him away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain
2. He sees the great city, the holy Jerusalem
 - a. Descending out of heaven from God
 - b. Having the glory of God
 - c. With light like a jasper stone, clear as crystal

B. THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CITY AND ITS WALL (12-21)

1. It had a great and high wall with twelve gates
 - a. With twelve angels at the gates
 - b. With the names of the twelve tribes of Israel
 - c. With three gates each on the east, north, south, and west

- d. With twelve foundations, on which were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb
- 2. The measurement of the city, the gates, and the wall
 - a. The angel had a golden reed to measure them
 - b. The city is laid out as a cube, its length, breadth, and height are each 12,000 furlongs (1500 miles)
 - c. The wall is one hundred and forty-four cubits (216 feet)
- 3. The construction of the city, the wall, its foundations, and the gates
 - a. The wall was of jasper; the city was pure gold, like clear glass
 - b. The twelve foundations of the wall were adorned with precious stones:

1) Jasper	5) Sardonyx	9) Topaz
2) Sapphire	6) Sardius	10) Chrysoprase
3) Chalcedony	7) Chrysolite	11) Jacinth
4) Emerald	8) Beryl	12) Amethyst
 - c. The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate one pearl
 - d. The street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass

III. THE GLORY OF THE HOLY CITY (22-27)

A. ILLUMINATED BY THE PRESENCE OF GOD AND THE LAMB (22-23)

- 1. Its temple are the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb
- 2. It is illuminated by the glory of God and the Lamb

B. ENHANCED BY THOSE WHO ENTER IT (24-27)

- 1. The nations of the saved shall walk in its light
- 2. The kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it
- 3. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day, and there is no night there
- 4. The nations shall bring their glory and honor into it
 - a. Nothing that defiles, causes an abomination or a lie, shall enter it
 - b. Only those written in the Lamb's book of Life enter it

Review Questions

- 1) **What are the main points of this chapter?**

- 2) **What did John see? (1)**

- 3) **What happened to the first heaven and first earth? What of the sea? (1)**

- 4) **What did John see coming down out of heaven from God? (2)**

- 5) **What is said about the dwelling of God? (3)**

- 6) **What will God do? What shall be no more? (4)**
- 7) **What did the One on the throne say to John in verse 5?**
- 8) **What did He say in verse 6?**
- 9) **What is promised to those who overcome? (7)**
- 10) **Who shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone? What is this called? (8)**
- 11) **Who offered to show John the bride, the Lamb's wife? (9)**
- 12) **Where is John taken, and what does he see? (10)**
- 13) **What was the general description of the city? (11)**
- 14) **What surrounded the city? (12)**
- 15) **What stood at each of the gates? What was written on the gates? (12)**
- 16) **How many foundations did the wall have? What was written on the foundations? (14)**
- 17) **What was the length, breadth, and height of the city? (16)**
- 18) **How tall was the wall? (17)**

19)What was the construction of the wall? Of the city? (18)

20)What were the foundations of the city adorned with? (19)

21)What were the twelve gates? What was the street of the city? (21)

22)Why was there no temple in the city? (22)

23)Why was there no need for the sun or moon to shine in it? (23)

24)Who shall walk in its light? Who shall bring their glory and honor into it? (24)

25)What shall not be shut at all day? What about at night? (25)

26)Who will by no means enter the city? Who will enter the city? (27)

The Book Of Revelation

Chapter Twenty-Two

In the previous chapter John described the glory of the New Jerusalem as the eternal destiny of the redeemed was revealed. In the first six verses of this chapter, John's vision of the glorious future for the people of God is completed with a brief description of **the river of life, the tree(s) of life, and the throne of God and of the Lamb**. With the river of life proceeding from the throne, and the tree (the definite article is not in the Greek, so perhaps two trees on either side of the river) of life bearing fruit every month along with its healing leaves, the picture is one of provision from God. Eternal fellowship with God, stressed in the previous chapter (cf. **Re 21:3-4,7**), is emphasized again with the promise of seeing His face and having His name on one's forehead. With no more curse (cf. **Gen 3:17-19**), the redeemed shall serve God and the Lamb on the throne. There is no night nor need for the sun, for the Lord God gives them light (cf. **Re 21:23**). The redeemed will also reign forever and ever (**1-5**).

The remainder of this chapter contains **the grand conclusion** of this wonderful book. The angel who showed John the holy city stressed that the events described in this book were soon to take place, such that John is not to seal the book (cf. **Re 22:6,10**; contrast this with **Dan 8:26**). Jesus Himself states three times that He is coming quickly (cf. **Re 22:7,12,20**), which I take to refer to His coming in judgment as described throughout this book (cf. **Re 3:10-11**). With a reminder of the blessedness of those who do His commandments, Jesus, who is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last, the Root and Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star, declares that He sent His angel to testify of these things to the churches. The Spirit and the bride join in with an invitation to let those who thirst come to drink of the water of life freely. The book ends with a fearful warning not to add to or take away from the book, a final promise of the Lord's coming, and a two-fold prayer calling for the Lord Jesus to come, and for His grace to be with all the brethren (**6-22**).

Points To Ponder

- The eternal destiny of the redeemed, in terms depicting provision from God
- How things revealed in this book were soon to take place
- The promises and warnings given as the book concludes

Outline

I. THE RIVER, THE TREE, AND THE THRONE (1-5)

A. THE RIVER OF LIFE (1)

1. John sees a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal
2. It proceeds from the throne of God and of the Lamb

B. THE TREE OF LIFE (2)

1. On either side of the river was a tree of life
2. The tree(s) bore twelve fruits, yielding fruit every month

3. The leaves were for the healing of the nations

C. THE THRONE OF GOD AND OF THE LAMB (3-5)

1. There shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it
2. His servants shall serve Him
 - a. They shall see His face
 - b. His name shall be on their foreheads
3. There shall be no night there
 - a. They need no lamp nor light of the sun
 - b. For the Lord God gives them light
4. They shall reign forever and ever

II. THE GRAND CONCLUSION (6-21)

A. THE TIME IS NEAR, DO NOT SEAL THE BOOK (6-11)

1. John is told by the angel that these words are faithful and true
 - a. The Lord God has sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place
 - b. The Lamb proclaims: "Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."
2. John attempts to worship the angel
 - a. He falls down at the feet of the angel who showed him these things
 - b. The angel forbids him
 - 1) The angel is his fellow servant, and of his brethren the prophets and of those who keep the words of this book
 - 2) John is to worship God
3. John is told not to seal the words of the prophecy of this book
 - a. For the time is at hand
 - b. Let he who is unjust be unjust still, the filthy be filthy still
 - c. Let he who is righteous be righteous still, the holy be holy still

B. THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS (12-17)

1. His first declaration:
 - a. "Behold, I am coming quickly"
 - b. "My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work"
 - c. "I am the Alpha and the Omega"
 - d. "The Beginning and the End, the First and the Last"
2. The promise:
 - a. Blessed are those who do His commandments (or wash their robes)
 - 1) That they may have the right to the tree of life
 - 2) That they may enter through the gates into the city
 - b. Those outside the city
 - 1) Are dogs, sorcerers, sexually immoral, murderers, and idolaters
 - 2) Whoever loves and practices a lie
3. His second declaration:
 - a. "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches"
 - b. "I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star."
4. The invitation:
 - a. The Spirit and the bride say "Come!"
 - b. Let him who hears say "Come!"

-- Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely

C. A WORD OF WARNING (18-19)

1. Do not add to the words of this book, or God will add to him the plagues written in it
2. Do not take away from the words of this book, or God will take away his part from:
 - a. The Book (or Tree) of Life
 - b. The holy city
 - c. The things written in this book

D. CLOSING PROMISE, FINAL PRAYERS (20-21)

1. The promise of Him who testifies to these things: "Surely I am coming quickly."
2. John's two prayers:
 - a. Concerning his Lord: "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"
 - b. Concerning his brethren: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

Review Questions

- 1) What are the main points of this chapter?
- 2) What does John see proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb? (1)
- 3) What is on either side of the river? (2)
- 4) How many fruits did the tree bear and when? What were the leaves for? (2)
- 5) What no longer existed? What was in the city instead? (3)
- 6) What is said concerning the servants of God and of the Lamb? (3-5)
- 7) What is said of night and the light of the sun? (5)
- 8) What is John told about the things which he has seen? (6)

- 9) What promise and assurance is given in verse 7?
- 10) What did John try to do when he heard and saw these things? (8)
- 11) What did the angel tell John? (9)
- 12) What is John told regarding the prophecy of this book? Why? (10)
- 13) What is said of the unjust and filthy? The righteous and holy? (11)
- 14) What promise and assurance is given in verse 12?
- 15) How does Jesus describe Himself? (13)
- 16) What blessedness is promised to those who do His commandments (some manuscripts say “wash their robes”)? (14)
- 17) What is outside the city? (15)
- 18) Why had Jesus sent His angel? (16)
- 19) How does Jesus describe Himself? (16)
- 20) Who extends the invitation to “Come!”? Who else is to extend this invitation? (17)
- 21) To whom is this invitation extended? What is offered? (17)

22) What warning is given to those who hear the words of the prophecy of this book? (18-19)

23) What promise is given by Him who testifies of these things? (20)

24) What two prayers does John express as he closes the book? (20-21)

The Book Of Revelation

Concluding Thoughts

As stated in the introduction to this study, the book of Revelation is unique in that it contains apocalyptic literature. Filled with figurative and symbolic language, it has been subjected to much abuse by many who have proposed to interpret it, especially by those who take the **futuristic** approach to the book.

I am persuaded **the key** to handling and understanding Revelation properly is to let **the first three chapters** set the context in which the book should be interpreted. In those chapters we learn that the book:

- Was intended to be understood (a revelation = an unveiling) - **Re 1:1**
- Was about things that would soon take place, not thousands of years later - **Re 1:1,3; 22:6,10**
- Could be understood even by an individual reading to a public audience - **Re 1:1**
- Is filled with signs and symbols (“signified”), likely understood by the original readers - **Re 1:1**
- Was addressed to seven specific churches in Asia, so any interpretation must first be applicable to those churches and their times - **Re 1:4,11; 2:1-3:22**
- Was written to churches who had already experienced persecution from unbelieving Jerusalem and pagan Rome, with more to come - **Re 2:9-10,13**
- Contains promises to those in the seven churches who overcome by remaining faithful, even to death, which promises are mostly depicted in their fulfillment by visions later in the book - **Re 2:7** (cf. **Re 22:2,14**); **Re 2:11** (cf. **Re 20:6,14; 21:8**); **Re 2:26-27** (cf. **Re 20:4-6**); **Re 3:5** (cf. **Re 7:14-17; 20:12,15; 21:27**); **Re 3:12** (cf. **Re 7:15; 21:1-27; 22:4**); **Re 3:21** (cf. **Re 20:4-6; 22:5**)

The **theme** of the book is clear: **Jesus is coming to judge!** He now reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords! (**Re 1:5,7; 11:15; 17:14**). His coming judgment(s) as depicted in Revelation involve judging churches (**Re 1-3**), unbelieving Jerusalem (**Rev 4-11**), pagan Rome (**Rev 12-19**), Satan and the world (**Rev 20-22**).

Efforts to interpret the book should give special attention to clarifying statements found throughout the book like these:

- *“...where also our Lord was crucified”* (**Re 11:8**) - identifies the city being judged in the first half of the book as Jerusalem.
- *“Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.”* (**Re 13:18**) - makes clear that the identity of the beast could be known by the original recipients (likely “Nero Caesar”, or the “Latin One”).
- *“Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time. The beast that was,*

and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.” (Re 17:9-11) - Identifies the harlot as being supported by Rome. Also, that whatever the beast represented, it **“is not”** at the time of the writing of Revelation. That suggests to me that the book was not written during the time of Nero or Domitian, but more likely during the reign of Vespasian. Similarly, that “kings” could not symbolize world empires, for that would rule out the Roman empire as having anything to do with the identity of the beast (since the Roman empire was in existence at that time).

- *“These words are true and faithful”* (Re 21:5; 22:6) - This expression prefaces and concludes the description of the new heavens and new earth, along with the New Jerusalem, the holy city which descends out of heaven from God. *“True”* means “real, genuine” and *“faithful”* means “trustworthy”. This suggests to me the possibility that the description of the eternal state of the redeemed in Re 21-22 are more realistic and reflective of that which is to come than were the visions seen earlier throughout the book (which were clearly symbolic). It certainly coincides with other scriptures that are not figurative in their context (cf. He 11:16; 13:14; 2Pe 3:13-14).

Despite its challenges, I find the book of Revelation fascinating and filled with much benefit for the Christian today. Studying Revelation, we learn of Christ's power and sovereignty over the kingdoms of this world. Like other books of the New Testament that may have been written to address specific situations affecting churches in the first century, we can make application to our own lives should we find ourselves facing situations similar to those endured by the Christians of the first century.

And remember, at some point Satan will be released once more to deceive the nations in a last attempt to destroy the church (Re 20:7-10). Should we find ourselves living at that time, let us never forget the key passage in this book:

These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful. (Re 17:14)

So with the aid of Christ and the rest of the New Testament to guide us, let us heed these words of the apostle Peter...

Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; (2Pe 3:13-14)

And may our attitude always be that as expressed by the apostle John at the end of Revelation...

Even so, come, Lord Jesus! (Re 22:20)