

Introduction to Revelation

If we were to say that the Bible cannot be understood, we would be making a false statement. The apostle Paul made clear to the Ephesians that the Bible can be understood by those who read it (Ephesians 3:4 *...when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ*). However, if we were to say that all of the Bible is easy to understand, that too would be incorrect; Peter made the point that some things are not easy to understand (2 Peter 16a....*in which are some things hard to understand.....*)

2,000 years ago an apostle of Jesus of Nazareth received a vision of prophecy, the only book of prophecy of the New Testament. Many times it seems that people fall into one of two categories when it comes to John's Revelation: either they are fearful of being confused by the text, and therefore avoid it, or they are over-obsessed with finding too much meaning in prophecy.

How Do We Understand Prophecy

Prophecy literal means "fore-telling" in Greek. To rightly divide a prophetic message, we should begin with this idea: "*No prophecy is a matter of one's own interpretation*" (II Peter 1:20). Prophecy does not mean something to one person that it does not mean to another person. It is not personal, it is communal. If we take the attitude that it can have meanings dependant on the hearer/reader, we have violated a rule of God on His message.

When we consider prophecy, we might benefit looking at the Jewish model of scriptural understanding, called *PARDES*.¹ This exegetical model may have been used during the time of Christ, as evidenced in the some of the early Talmudic writings.

¹ <http://www.yashanet.com/studies/revstudy/pardes.htm>

P'Shat	= Plain Meaning
Remez	= Deeper Meaning
Midrish	= Hidden Meaning
Sod	= Secret meaning

An example of these ideas might be found in Matthew 2:15, which says "Out of Egypt I called My Son". This passage is a restatement of Hosea 11:1. The *P'Shat*, that is, the plain meaning, is that God called a son from Egypt. The *Remez*, or deeper meaning (we might say allegory or metaphorical), is that the passage in Hosea 11:1 is referring to the allegory of Israel being removed from Egypt in the Exodus. The *Midrish*, or hidden meaning (that which cannot be seen in the text, but must be revealed) is that it also was part of the mystery of Christ, and His time in Egypt. *Sod* is very seldom used in Scripture; we will see in Revelation one of the few times it is used. *Sod* is the coded meaning, the meaning one must use "tools" to extract.

The New Testament is sometimes very plain, but sometimes has a hidden or deeper meaning. Parables are an excellent example of this. Jesus said He spoke in parables for the purpose of making hidden a plain meaning.

Matthew 13:10-17 And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and

shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.' But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."

Jesus is suggesting that some are not ready or willing to receive the Gospel, and that there are times not to reveal spiritual truths. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus again suggests this idea, by telling us some people are "swine", and would not accept the "pearls" of wisdom offered, but instead would forcefully reject it.

Matthew 7:6 "Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces".

Paul would be using the word "Mystery" to describe something God hid throughout the Old Testament. This "mystery" idea is found throughout Paul's writings, that there was a great truth (the truth of Christ and the Gospel, of Salvation to all races of men) hidden in the events and the codes of the Law and the Prophets.

1 Corinthians 2:7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory,

Ephesians 3:9 and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Christ;

Colossians 1:26 the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.

There are several reasons why God might sometimes allow hidden statements when we consider understanding Scripture. One reason might be seen so that someone who desires to know God would use diligence to understand God. This requires a diligences of the hearer.

2 Peter 1:5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,

2 Timothy 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Another reason is so that the false teacher can be revealed by the absence of their understanding. If one is not truly of Christ, but merely a pretender, the absence of understanding of deep truths is the means in which their falsehood is exposed.

2 Peter 3:15-16 and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation--as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.

Consider what it means to be "taught" by one who lacks the spiritual mind. Paul says in II Corinthians 2:13 that they lack the proper attitude, understanding, motivation (fear of the Lord), or wisdom to accurately present the Truth of God. Paul rebuked a demon in Acts 16 for speaking the truth of the Gospel; it matters to God who speaks His truth, and making some truth difficult to understand is a way to prevent the ungodly from speaking God's truth.

Why is Revelation "difficult to understand"?

We might apply all of these reasons to John's Revelation. Prophecy is a matter that can (and usually is) used by false teachers to give them an air of ordained authority. John spoke in symbolism in Revelation because we needed to be diligent to look into the power of God in the lives of Saints, and that the false teachers who are wolves in our midst and teach falsely about things such as Christ's kingdom or his second coming, should be revealed.

The approach in study of Revelation in this book:

Let us before opening the book consider what our approach to prophecy will be. Our first concern is that we do not misuse or misapply what we have been given. Perhaps this is the meaning of Peter's admonition about difficult writings, that they can lead to the destruction of the reader if the wrong mind or attitude is used.

II Peter 3 some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.

In the study of Scripture, one of the biggest mistakes we can make is being untaught (lack an understanding of the total message of all Scripture) and unstable (delusional in our view of God) and then (either intentionally or unintentionally) twist it to our own ends. No one who seeks to know what God

has said or wants has a goal to misread the Word. So to avoid this danger, when it comes to portions of Scripture that at “*hard to understand*”, the first principle is to recognize not what the text means, but what it does not mean. In other words, to understand a difficult passage, we might first deduce what it cannot be saying. Then we are better able to conclude what it is saying. We must know what has been said outside of Revelation in Scripture, so that we are not untaught. We must then have the correct mind and heart to receive these truths.

For example, the scripture clearly teaches that the Kingdom of Jesus Christ was meant to be established in the time of the Roman Empire (Daniel 2, 7). It also teaches us that when Jesus arose from the grave, He had this authority given to Him (Matthew 28:18). From that time on, the New Testament writes referred to Jesus as the King (I Timothy 6:15). To then interpret Revelation 20 as a future event, of Jesus establishing a 1,000 year kingdom on earth, contradicts what we already know to be true. We are either untaught or unstable to construct such a point from the text.

Our Hermeneutic Approach to Revelation

Hermeneutic comes from the name of the pagan god Hermes, the messenger of the gods of Greece. The word means the way that a divine message is understood. To be honest scholars, we must decide ahead of our study what we will be using to understand the text, then applying it.

As already mentioned, because Revelation has the potential to be “hard to understand”, we will first ensure that we do not make conclusions that contradict other, more clear statements of Scripture. We also will approach this book by Faith (Romans 10:17), believing that we can understand the text, since we are told that Scripture is meant to be understood (Ephesians 3:4), although it may take diligent study (II Timothy 2:15)

Let Revelation Interpret Itself. Many statements made in Revelation 1-3 will be keys to understanding later points. . We will assume that John answers himself before going outside of this book.

Let New Testament prophecy interpret Revelation. Mainly, Jesus and Matt 24/Luke 21 will tell us much about Revelation. For example, it must be considered relevant that Revelation begins (1:7) by quoting Jesus' statements in Matthew 24:30. As well, much of Chapters 5-9 will be quoted from Jesus' statements in Matt 24/Luke 21

Let Old Testament Prophecy tell us about Revelation. Revelation is written in the style of the Old Testament prophets, an important fact we should use to help our understanding. Much of what John says is restatement of older prophecy found in Zechariah and Daniel.

Let History validate what we see in Revelation. Only after we conclude we understand that John references events, we will look in history to see these events carried out. We must note that history as written is not inspired, and cannot give us the actual answers here. History can be used to clarify our understanding of what is already revealed

Let us begin our study together. It is expected that the reader will use this study only to supplement their understanding, not to build upon. John is the inspired writer here, we can only use our thoughts to try to sharpen our understanding. It is expected that the reader reads each chapter or chapters of Revelation before looking into the chapter discussion.

***Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy
Revelation 1:3***

PART I : INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 – Jesus Visits His Beloved Apostle John

Matthew 24:21 *"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be."* Jesus Christ, referring to the time immediately before Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD

Purpose of the Book

The Apostle John often told his readers the specific purpose of his writings. John 20:21 tells us why he wrote the Gospel of John. I John 5:13 tells us why he wrote the epistle of I John. Likewise, Revelation 1:1 tells us that the purpose of this letter is to show God's bond servants what soon must take place. He says in the same verse that this will be done through signs (*signified*).

One major key to the book is found in verse one as well, but restated seven times throughout the book: the events of the prophecy were in that time

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|---|---------|
| 1. "Must soon take place" | (1:1) |
| 2. "The time is near" | (1:3) |
| 3. "Things which must shortly take place" | (22:6) |
| 4. "I am coming quickly" | (22:7) |
| 5. "The time is at hand" | (22:10) |
| 6. "I am coming quickly" | (22:12) |
| 7. "I am coming quickly" | (22:20) |

With such repetition, we need to clearly see that John does not want us to take this message and fabricate a lengthy view of history; fundamentally this prophecy is for the first century Christians.

Another major key to the prophecy is in 1:9 – three themes that John will be driving us towards: **Suffering** - the Saints will suffer from persecutions; **Kingdom** -

the Kingdom is now, but still being fulfilled in prophecy about Jesus' judgment;
Patient Endurance – That the Saints must endure these things

Author

Authorship is identified as threefold: John (vs 4), Seven Spirits (vs 4), and Jesus Christ (vs 5-8).

John - An apostle and an elder (II John 1:1). There is some debate if this John is indeed the same person as John the Apostle. Some modern scholars have created an separate identity for this John, and the John who wrote the Gospel of John, and the epistles of John; these claims are only made by so-called “textual criticism” and have no substance beyond supposition. The most likely person of this letter is John the Apostle, and this is the same that is unanimously identified by the early church writers as the author. John was a physical cousin to Jesus Christ (John 19:25 with Matthew 27:56). However, John here wants us to see that he is only a common citizen with us in the kingdom of Christ in verse 9. Currently he is on Island of Patmos. We will discuss the date of this shortly.

The Seven Spirits: These do not appear to be the seven angels who stand before the throne, since the letter is addressed to them. Instead, we might consider this is the Holy Spirit, who inspires this message, in a sevenfold form (Isaiah 11:1-2)

Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Of we read this: (1:8) *"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."* John told us in His Gospel that Jesus has existed as God since prior to the creation of all things (John1). His being the “Beginning and End” might be seen as being the creator of all things, and we will see in Revelation, the end of all things. Jesus is the active force of the Godhead (we might think of the Father as the originator, and the Holy Spirit as the revelator), so it makes sense that this is His Revelation. If we look at this we can see Jesus is identified in three

tenses: Past, Present and Future.

Present Tense “is”: Jesus is identified as: The Faithful Witness (Consider John 18:37); Firstborn of the Dead (Paul: the "First-fruit of those asleep (the Dead)" in I Corinthians 15:20); Ruler of the Kings of the Earth (King of Kings and Lord of Lords, I Timothy 6:15)

Past Tense “was”: Jesus has already loved us (before we loved Him, Romans 5:8); He has released us from Sin by His Blood (I John 5:5); He has made us a Kingdom of Priests to God (I Peter 2:9)

Future Tense “is to come”: Jesus will come again in the clouds to be seen by all. As we will see, coming in the clouds here likely relates to the major theme of the prophecy, the judgment on the Jews and the Romans. However, there is also a coming on the clouds which we anticipate that is for salvation. (I Thessalonians 4:16-17; Acts 1:11)

The Vision

John hears a trumpet, and sees seven lamp stands and the Son of Man, in a robe to His feet, a golden sash, hair white as snow, eyes like flames, and a face like the sun. He holds the Seven Stars (the Angels of the Churches, vs 20) and a sword (the Word of God, Hebrews 4:12) comes out of His mouth. This is Jesus. He identifies Himself by His deeds and His powers (vs. 17-18).

When Jesus died and arose, he overcame death. He states that He has the “keys”, which he took away from Satan. We now know that keys then are representation of power or authority.

Hebrews 2:14 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,

Jesus has a message for Seven Churches, which is also for all churches (2:17, repeated). Although the chronology of the writings of the New Testament is not certain, the Revelation of John is likely one of the last books to be written, and likely the last message Jesus has for anyone.

The image is of Jesus among the "lamp stands", which sound similar to the one that was in the temple, that the Romans would soon carry away. That lamp stand served to illuminate the show bread; now they illuminate the bread of Life. Jesus holds in His hands the stars of the Angels of these Churches. This is a use of *Remez* and *Midrish* prophetic messages; we will need to remember these descriptions later in the book.

Date of Writing

Revelation is one of the few Bible books that the date it was written has a great deal of importance as to its meaning. There are effectively two dates put forward by Christians as possible dates of writing: around 68AD (the early date), and around 95AD (later date). While it may not seem the case, that 25 year period can make a great difference in the context of the book.

Some to have suggested that Revelation was written during either of these dates pertains to a long term view of history, with issues like the rise of the apostate orthodox/catholic church, the rise of Islam, the decline of civilization in the middle ages, and events even into modern history. We reject this, as John has made it abundantly clear that the majority (or entirety) of the prophecy was in his time.

Seeing that the prophecy was meant for the time it was written in, we can see that the date of writing would have importance. If the book was written prior to 70AD, the supposition is that the main thrust of Revelation is the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem, and the persecutions of Nero. If the book was written around 96AD, then the main purpose of the book pertains to the persecution of Christians by the Roman Emperor Domitian.

Whatever the date, the theme of Revelation of persecution, kingdom authority, and the endurance of the Saints, is unchanged. The value of the letter for our edification is unchanged whichever date is accurate.

Late Date - around 90 AD

This date has the power of being testified to by early church writers. In Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* (around 300AD), this was during the reign of the Flavian Emperor Domitian (81-96 AD)² If so, John's age would be the 80s or 90s, (this is complicated, since the same author Eusebius also puts him in Ephesus at that age). Irenaeus claims John's companion Polycarp said it was Domitian who was the beast in chapter 13. Hippolytus (an early church writer) wrote in 236AD that John "*was banished by Domitian the king to the isle of Patmos*"³. A number of historical testimonies follow these, most of which make reference to the original claim by Irenaeus.

Historically, Domitian is asserted to have oppressed Christians by Eusebius, but there is no record beyond his of this occurring⁴. In regards to general oppression and tyranny, Domitian is The Second Nero by secular writers of the time⁵. Another consideration is that the city of Laodicea was destroyed by an earthquake in 60AD, and may not have been restored by 70AD⁶.

² Eusebius Pamphili was born about 260 and died before 341. Bishop of Cæsarea in Palestine, he is known as the "Father of Church History. His testimony is in chapter 18, Book 3 of his *Church History*

³ Hippolytis, *On the Twelve* chapter 1, verse 3

⁴ Jones, Brian *The Emperor Domitian* 1992, pg 111

⁵ Juvenal *Calvus Nero*,. IV, 38

⁶ Tacitus, *Annals*. xiv. 27.

Early Date - around 70 AD.

This date also has some historical testimony. One of the oldest texts of Revelation (the Syriac, 2nd century AD) titles the book as *“John the Evangelist in the Isle of Patmos, where he was thrown by Nero Caesar.”*. Another historical testimony is that of Clement of Alexandria (c. 150AD), who declared that the writings of the apostles were completed before 70 AD⁷.

Historically, Nero is identified in multiple Roman writings as having persecuted Christians. Nero is esteemed to be one of the most infamous of rulers in Rome. Tacitus writes the following in his *Annals*:

“Therefore, to stop the rumor [that he had set Rome on fire], he [Nero] falsely charged with guilt, and punished with the most fearful tortures, the persons commonly called Christians, who were hated for their enormities. Christus, the founder of that name, was put to death as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea, in the reign of Tiberius, but the pernicious superstition - repressed for a time, broke out yet again, not only through Judea, - where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also, whither all things horrible and disgraceful flow from all quarters, as to a common receptacle, and where they are encouraged. Accordingly first those were arrested who confessed they were Christians; next on their information, a vast multitude were convicted, not so much on the charge of burning the city, as of “hating the human race.”

⁷ Clement of Alexandria -The Stromata, or Miscellanies, Book 7, Chapter 17

In their very deaths they were made the subjects of sport: for they were covered with the hides of wild beasts, and worried to death by dogs, or nailed to crosses, or set fire to, and when the day waned, burned to serve for the evening lights. Nero offered his own garden players for the spectacle, and exhibited a Circensian game, indiscriminately mingling with the common people in the dress of a charioteer, or else standing in his chariot. For this cause a feeling of compassion arose towards the sufferers, though guilty and deserving of exemplary capital punishment, because they seemed not to be cut off for the public good, but were victims of the ferocity of one man”⁸

The hermeneutical approach we are taking in this study is that internal evidence is the most important, and that historical evidence should only be weighed in support of or in the absence of Biblical testimony. That is to say, the answer to the date (thereby determining the subject) of John’s Revelation should first be sought in Revelation itself, then in New Testament prophecy, thirdly in Old Testament prophecy, and that the least weight ought to be the testimony of historical writers, whom we know not to be inspired, and often flawed in their records.

Our Determination: The Early Date of 70AD

We will be proceeding with the early date. This does not say that the late date is necessarily incorrect, but that the early date is more likely. If the late date is accurate, it would not change our understanding of the purpose and intent of the letter. The reasons for working from an early date:

First: One of the pivotal persons discussed in this book is the “Lesser Beast” of Revelation 13. The identity of this beast, we will see, is most strongly evidenced

⁸ "Nero Persecutes The Christians, 64 A.D.," EyeWitness to History, www.eyewitnesstohistory.com (2000).

to be Nero Caesar, the Roman Emperor from 54AD to 68AD. This sets us in a timeframe of around the time of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem.

Second: The persecution of the saints is the main thrust of the dialogue of Revelation. According to Jesus Christ, the tribulation that would come prior to the destruction of the temple would be the greatest in all history:

Matthew 24:21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.

It seems that the most likely persecution that would be the subject of prophecy would be the most terrible too. This places the beginning of the persecutions around 66AD, when Peter, Paul, and many others were probably put to death.

Third: much of the symbolism in Revelation is identical or nearly identical to that used by Jesus Christ in His message on the destruction of the temple. While both rely on rather standard Old Testament prophetic language, some of the parallels are too powerful to miss. Our study will conclude that there appear to be parallels because it is in fact a parallel prophecy; that is to say, that the first half of Revelation pertains to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.

<p style="text-align: center;">Used By Jesus Christ in Matthew 24/Mark 13/Luke 21</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Used by John in Revelation</p>
<p>Matthew 24:13 "But he who endures to the end shall be saved."</p>	<p>2:10b. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.</p>
<p>Matthew 24:30 "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.</p>	<p>1:7 Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him.</p>
<p>Matthew 24:32 "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near.</p>	<p>6:13 And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind.</p>
<p>Matthew 24:7a "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.</p>	<p>6:4 Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another;</p>
<p>Matthew 24:7b "And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.</p>	<p>6:12 I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake;</p>
<p>Luke 21:24 "And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.</p>	<p>11:2 But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.</p>
<p>Luke 21:25 "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring;</p>	<p>6:12 I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood.</p>
<p>Matthew 24:24 "For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.</p>	<p>Revelation 13:13 He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.</p>



Figure 1: Image from the Arch of Titus in Rome, a memorial commemorating the destruction of Jerusalem by (then) General Titus. Note the lampstand being carried out of the temple

⁹ With Permission, photograph by A. Hunter Wright; (via Wikipedia Commons)

PART II: The Seven Churches

Chapter 2 - 3



Figure 2: Map of Easter Asia Minor with Patmos

The seven churches are identified in a clockwise “circle” in the second and third chapters of Revelation. We cannot miss that each of these churches was a real congregation of Christians, with real issues to work through.

There is a bit of a pattern to the words of John. First, Jesus is identified with a specific reference to something that is found in the introduction of the letter. Second, there is typically a commendation of the good things of the church, a condemnation of the problems in the church, and an admonition for the church. Finally, the admonitions in particular will play a role in understanding later portions of the vision.

10

The Church at Ephesus

From He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands. This point to what has been, from chapter 1:16-18. We might recall that the Ephesian church has been recipient to many letters, to some degree; they were addressed directed by the apostle Paul in the epistle bearing their name; the evangelist at the Ephesian church, timothy, received the epistle of I (and possibly II) Timothy while there.

¹⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Seven_churches_of_asia.svg

The Good: The Ephesians church works and perseveres/endures and has not been wearied. They do not tolerate evil men and have tested false apostles. As well, they hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans. No one is certain who the Nicolaitans were. Some think that perhaps they were a sect of Gnostics. Some think that it is simply a word made by John to describe those against Christ. In John's admonition to the church at Pergamos, he will define the Nicolaitans as those who practice the sin of Balaam

The Bad: They left their first love. That first love is not identified, perhaps so that we might ponder the meaning of the expression. Is it the fundamental principles of Christ (Hebrews 6:1-2)? Is it simply love itself? We might consider that Scripture tells us that our works end with Love, not begin with it (II Peter 1:5-7).

The Admonition: Repent and do the deeds you did at first. Perhaps this is much like the Hebrews or the Corinthian churches, which Scripture tells us had to return to the fundamentals of Christ.

Too often we are falsely led to believe that Christianity is a religion of tolerance. One who believes such has failed to read scripture; the Christian is constantly admonished to be intolerant towards sin. The Ephesian Church has put to the test those who claim to know Christ, and do not. This is a virtue in the Christian Faith – to refuse to accept (into fellowship) that which is not of Christ.

Finally, we are given our first "key": *To Him who overcomes, he will eat of the tree of life.* This tree will be visited again in Revelation 20:14-15

The Church at Smyrna

From the One who was First and Last, Dead and Alive (1:17-18). There is no Biblical record as to the origin of the church in Smyrna. The city itself seems somewhat prosperous, competing with Ephesus for the title of "First City of Asia"

The Good: The Smyrnans are one of the two churches that receive only a good report. It is made clear that their works are known to God, and it is known to God that they suffer both tribulation (persecution) and poverty. The “false” Jews blaspheme them. This is the first of several times John mentions “false” Jews, who are driven by the Devil himself (John 8:44). There were about to suffer some more; “ten days” likely is not literal, but representative of the ten kings, or some longer period of time. The wonderful encouragement is to “be faithful until death” to receive the crown of life.

We are given our second key, pointing us to the end of the letter: *To Him who overcomes, he will not be hurt by the second death.* This second death is the ultimate judgment for all, we will find in the 20th chapter.

The Church at Pergamos

From the One with the Sharp Two-Edged Sword. Once more, the image of Christ from chapter 1:16. We do not know anything about this congregation of God’s people beyond Revelation. One of the interesting points to consider is the reference to “Satan’s Throne”. There is a remarkable structure in Berlin that was removed from Pergamos, an enormous altar dedicated to Zeus.

If this is the reference John makes to “Satan’s Throne”, the interesting point is that the other reference to Satan in the mention of the seven churches is to the synagogue that was persecuting the Christians; thus Satan is identified as being behind both the pagan persecution and the Jewish persecution.

The Good: The church at Pergamos holds fast to the name of Jesus in the midst of Satan's throne, with Satan among you. No doubt the pagan majority brought considerable pressure on believers; we might consider the atheists today who mock Christians for their belief in the creation of Genesis 1-2. No doubt the Pagan was loaded with “evidences” that their faith was clearly the only faith.



*Figure 3: Altar of Zeus from Pergamos, Berlin Museum*¹¹

The brethren of Pergamos have suffered a painful loss in the murder (martyr; “witness” Acts 22:20) of Antipas. We do not know who Antipas is beyond this reference; there is some Catholic tradition of his place as an elder, but this is unsubstantiated. We can only observe that his death was a great blow to the brethren.

The Bad: The brethren here tolerated a false teaching, identified with the prophet Balaam, who served Balak in Numbers 22-23. Balaam agreed to curse Israel for money (to be fair, with great reluctance at first). Peter calls this to mind in regards to loving unrighteous wages (II Peter 2:15), as does Jude in Jude 11. This is then tied to the Nicolaitans.

What precisely is this doctrine of Balaam? John aids us by reminding us that Balaam ultimately taught Balak to use the Midianite and Moabite women to

¹¹ With Permission; photograph by Raimond Spekking / CC-BY-SA-3.0 (via Wikimedia Commons)

seduce the men of Israel to commit sexual immorality. John adds to this the eating of things sacrificed to idols, not a sin itself, but potentially a heavy stumbling block.

Numbers 31:16 Look, these women caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD.

1 Corinthians 8:4 Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one.

Romans 14:13-14 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way. I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

Admonition: Repent. The promise is made that if they do not, Jesus will make war against them. Since much of the Revelation is about the warfare Jesus wages, this is no idle threat.

Now our third key is received: *I will give you hidden manna, put your name on a white stone.* This key will be used in chapter 4:3.

The Church at Thyatira

From the Son of God with Eyes like a flame of Fire (1:14). In Scripture, Thyatira's other reference is to being the hometown of the noble Lydia, who aided the apostle Paul in Philippi (Acts 16:14).

The Good: The brethren of Thyatira are notable for their good works, for their love, for their service, their faith, and their patience. Such a grouping would leave one to believe they are the perfect church. In some ways though, they are the opposite of the Ephesian church. The Thyatiran's had perfected what the Ephesians lacked; now we see that the Ephesians had perfected what the Thyatirans lacked.

The Bad: The brethren suffer from tolerance; they are permitting a false teacher, likened to "Jezebel" of the Old Testament (I Kings 16:31). This was a false teacher who claimed to be a prophetess; she led people into the identical problems the church at Pergamos suffered by the Nicolaitans. Sexual immorality is a broad term, and can include fornication, adultery, inappropriate remarriage after divorce, homosexuality, or lust. It is one of the most common admonitions among brethren of the first century churches.

1 Corinthians 6:18 Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.

The threat was made to the church in Pergamos that Jesus would make war if they did not change; it seems clear here that it is now too late for those who are false. Jesus said that he would punish both her and her followers with sickness.

Admonition: To those who have not engaged in this sin, hold fast what you have till Jesus comes. What is interesting to note, is that while the whole church might suffer for these issues, there is no condemnation on the few who have not participated in "the depths of Satan". The same point will be made of the Saints in Sardis

The fourth key is given to us now: *I will give authority over the nations, and you will rule over them (20:4, 12:5) and I will give him the morning Star (22:16).* This key will provide us to the insight of ruling with Christ.

The Church at Sardis

From the One with Seven Spirits (1:4) and Seven Stars (1:16). Sardis is known in history as a city made wealthy by textile works. One of the largest ancient synagogues existed there at the time John wrote, as evidenced by excavations by Harvard University in 1958 ¹²

The Good: It is questionable if there is anything good in the assessment, or if it is meant in an ironic sense. The brethren at Sardis are told that they have a name for being alive, and are known for their works. But no works are mentioned, and the next point is to say that the name is not true.

The Bad: In fact, this is a dead congregation. One must consider that no other congregation is told this, despite the multitude of errors found in them.

Admonition: Even dead, there are a few brethren who have maintained the faith in Christ at Sardis. It reminds one of the few in Sodom or Gomorrah who, if they had been found, might have preserved those cities (Genesis 18:32). There is still a chance at repentance for this congregation, if they (similar to the Ephesians) wake up and do the deeds they did at first.

The fifth key: *To those who have not soiled their garments, he will be clothed in white (7:14) and will have his name written in the book of life of life (21:27).* John uses the imagery of clothing as an allegory for having put on Christ, and abiding in Christ (II John 9). Jesus (Matthew 22:11-13) and other apostles (Galatians 3:27) have done the same.

¹² Seager, Andrew R. The Building History of the Sardis Synagogue. American Journal of Archeology, 76 (1972):425-35

To the Church at Philadelphia

From the One who has the key of David (1:18). The Saints in Philadelphia are suffering at the hands of the local synagogue, which John calls the Synagogue of Satan. As mentioned before, it helps us to tie the two themes of persecution in this letter, the pagans and the Jews. John records Jesus as having identified some of the Jews “who heard the truth and did not believe” as being of Satan (though Jesus truly uses this as a description of anyone who sins):

John 8:44 "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it."

The Good: Like the Saints in Smyrna, the brethren in Philadelphia have only a good report from the Lord. His reward to them would be a door no one could shut (John 10:9). As well, they would find preservation from the coming trials. These good saints are holding up the image of the New Jerusalem, which is of course the church (Hebrews 12:22-23), the true temple of God (I Corinthians 3:16, Ephesians 2:19-21)

Admonition: Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. The sixth key is given: *To Him who overcomes, he will be a pillar in the Temple (21:22) and will have a name in the new Jerusalem which descends from heaven (21:2).* This image will be important at the end of the letter.

To the Church at Laodicea

From the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of Creation (1:5). The brethren in Laodicea and in Colosse were joint recipients of Paul's Colossian letter.

Colossians 4:16 Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.

The city of Laodicea had several notable characteristics that may have inspired the language used to encourage the repentance of the Saints. Laodicea is sometimes described as a banking center, evidenced in the many coins minted there¹³. The city would be accurately described as wealthy, so much so that after being nearly destroyed in AD 60 by earthquake, the city refused aid from Rome and instead rebuilt the city exclusively by their own funds¹⁴. According to the ancient Greek geographer Strabo (12.8.20) there was a medical school in the city, where a famous eye doctor practiced, some 40 years before John wrote.

The Good: As with the brethren in Sardis, there is not much good brought out of these brethren. Jesus does point out in verse 19 that He does indeed love them, but that they must repent.

The Bad: It must be the case that these brethren have over esteemed themselves, as they are told that they think they are rich (perhaps the wealth of the city mentioned earlier), but in fact they are poor, blind and naked, the very image of poverty. They are told that in the eyes of Jesus, they are neither hot nor cold, and therefore have no value. It has been suggested that this could refer to the two water sources of the Laodiceans, the piped in hot mineral water from the nearby town of Hierapolis, and the cool pure water found in nearby Colosse. Regardless, the issue is that these Saints have failed to impress Jesus.

¹³ ^ Cicero Epistulae ad Familiares ii. 1. 7,.

¹⁴ Tacitus, Annals. xiv. 27

Admonition: These brethren need zeal, to inspire them to either heat up or cool down. They must repent; Jesus tells them in regards to their condition, that they need the wealth He can provide (Matthew 19:21), the attire he can provide (II Corinthians 5:2), and the cure for blindness he can provide (John 9:39-41).

Our last key: *Buy from me gold refined in fire and White Garments (7:14). He who overcomes will sit at my throne with me (20:4)*

Summary of the Seven Churches of Asia

Chapter one prefaces the speaker for each church in symbolism. Each portion closes with a reference that will be explained later in the book. This might be telling us that the rest of the book is still for these seven churches specifically, rather than the church universal, or churches after their time.

We would not want to miss that these problems are ones most congregations face. There are problems external (persecution by Jews, by Romans/the world) and internal (false teachers, weaknesses that border death).

The point that the rest of Revelation will take is to problems external. This is because the problems internal are in the hands of each congregation. We want to emphasize the importance of this, both for our study of Revelation and our desire to walk with Christ. The most dangerous problems for any congregation are not the external enemies, which we will see will be dealt with by Christ, but our internal problems we allow.

Having considered in the seven churches the internal issues churches face, we now look to the external problems that these seven churches (and many others) would face. Revelation identifies two enemies of the Church of the First Century: The Roman Government and the Jews

PART III: The Revelation of the Lord
Chapter 4 and 5: Seeing the Gospel From Heaven

John Saw	Ezekiel Saw
A door opened in Heaven	Heavens opened and with visions of God
Flashes of lightning	A cloud with lightning
Four living creatures	Four living beings with human form:
Had many eyes, each with 6 wings	Each had four faces and four wings
The face of a man, a bull, an eagle, a lion	Each had the face of a lion, a man, eagle and bull
Seven lamps of fire	Among them were fires darting around
The seven lamps of fire were the Seven Spirits of God	Each creature followed a Spirit
There was something like a sea of crystal	There was a great expanse of something like crystal
There was a sound like thunder	There was a loud rushing noise like abundant waters
(In chapter 1 Jesus is described as being with eyes of fire and a face like the sun)	Above this was a throne with one who appeared like a man who looked like fire (God)
The Throne appeared of Jasper and Sardius	The Throne appeared of Lapis Lazuli
A rainbow like an emerald was around the throne	Radiance like a rainbow
Shown a scroll that could not be opened (5:1)	Given a scroll of lamentations to eat, sweet like honey

This portion of the Revelation begins with John seeing a door open to heaven. Comparing this with Ezekiel chapters one through three, we are struck with how similar these visions are. This cannot be a coincidence; this vision is about authority and covenant.

Trying to make a symbol have a specific meaning is sometimes problematic; symbols can have more than one meaning. We ought to not approach symbols with guesses or possibilities. Instead, we might keep in mind the words of Moses:

Deuteronomy 29:29 "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."

We can make some connections here using things which have been revealed to us in times past. We know that a rainbow is the sign of a Covenant (Genesis 9:13-17). We also know that the One in Heaven is God. It is important that we understand that this is an image of what how God viewed man before the death of Christ; we know this since Christ will ascend in the course of this vision. We can also see that the 24 are symbolic of the 12 of the Old Covenant (12 Tribes) and 12 of the New Covenant (12 Apostles); this will be restated in chapter 22 for us with enough clarity to be certain they symbolize that the Old and New are both in harmony. This fulfills what Jesus said, that we would see these things together (Luke 13:28) in his authority.

The seven horns and seven eyes are the Seven Spirits of God - God's Spirit poured out in Acts 2. There are Seven Spirits of God listed in Isaiah 11, and this might well speak to them. We might also think of the prophetic words repeated in Hebrews 1:7.

Isaiah 11:2 The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.

Hebrews 1:7 And of the angels He says: "Who makes His angels spirits And His ministers a flame of fire."

There is too a scroll that cannot be opened but by the Lamb. Perhaps this is the Revelation itself, although more likely it is the Scroll of Life mentioned in 3:5. Jesus must break Seven Seals (5:1) to reveal this and to give us eternal life. The Seven Seals are not necessarily a literal number of trials or tests that Jesus went through in his life, but you might recall that in the Gospel of John there are mentioned Seven Testimonies of Christ:

1. Testimony of the Apostles (John 15:27, 21:24)
2. Testimony of John the Baptist (John 3:28, 5:33)
3. Testimony of God the Father (John 5:37, 8:17)
4. Testimony of Jesus Himself (John 8:14, 8:18)
5. Testimony of the Scriptures (John 5:39)
6. Testimony of Miracles (John 5:36, 10:25)
7. Testimony of the Holy Spirit (John 15:26)

In the end, Jesus takes the Scroll from the Right Hand of God . (I Peter 3:22, Hebrews 12:2, Romans 8:34) He can open the Book because of His Sacrifice. This fits nicely with Matthew 28:18, in that He has ALL authority now, given to Him by His Father. Revelation 5:13 makes very clear the same point as Matthew 28:18. The end of weeping in verse five, much like the wiping away of all tears (21:4), is the comfort of the Gospel. *Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted* (Matthew 5:4)

Conclusion:

Revelation chapter 4-5 is John is describing the relevance of the Gospel (Death, Burial, Resurrection, I Cor. 15:1-4) as seen from the throne of God. Jesus will purchase by blood the bond servants of 1:1, 5. He thus creates a Kingdom of Priests who reign with Him on the earth (1:6). This visualizes Revelation 1:5-6

PART III: The Revelation of the Lord Pertaining to the End of Judaism

Chapter 6 and 7: A Restatement of Jesus' Prophecy in Matthew 24

According to the book of Isaiah, the Messiah who was to come would fulfill the following:

Isaiah 61:1-2 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn

When Jesus publically identified Himself as Messiah in Luke 4, this is the passage He used. However, Jesus did not read the entire passage.

Luke 4:18-20 "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD." Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him.

As can be seen, Jesus did not read the portion which stated that Messiah would proclaim the Day of Vengeance of God.

Now move ahead at least three years, to the last days before Jesus was crucified. In fact, it is the very last act Jesus performed on earth before the Lord's Supper. Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 all record that the last message Jesus

publically preached was the destruction of Jerusalem, as Jesus says in

Luke 21:22 "For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled."

What a marvelous thing the fulfillment of this passage is. Jesus begins His ministry with it, and now, Jesus finishes with the last verse of the prophecy.

Revelation chapter six and seven might be seen as a restatement of these things. In the aforementioned passages in the Gospels, Jesus is prophesying about the destruction of Jerusalem (as he clearly said in Matthew 24:1-3). Jesus said in those passages that the faithful will suffer persecution before this takes place. Here in Revelation six and seven, the language is identical, using even the same OT quotations in places. The chronology is the same as well.

Let us take a few moments to study Matthew 24, Mark 13 & Luke 21 to understand what we are speaking about. You will note that John's Gospel does not contain this sermon; it may be because his Gospel was written after 70AD.

Matthew 24 – Mark 13 – Luke 21 and the Destruction of the Temple

The conversations begin with the apostles and Jesus touring the Temple area. This is probably the Tuesday or Wednesday before the Lord's Supper.

Mark 13:1-2 Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" And Jesus answered and said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

Nothing more seems to be said, until they reach the outskirts of town, on

the Mount of Olives. What is noteworthy is that in all three accounts, the Apostles do not seem surprised or shocked, as they were sometimes with Jesus' teachings. If they were anticipating this, one likely reason is the prophecy of Isaiah 61; part of the work of the Messiah was to proclaim the Day of Vengeance.

Mark 13:3-4 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?"

So the teaching to follow was Jesus answering the question: when would the temple be destroyed. So many untaught and unstable people have of course made much effort to turn these statements into future predictions, coming times, and a whole school of theology has been fabricated off of the "end Times". But an earnest Bible student does not miss that a question was asked, and Jesus is giving the answer.

The Days of the Lord in the Old Testament

The language Jesus uses in His discourse is very much the same as many of the Old Testament prophets. The "Day of the Lord" is used throughout the Old Testament as the day that God brings judgment upon a nation. That judgment is usually accomplished by another nation. Here are some examples:

Joel 1-3 (vs 15)- destruction of Judah (by Babylon)

Day of the Lord - darkness, locusts, famine

Jeremiah 46(vs 10) - destruction of Egypt by the northern nation (Babylon)

Day of the Lord - the swift may flee, escape

Lamentations 2 (vs 22) - destruction of Jerusalem (by Babylon)

Day of the Lord - punishment, destruction

Isaiah 2 (vs 12) - destruction of Jerusalem (Babylon or Rome)

Day of the Lord - after the Mountain of the Lord is established

Isaiah 13 (vs 6) - the destruction of Babylon by the Medes and Persians

Day of the Lord - stars won't shine, great noise, pain of childbirth

Ezekiel 30 (vs 2) - the destruction of Egypt and Ethiopia by Nebuchadnezzar

Day of the Lord - fire, day of clouds, time of Gentiles

Zephaniah 1 (vs 7, 14) - destruction of Jerusalem (by Babylon)

Day of the Lord - no light to shine, noise, trumpets

Zephaniah 2 (vs 2) - destruction of: Philistia, Moab, Amon, Ethiopia, Assyria

Day of the Lord – desolation

Obadiah (vs 15) - destruction of Edom

Day of the Lord – destruction

Zechariah 14 (vs 1) - destruction of Jerusalem (by Babylon)

Day of the Lord - all the nations gathered

We can see clearly that many of the metaphors of destruction used by the Old Testament prophets were used by Jesus when He taught on the Mount of Olives. The language in Revelation should not trouble us, since we have been seeing it all through the Old Testament. The most likely conclusion is that these seals represent the destruction of Jerusalem.

The Seven Seals

6 Seals Opened:	Jesus' Prophecy in Matthew 24, Luke 21, Mark 13:
The White Horse: Christ is crowned	(Matthew 28:19; Not mentioned since Jesus would soon die, be buried and arise crowned with all authority)
The Red Horse: War	Matthew 24:6; There will be war and rumor of war, nation will rise against nation
The Black Horse: Famine	Matthew 24:7; There will be famines
The Pale Horse: Death & Hades, Famine & Pestilence	Luke 21:11; There will be plagues and famine
The Martyrs of the Cause of Christ Under the Altar	Luke 21:12-16; They will lay hands on you to persecute you and some will die
The Martyrs under the altar desire the Lord to render judgment	Matthew 24:30 When the Lord comes (Jerusalem is destroyed) it is to render judgment
Earthquake, darkened Sun, falling Stars	Luke 21:25-26; There will be earthquakes, terrors and signs from heaven; there will be signs in the sun, moon and stars, the powers of heaven will be shaken
The men of the world will hide, and call to the mountains and rocks to fall on them to cover them up	Luke 23:29-30 Some will call the rocks to fall on them (said on the road to the cross, but pertaining to the destruction of Jerusalem)
A fig tree as the example	Mark 13:28 The fig tree is the metaphor for the times

Figurative language like this is found throughout Old Testament prophecy in relation to the judgment of God on nations. The “mountains cover us” is identical to Hosea 10:8 and God’s wrath against Judah; the sun and moon language is found in Joel 2:31; rumors and wars in Jeremiah 51:46.

In particular to the horsemen, we can gain additional insight into their meaning from the Old Testament prophet Zechariah. He gives us an excellent place to understand the vision of the horsemen, calling the four horses the four winds.

Zechariah 6:5-8 And the angel answered and said to me, "These are four spirits of heaven, who go out from their station before the Lord of all the earth. The one with the black horses is going to the north country, the white are going after them, and the dappled are going toward the south country." Then the strong steeds went out, eager to go, that they might walk to and fro throughout the earth. And He said, "Go, walk to and fro throughout the earth." So they walked to and fro throughout the earth. And He called to me, and spoke to me, saying, "See, those who go toward the north country have given rest to My Spirit in the north country."

Here the Four represent the Spirit of God around the world. In fact, the usage is the same in Revelation, that God reveals he will protect Saints around the world. Chapter 7 begins with the Four Angels gathering the elect for preservation. This corresponds exactly with what Jesus says would happen in Matthew 24 and Mark 13, while Luke gives more of a *Gentile-friendly translation of the idea*, "Your redemption is near" - Luke 21:28

Matthew 24:31 "And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Mark 13:27 "And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven.

This is the point – at least part of the persecutions are coming to an end. Jesus was dealing with the destruction of Jerusalem in the parallel passages; therefore, we shall conclude that the end of suffering and persecution pertains to the Jewish persecution, not the Roman.

Revelation 7:14 points us to the important question: who will come out of this great tribulation? The answer is only those who are washed in the blood of the Lamb who believed. Consider Jesus' warning in Matthew 24 - only those who heeded him left Jerusalem. On a historical note, Eusebius makes this known to his readers:

But the people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a revelation, vouchsafed to approved men there before the war, to leave the city and to dwell in a certain town of Perea called Pella.¹⁵

Here we find that the Saints are numbered as the 144000. This is of course merely a play of numbers (12 X 12 X1000). The 12 and 12 have been mentioned previously as the working of the Old and New Covenants. The number 1,000 is used in Scripture to represent an unknown large amount, and seldom meant in a figurative usage to represent a literal number:

¹⁵ Eusebius Pamphili *History of the Church* Chapter 5 Section 3

Deuteronomy 7:9 "Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments;

We ought to conclude that it a literary tool to express that the total number of the saved, a number uncounted (as told to Abraham in Genesis 17:2)

In Chapter 7 the promise is made that the Saints will never hunger and thirst again. This is metaphorical, not a description of heaven. John has told us this before, in his Gospel, tell us about how Jesus taught that His words were the Bread of Life (John 6:35, 66), and how He would provide the Living Water (John 4:14). Again, we are mindful of the beatitudes, which tell us that "*Blessed are those who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness*" (Matthew 5:6).

Too, the idea here (and previously, and also in Revelation 21) that God will remove tears, is symbolic of the end of persecution, of the satisfaction of the Gospel that the beatitudes promise. In Psalm 13 we see that the deepest of sorrow is from sin; "no tears" is the result of Salvation. With the Destruction of Jerusalem and preservation of the saints, the last work of the Messiah and his authority is complete

PART III: The Revelation of the Lord Pertaining to the End of Judaism

Chapter 8 and 9: Pharaoh's Judgment and Jerusalem

With chapter eight we see the last of the seals that Jesus has broken. We should understand that this means it is the end of the judgment that has been in discussion, that is, the judgment on Jerusalem. A message from God is coming; God does not always speak with words. Before the trumpet comes, the prayers of the saints are answered (Literally thrown to the earth) from chapter 6:10. This judgment is the answer.

There are two "kingdoms" in Revelation. Since the word translated "kingdom" in the New Testament is more accurately described as authority (Strong's: basileia: *properly, royalty, i.e. (abstractly) rule, or (concretely) a realm (literally or figuratively):--kingdom, + reign*), we need to think of this vision of kingdoms as pertaining to authorities. In Chapter 10:11, John will be instructed to prophecy something new, the prophetic message against the second authority. Since the two greatest persecutions of Christians are the Jews and the Romans, we will presume that the first authority, dealt with through chapter ten, is the Jewish authority of the covenant of Moses.

One more thought: in chapter 11:15 the "Kingdom of the World" (the Jewish world) has become the Kingdom of Heaven; compare this with the descriptions of the replacement of the authority of the covenants and the statement that the Kingdom of Christ is the real Israel

Hebrews 8:7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.

Hebrews 10:9 then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God." He takes away the first that He may establish the second.

Romans 11:24-27 For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins."

The Seven Trumpets

The Seventh Seal leads to another revelation, the Seven Trumpets. In The first six trumpets repeat the descriptions Christ has made about the events at the end of the tribulation of the Saints. Remember that Jesus said in Matthew 24/Mark 13/Luke 21 that the final events of His judgment against Jerusalem would occur after the tribulation.

Matthew 24:29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken."

Many of the events in the Six Trumpets bear out with some of the events Jesus describes in the Temple destruction sermon. When Jesus mentioned these, the context is that this is at the end of the tribulation of the Saints

<p>Third Trumpet: A great star (Wormwood) fell from heaven and poisoned 1/3 of the water, many men died</p>	<p>Mark 13:25 - "And the stars will be falling from the heavens"</p>
<p>Fourth Trumpet: Sun, moon and stars darkened by 1/3</p>	<p>Mark 13:24 - "The sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light" (Isaiah 13:10)</p>

What is so interesting is that John sees the Seven Trumpets (the actual events of the destruction of Jerusalem) in parallel with plagues on Egypt; in Revelation 11:8 Egypt is identified as Jerusalem, in case we miss the parallel. We ought to consider that the Judgment on Egypt that was found in the plagues was because Pharaoh hardened his heart against God, and God sought to demonstrate to his people that He was in control. Has not the same accusation been made in the New Testament to the Jews who rejected Christ?

Exodus 11:10 So Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh; and the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the children of Israel go out of his land.

Acts 7:51 "You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you."

6 Trumpets	Plagues of Egypt
First Trumpet: Hail and Fire Mixed with Blood on the earth; 1/3 of the earth, trees, grass burned up	Plague of Hail and Fire from the Sky
Second Trumpet: Something like a great mountain on fire is thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea becomes blood, 1/3 of life in the sea and ships destroyed	Plague of Blood in the Water
Third Trumpet: A great star (Wormwood) fell from heaven and poisoned 1/3 of the water, many men died	Plague of Blood in the Water
Fourth Trumpet: Sun, moon and stars darkened by 1/3	Plague of Darkness
Fifth Trumpet (woe): Star that fell from heaven is given a key to the abyss, and it is opened, and locusts are	Plague of Insects
Sixth Trumpet (woe): The Four angels held at the Euphrates are released with their army of 200,000,000 to kill 1/3 of mankind	Plague of the Death of the Firstborn

Who is Abaddon

We are introduced to a new person in the text in chapter *Abaddon* in Hebrew, *Appolyon* in Greek. The word means “Destroyer”. The Hebrew word is found, among other places, in Job 15:21 (In prosperity the destroyer comes upon

him). The Greek word is found in I Corinthians 10:10 (some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer). Perhaps we are drawn to remember that Destroyer of the Firstborn released by God in Exodus.

The Destroyer of Exodus was a divine Messenger. Here in Revelation this may be a mortal leader, perhaps a personification of the one who sent the army of locusts - Emperor of Rome. If so, we will meet him once again in chapter 13.

Historical Note

Revelation 8 most likely describes the coming of the armies of Rome to Jerusalem. The Roman emperor Nero suffered a rebellion in Galla (France) in 67 AD, and then in Judea. Nero made General Vespasian Governor of Judea and sent him to subdue Judea at that time. By 68 AD Nero had lost most support among the Roman Senate. Ultimately Nero's own guards betrayed him and when the newly proclaimed emperor Galba ordered Nero arrested, Nero took his own life in June 68 AD. This was AFTER he had begun the re-conquest of Judea, but BEFORE the fall of Jerusalem on August 1, 70 AD. The Judea revolt ended in the spring of 74 AD with the fall of the fortress of Masada. At that time, the destruction of Jerusalem had been passed by 3.5 years, with a total of seven years of war.

PART III: The Revelation of the Lord to the End of Judaism

Chapter 10: Jesus Comes in the Clouds

Chapter ten is the coming of Jesus Christ in the clouds. This is the culmination of the events of Matthew 24/Mark 13/Luke 21. It is NOT the ultimate return of Jesus, that is, the final Day of the Lord; this is the end of the judgment on Jerusalem. We cannot miss that this is Jesus, as John has gone into detail to give us figurative imagery of His identity.

Revelation 1:14-15 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters;

Common to all of the descriptions is that Jesus is coming in a cloud;

Daniel 7:13 I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven

Matthew 24:30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory

Mark 13:26 Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

Luke 21:27 Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

Why a cloud? Throughout the Bible, the cloud represents the presence of God in a natural setting. A cloud followed the Israelites out of Egypt; a cloud moved into the Temple when Solomon built it; God spoke from a cloud at the transfiguration.

In Chapter 10 Jesus descends and places his feet on both land and sea Let us again go to the Old Testament prophets (as Jesus suggested we should in 10:7) to look at the posture of Jesus here:

Zechariah 14:1-9 Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north And half of it toward the south. Then you shall flee through My mountain valley, for the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the LORD my God will come, and all the saints with You. It shall come to pass in that day that there will be no light; the lights will diminish. It shall be one day which is known to the LORD- Neither day nor night. But at evening time it shall happen that it will be light. And in that day it shall be that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and half of them toward the western sea; in

both summer and winter it shall occur. And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be-"The LORD is one," And His name one.

Clearly Zechariah was seeing the same events as John; the battle against Jerusalem, the destruction of Jerusalem, the salvation of the Saints, Jehovah Himself standing on the Mount of Olives, the absence of light. Particularly, Zechariah notes that this ends with Jehovah as King of all the earth.

John then hears seven thunders from Christ (who speaks with a loud voice like thunder in chapter 1:15), but they are not recorded. Why not? We might remember that Daniel too had a vision, in fact one that we will see was also about the same things, and he too was told not to speak of it. Daniel was told this because the time had not yet arrived; perhaps the same is true with John?

Daniel 12:4 "But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase."

One last note: John is given a scroll to eat, sweet and sickening all at once. He is then told he will prophesy about many peoples, nations, languages and kings. We have already seen that Ezekiel was given a scroll to eat with similar characteristics; we are told Ezekiel's scroll was lamentation of judgment by God against Israel (Ezekiel 2:10-3:2). Then he was sent to a people of his language and speech. John is sent to someone with a different speech; this new prophecy will commence in chapter 12.

The Mystery of God Accomplished

Throughout the New Testament there is reference to the mystery of God. Paul in particular speaks of this; we looked at these passages previously, but here is one which defines the mystery:

Ephesians 3:3-6 how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel,

Let us understand that the mystery that is in fact the salvation to both Jew and Gentile culminates with the necessary destruction of the covenant items of the old covenant. The last part of the mystery must be the destruction of the Temple.

PART III: The Revelation of the Lord to the End of Judaism

Chapter 11: The End and the Beginning

Throughout the Old Testament there are many examples of the pronouncement of judgment on nations. Egypt, Tyre, Sidon, Assyria, Edom, Babylon and others were spoken of against God; but the most common prophesy pertained to God's judgments against Israel and Judah. We need to see that there is a pattern of judgment by God against nations (particularly Israel); God always used means of providence rather than supernatural means to bring about judgment against a nation. Meaning, for example, God raised and used Assyria to judge Israel, and then judged Assyria. God raised and used Babylon to judge Judah, and then judged Babylon. History is repeating itself.

From a prophetic view, the prophet Zechariah would begin to speak of another Babylon (in his day Babylon had already been judged and overthrown, see Daniel 5), a "New" Babylon that would be Rome (we will look at this later). However, for this chapter, we must go back and look at the leader Zerubbabel.

As you no doubt remember, Zerubbabel was the Jewish leader (heir to the throne of David) and ancestor of Jesus who led the people out of captivity. There is a great deal of importance put on him and his companion Joshua the High Priest. Consider this prophecy in Haggai:

Haggai 2:20-23 And again the word of the LORD came to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month, saying, "Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying: 'I will shake heaven and earth. I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I will destroy the strength of the Gentile kingdoms. I will overthrow the chariots and those who ride in them; The horses and their riders shall come down, Every one by the sword of his brother. 'In that day,' says the LORD of hosts, 'I will take you, Zerubbabel My servant,

the son of Shealtiel,' says the LORD, 'and will make you like a signet ring; for I have chosen you,' says the LORD of hosts."

This prophecy is likely the same one as seen here in Chapter 11. We need to go back to Zerubbabel to see chapter 11 in a parallel context. Therefore, we will go to the prophet who discusses him the most, Zechariah

Zechariah 2:1-2,5 Then I raised my eyes and looked, and behold, a man with a measuring line in his hand. So I said, "Where are you going?" And he said to me, "To measure Jerusalem, to see what is its width and what is its length." 'For I,' says the LORD, 'will be a wall of fire all around her, and I will be the glory in her midst.'"

John is given a measuring rod, as Zechariah foretold. He is sent to measure the temple, with the exception of the outer courts, which are to the Gentiles. Measuring is an allegory of judgment (Daniel 5:26-28). Zechariah is seeing the temple that the Spiritual Zerubbabel will build. This of course a vision of Zerubbabel's descendant, Jesus of Nazareth, who would build the temple that is His church:

Ephesians 2:19-21 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,

John is told that this temple will be trampled by the Gentiles (unbelievers) for a time, identified as 3.5 years. Normally we should not try to make literal

application of times and dates (II Peter 3:8), it is worthy to note that the Roman Army continued battling in Judea for about 3 ½ years after the physical temple was destroyed.

The Two Witnesses

As we read this chapter, we are introduced to two witnesses who speak, die, are resurrected and cause judgment on Jerusalem. The identity of these two is clearly given to us in Zechariah's prophecy. John says that these two are the "two olive trees and lamp stands" (11:4), in a way we should know their identity. We find them here:

Zechariah 4:1-3 Now the angel who talked with me came back and wakened me, as a man who is wakened out of his sleep. And he said to me, "What do you see?" So I said, "I am looking, and there is a lampstand of solid gold with a bowl on top of it, and on the stand seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps." "Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl and the other at its left."

Zechariah 4:11-14 Then I answered and said to him, "What are these two olive trees-at the right of the lampstand and at its left?" And I further answered and said to him, "What are these two olive branches that drip into the receptacles of the two gold pipes from which the golden oil drains?" Then he answered me and said, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord." So he said, "These are the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth."

Who are the Two Anointed Ones? You might recall that the word "Anointed One" used here is *Messiah*, the same as the word "*Christ*" in the New Testament.

The two anointed ones in Zechariah are Joshua the High Priest and Zerubbabel the (king) governor. In Zechariah chapter 3 Joshua is identified as a fore-shadow of Christ (indeed the name “Jesus” is the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew “Joshua”), and here in Zechariah chapter 4 Zerubbabel is identified as a foreshadow of Christ. So in fact, both men represent Christ. How can two men represent Christ? One is the ruler (who would have been king) and one is the High Priest.

So does this mean that the Two Witnesses are symbolic of the dual position of Christ, as High Priest and King of Kings? Possibly, but when we look back into Revelation 1:6, we see that the Saints are called the priests and kings.

Revelation 1:5-6 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

The Seventh Trumpet

With the Seventh trumpet, the Kingdom is finished in prophecy. What was begun by Jesus in Luke 4 and his proclamation of being the Messiah, what was then spoken of in Luke 21/Matthew 24/Mark 13, is complete. The Saints have overcome the persecution of the Jews. The authority of the world of Judaism is gone.

1 John 5:4-5 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world-our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Remember that by John's earlier statement, we know that the kingdom has already existed (Revelation 1:9). In fact, when we look back to the Gospels, we know that kingdom, meaning authority, has been with Christ since he arose from the grave.

Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth

Why is Jesus authority absolute, which is what is being said? We cannot say He did not have all authority prior to this; we see above that Jesus said He had just that. Perhaps the fullness though was shared at first, with something that was passing away. We are told that the Law of Moses was still fading, even after Christ had returned to Heaven

PART IV: The Revelation of the Lord Pertaining to Rome

Chapter 12: The New War Begins

John now begins the prophecy that pertains to the nations, which is mentioned back in chapter 10:11. All of the terms used there are used in the Old Testament to identify the Gentiles; so in a spiritual sense, we are meant to say that this is the identity used for the unbelieving nation, which is Rome. A War in Heaven (NOTE: This is NOT the future we see here, but the past and present)

A Woman with Child

Who is this woman and child? We might note the following: John has used the metaphor of a woman and child before, to describe the church that he wrote to in 2 John 1 (*To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth*). As well, in the Old Testament, Hosea uses this language to describe his brethren as individuals, and the nation of Israel as a whole as mother.

Hosea 2:1-2 Say to your brethren, 'My people,' And to your sisters, 'Mercy is shown.' "Bring charges against your mother, bring charges; for she is not My wife, nor am I her Husband!

Finally, we know that the child here is described as one who “was to rule all nations with a rod of iron”. Jesus Christ is the first person we see in this image, particularly with the reference to the child going to heaven with God. However, when we look more intently, we would say that it really would not fit to say Jesus was born of the church, since we know that Jesus is the builder of the church. Perhaps the clue to the child’s identity is found back in the “keys” given to the seven churches, specifically to the church Thyatira in Revelation 2:26-27: "And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations--'He shall rule them with a rod of iron". It is the individual Christian who rules.

The word used for child here is a number neutral word; in verse 17 many children are suggested having been born to her. Perhaps we might see that birth labor is mentioned in New Testament in connection with the bringing of the church. While the child may well be Christ, the text is pointing us to the child being the individual Christian, or the individual congregation. In a historical sense, this separation works well, since we know too that many individual congregations were lost to the great apostasy (I Timothy 3), but the universal church, called the bride of Christ, was not nor could she be (Matthew 16:17)

John 16:21 "A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.

Romans 8:22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

Galatians 4:19 My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you,

Great Red Dragon

The Dragon is identified in chapter 20 as being Satan (20:2 "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan"). However, the Dragon is adorned just like the beast in chapter 13 and chapter 17; in those instances, we shall see that the beast is identified as the Roman Empire.

This could be confusing, except that the keys have been once again provided to us. Recall now that the message to the churches gave many references to Satan, which were references to people too.

1. Jews in Smyrna serve Satan 2:9
2. Satan dwells in Pergamum 2:13
3. Satan's doctrine in Thyatira 2:24
4. Satan's synagogue in Philadelphia 3:9

Therefore, we have been told that Satan attacks the churches through the So what is this war spoken of here? Satan will use his ministers on earth, in this case we will come to see them as the Roman nation, to attack the church.

2 Corinthians 11:14-15 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.

Michael

Michael is brought into the events now, as battling Satan, something that has occurred before. The battle here is about authority; Satan has an authority over death (Hebrews 2:14), and is referred to throughout Scripture as one who is a potentate, or holder of authority (Ephesians 2:2, 6:12, Romans 8:38). This power is over those who are in sin (John 8:34), and the purpose of Christ's sacrifice was to "rob" Satan of those who were under his authority (Matthew 12:29). Thus the battle language is a vivid way of seeing this done. Michael has battled with Satan before.

Jude 8-9 Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries. Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

Michael has also been spoken of at length in the visions of the prophet Daniel; these visions are now going to move to the forefront of the Revelation. Revelation 5-11 has been a restatement of the prophet Zechariah, who saw the change of authority from the covenant of Moses to the covenant of Christ. Now we will be seeing a restatement of the prophet Daniel, who spoke of Satan using the authority given to men (Romans 13:1-2) to wage the great battle against the church.

Daniel saw Michael as the defender of God's people, who would rise to their defense in the last days (last days meaning the final dispensation; Peter said that the "last days" began at Pentecost in Acts 2:17-18).

Daniel 12:1 "At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, Every one who is found written in the book.

Is Michael a pseudonym for Jesus? Michael's name means "who is Like God", and Jesus certainly is the only man "who is like God". Yet John has used other literary devices to identify Jesus in the Mystery; it seems unusual to switch now. Of course, really we are meant to be using this to reference the prophecy of Daniel. It is not clear if this Michael is our Lord, or a Prince of Angels. He is the only Archangel in Scripture, but the mystery of his identity remains.

The War of Heaven

The simple message of chapter 12 is that the Church is safe, but brethren will be tormented. Does this sound contradictory? Consider the point in Luke 21:16-18 - brethren will die, but not one hair will perish. Collectively, the war will cost lives, but the whole of brethren will overcome (Revelation 13:10)

The Woman fled into the wilderness for 1260 days. Again, it is not a wise decision to try to make much of these days. The total is 3 ½ years; it may be a restatement of the time in chapter 11, or perhaps we are to add it together with chapter 11, and determine that seven years is the “whole” (figuratively) of the persecution of the church. The church will suffer for a time; it could be until the Roman war in Judea ends, until the reign of Domitian ends, or even until the Roman government collapses in the next few centuries. Since we have some record in history of the church hiding in the hills of Judea while the Romans went through (see Eusebius), perhaps this is the best fit.

The remaining 8 chapters are the war of heaven, the battle between the Dragon and the Lady’s children.

PART IV: The Revelation of the Lord Pertaining to Rome

Chapter 13 – The Beasts

The First Beast

With the introduction of Michael in the last chapter, believers/readers of John's letter versed in Old Testament prophesy (as we are commanded to be, II Tim 3:15-17) know to look for a Beast. We might say that Daniel 12:1 is the trigger prophecy for our need to look for the information

Daniel 12:1 At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, Everyone who is found written in the book.

Note in chapter 13 verse 1 that the Dragon (Satan, 12:9) is on the seashore, he is between both beasts; they are his “ministers”, doing his bidding. Remember that Satan is not the beast, but the beast is of Satan, like the Jews of John 8:44.

The first beast emerges, and it appears much like the Dragon in chapter 12: It has ten Horns, seven heads, and ten crowns (as opposed to the seven crowns. Later in chapter seventeen, these symbols are explained: the ten horns are ten kings, the seven heads are seven hills (we will see it is a nickname for the city of Rome). The identity of the Beast is determined by the prophecy from Daniel.

Daniel 7:1-3 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head while on his bed. Then he wrote down the dream, telling the main facts. Daniel spoke, saying, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the

Great Sea. "And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other

Daniels vision goes on to describe four animals/beasts. The first beast is a lion with eagle wings, which we are told is the Kingdom of Babylon. The second beast is a bear, and this beast symbolizes the Medo-Persian Empire. The third beast is a leopard with four wings; Daniel spend much time in a subsequent vision on this empire, which we find is the Macedonian Empire of Alexander the Great, broken into four pieces at his death. It is the fourth beast that we will instantly recognize from our reading in Revelation 13.

Daniel 7:7-14 "After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words. I watched till thrones were put in place, And the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, And the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, Its wheels a burning fire; A fiery stream issued And came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him (REVELATION 1:14-16) Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, And the books were opened. I watched then because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn was speaking; I watched till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame....."I was watching in the

night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed

Here Daniel stops to consider what he is seeing. No doubt the vision he had been privy to through Nebuchadnezzar decades before, (recorded in Daniel 2) came to mind. It is the same history unfolding, though this time in more detail, and revealed directly to Daniel (we might note this is the first vision that was recorded as being Daniel's personal vision, the previous two visions (the statue and the tree) being given to King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel goes on, because it is the fourth beast that is the most disturbing.

Daniel 7:19-25 "Then I wished to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its nails of bronze, which devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled the residue with its feet; and the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up, before which three fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance was greater than his fellows. I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom. Thus he said: 'The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all other

kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, Trample it and break it in pieces. The ten horns are ten kings who shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first ones, and shall subdue three kings. He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, Shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time.

We see the parallels in visions nearly instantly. The Beast in Revelation is a combination of all three beasts that Daniel saw (Bear, Lion, Leopard). Both beasts have ten horns, which we have seen and will see represent the kings of the nation.

The important point of comparing these two prophecies is that Daniel tells us exactly what the beast is: the fourth empire from the Babylonian. Further reading tells us that Daniel already knew the next coming empire would be the Medo-Persians, and from Daniel chapters 10-11 we know that following this would be the Greeks. **The fourth world empire cannot be any other than the Roman Empire**, one of the most powerful in history. Many would say that the Roman Empire conquered the whole of the known world; certainly it conquered what had once been parts or whole of the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, and Greek empires (hence the beast having form of the other three creatures).

The Great Beast of Rome blasphemes God and wars against the Saints. We might consider that the Bible tells us that leaders of all of the great nations submitted to God at some point; the Egyptian Pharaoh (Genesis 41:38-39); the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4:2); the Persian Kings Darius (Daniel 6:26), Cyrus (Ezra 1:2) and Artaxerxes (Ezra 6:14). The Bible also tells us that one of the Caesars (presumably Nero by the timeframe) gave an audience to the apostle Paul and heard the Gospel (Acts 27:24 "*Paul; you must be brought before Caesar*"). However, there is no record in Scripture or even in history (including the

so-called "Christian" emperors after Constantine) that any Roman Emperor ever submitted to Christ.

The Second Beast: 666 or 616

In the vision, a second beast emerges, which we are told "exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence". We are also told that the beast is a man in verse 18, which makes him different. What man exercises authority over the Roman Empire? The Roman Emperor. We know the title and position of the lesser beast; what is his name? John attempts to tell us this too.

The infamous "number of a man" may be the only time that the unusual "Sod" hermeneutic might be needed in the New Testament. In this case, we are expected to know that the number John reveals, "666" is the number of a man. While we have said that numbers in the Revelation typically are meant to be representations and symbols rather than to be taken literally or specifically, in this case, John seems to tell us otherwise, by telling us this is the number of a man, and that we should calculate it to determine the name of the man.

Many people are familiar with the idea that in Judaism as well as Greek culture, letters and numbers were sometimes used in representations of one another. In Hebrew, this is called *Gematria*¹⁶, and in Greek it is referred to as *Isopsephy*¹⁷ (in fact, the Greek word John uses for "calculate" or "count" is *psephisato*, which is the same root as isopsephy¹⁸). This really was not so much of a mystical calculation as a means of creating numbers in letter form. We might compare it to doing the following in English: A=1, B=2, C=3.....Z=27. Then we might say that the name Jack is 10+1+3+11, or 25. However, the Hebrew form set ten and hundred positions to letters after reaching ten. In this case, for our example, k does not equal 11, but 20; L = 30, and so on.

¹⁶ Benjamin Blech, "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Jewish Culture", p. 395 (2004)

¹⁷ Psychoyos, Dimitris K. (April 2005). "The forgotten art of isopsephy and the magic number KZ". *Semiotica* 2005

¹⁸ <http://barnes.biblecommenter.com/revelation/13.htm>

In using this tool, a number of calculations have been made through time that could lead to nearly any person of whom we wish to identify in this role. Irenaeus once said that “many names can be found possessing the number mentioned”¹⁹, although this did not stop him from suggesting that the word *Lateinos* (“Latin man”, or Roman) fit the bill.

Who is our number man? As said, many people might be calculated to add up to this number, but a recent discovery might aid us. The most ancient

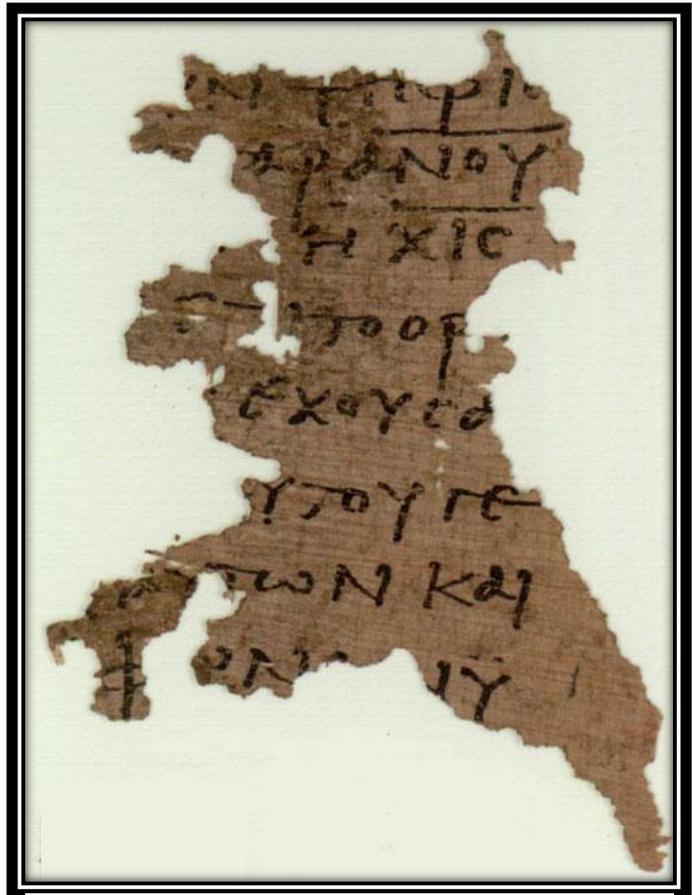


Figure 4: Fragment of Revelation with "616"

fragment of Revelation was examined in 2005, and it was found that it does not say “666”, but “616”²⁰. This supports the critical Greek manuscript (like the *Textus Receptus*, a compilation of Greek texts) of the New Testament, the *Novum Testamentum Graece* which the American and New American Standard versions of the English Bible tend to follow.

The point here is not to confuse by suggesting that one of these two numbers are a mistake; in fact, the suggestion is that both numbers are correct. If the purpose of the number is to identify a person, depending on the language being used, that number might change. There is only one man in history whose name fits both numbers (one in his Greek name, one for his Latin name)²¹. It is

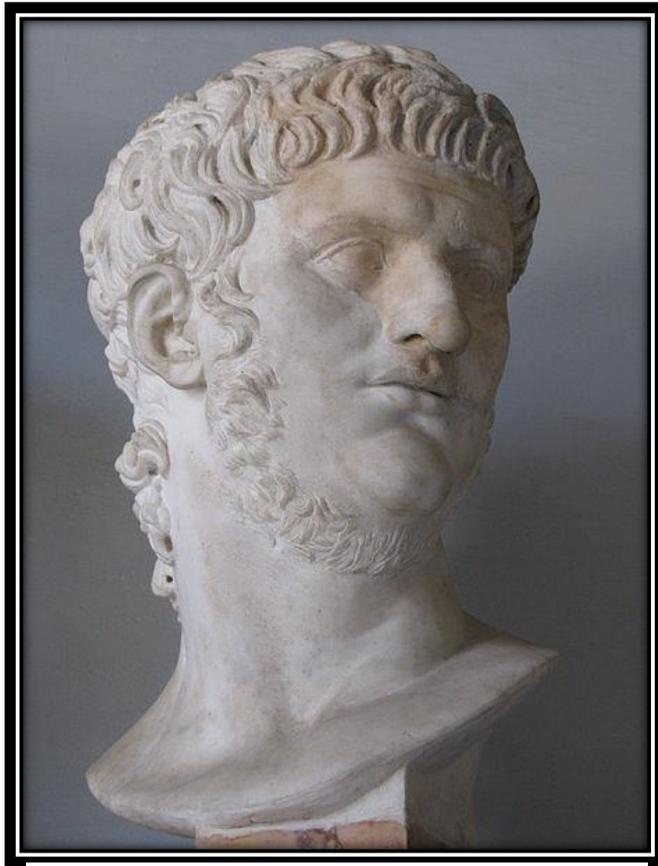
¹⁹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book V, Ch. 30

²⁰ Chris Wattie, "Beast's real mark devalued to '616': Revelation fragment," *Canada National Post*

²¹ Metzger, Brice "Breaking the Code" pg 77 (1993)

also the name applied to the Syriac Manuscript of the book of Revelation. Finally, it is the same person as the 6th Roman Emperor, whom we are told in Revelation 17 is the beast. That name is **NERO CAESAR**.

There is one more consideration to see that Nero is likely the man in the image. In Revelation 17, we are told about the man who controls the beast again. We are told that there are seven kings coming, that five have come, and now is the sixth. History records the following rulers of Rome, from the inception of the



Empire in 44BC. These first Roman emperors are (1) Julius, (2) Augustus, (3) Tiberius, (4) Caligula, (5) Claudius, then (6) Nero. Following Nero's assassination, the Roman Empire falls into civil war, with the General Vespasian finally bringing some stability to the empire.

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Figure 5: Emperor Nero Caesar

²² With Permission; cjh1452000 through wikipedia.org commons

PART IV: The Revelation of the Lord Pertaining to Rome

Chapter 14 – The Saved

The 144,000

Earlier in our study we saw the 144,000 as those who had been preserved from the persecution of the Jews in Revelation 7:4. These saints walked in white (as the key of the church of Sardis tells us, those who do not give in to temptation). One consideration is that 144,000 (again, 12 x 12 x 1,000) may represent both the living (one 12) and the dead (the other 12) Saints, both of whom are grouped as those saved by Christ. Another consideration is that they may represent the entirety of the dead in Christ, those dead before Christ (12) and those who died in Christ (12).

Are they the dead who are now in Christ? Some first century Saints feared that those who died would not see Christ, as evidenced by Paul's letter to the Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 15:18-20 Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

We know that the greater beast has already slain Saints (13:7, 10, 15). The use of the expression "firstfruits" in verse four may indeed reference those slain Saints.

But then again, the expression "firstfruits" is used by James to describe those in Christ:

James 1:18 Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

Perhaps we need to here refer back to our hermeneutical point Peter has given us, and simply understand what the 144,000 does not represent. First, it CANNOT represent a literal numbering of Gods people. We know that Scripture is careful to tell us that God's people are innumerable (Genesis 15:5, Hebrews 11:12). We have already pointed out that the use of the number 1,000 is to relate to something that is uncountable. Second, this number CANNOT represent the physical people of Israel. This would be in opposition of the truths taught elsewhere in the New Testament, that the physical nation of Israel rejected Christ, and the church has become the spiritual Israel of promise.

Romans 10:16-21 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: "Their sound has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world." But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: "I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation." But Isaiah is very bold and says: "I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me." But to Israel he says: "All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people."

Romans 9:6-8 But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called." That is,

those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.

An important point is found here about life and death. Death is not a loss to a Christian, but a gain. This is the case for those who have remained pure; if they are lost to the world, they are gained to God. This was much of the admonition that was promised in chapters two and three to the seven. Jesus promised that if Saints remain steadfast, they will overcome.

The Three Angels Proclamation

Now three angels appear with messages. The first Angel's message is to all the earth to all the Earth – Fear God, not men. We are told by Jesus:

Matthew 10:28 "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

The second angel delivers to us this message: Babylon the Great is Fallen. The identity of this Babylon is somewhat mysterious; however, it is generally understood to be Rome itself. In the Old Testament, it is Babylon which captures Judah and Jerusalem; dualism of Old Testament prophecy is that the church, the New and Spiritual Jerusalem, is also faced against by Babylon. This imagery needs to be held onto to fathom upcoming imagery, such as the Harlot of Babylon, or the gathering at Armageddon.

Isaiah 21:9 And look, here comes a chariot of men with a pair of horsemen!" Then he answered and said, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen! And all the carved images of her gods He has broken to the ground."

Jeremiah 50:2 "Declare among the nations, Proclaim, and set up a standard; Proclaim-do not conceal it -Say, 'Babylon is taken, Bel is shamed. Merodach is broken in pieces; Her idols are humiliated, Her images are broken in pieces.'

As Babylon captured Judah, then was shortly afterwards destroyed by God, so Rome is given power to torment the Saints, then that power is lost. In Jeremiah 24 the prophet sees a vision of two baskets of figs; one is of good figs, one is of bad figs. God tells Jeremiah that Judah would suffer greatly so that the impure, the “bad figs” would be removed, and the pure would be allowed to return. We might see this as a parallel of the impurity of Judaism against the New Covenant of Christ. Rome is empowered to remove that impurity, but will be judged itself. This is a synopsis of the next four chapters, as made clear from 16:19, 17:5, 18:2-21.

The third angel proclaims that those who submitted to the beast will receive God's wrath with the beast. Many would consider that the threat of death would release the obligation to submit to God. However, God does not preserve those who are not with him

Matthew 10:32-33 Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

Their torment for failure is eternal, but it begins here. This image of torment is repeated again in chapters 20 and 21.

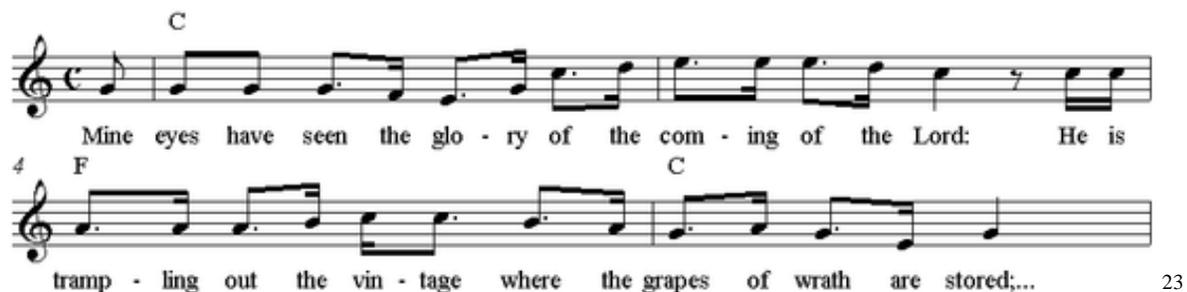
The Harvest of the Earth

Is this a reference to the ultimate coming? We need to understand that the context pertains to Babylon, the beast, and that this is a reference to the time of God's wrath on the beast that is Rome. The judgment of God upon nations has in the past not come at one time, but each nation is judged in its own time, and God uses other nations to execute His judgment.

In the ultimate coming, we are told that all men will be judged at one time, at the time of the resurrection.

Matthew 25:31-32 When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.

The song that we sing in the United States, the “Battle Hymn of the Republic”, captures this idea. It was originally drafted as a song to inspire men to fight to “set men free”, or against slavery, during the American Civil War. The admonition of the song is that God had trampled out the vineyards where the grapes of wrath are stored; that because of the nation’s tolerance of slavery, God had sent the fourth angel of vengeance in the form of war.



The image shows the beginning of the musical score for the "Battle Hymn of the Republic". It consists of two staves of music in C major, 4/4 time. The first staff starts with a treble clef and a common time signature. The melody begins with a quarter note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, C5, and then a dotted quarter note B4. The lyrics "Mine eyes have seen the glo - ry of the com - ing of the Lord: He is" are written below the first staff. The second staff begins with a treble clef and a common time signature. The melody starts with a quarter note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, C5, and then a dotted quarter note B4. The lyrics "tramp - ling out the vin - tage where the grapes of wrath are stored;..." are written below the second staff. There are chord markings 'C' above the first staff and 'F' and 'C' above the second staff.

²³ With Permission; Hyacinth; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Battle_Hymn_of_the_Republic_beginning.png

PART IV: The Revelation of the Lord Pertaining to Rome

Chapter 15-16- God's Wrath on Rome

Preparation for the 7 bowls of wrath

The wrath is the same wrath spoken of first by the 3 angels in the last chapter. It is God's wrath against a nation, specifically, Rome. The wrath is identified as plague(s). This is important imagery; it brings to mind God's wrath against Egypt for persecution of the children of Israel are called plagues,

The point is that there is/are a strong parallel(s) between Egypt and Rome; both are the greatest nation on the earth, both seek to destroy God's people at the point of inception. "Let my people go" is a theme shared by Moses before Pharaoh, or Paul before Caesar. The Song of Moses and the Lamb (15:3) is much like Exodus 15, a song about deliverance. In the original song, Egypt was swallowed up by God's wrath (Exodus 15:7). Now it is Rome

Some interpret these plagues as a restatement of chapters six through eight. However, the plagues of chapters six through eight matches up with what Jesus said in Matthew 24. There is no similar match up found in this listing, but more of a restatement of (some of) the plagues from Exodus. In fact, after chapter ten there do not appear any quotes of Jesus from Matthew 24/Mark 13/Luke 21. This is a different enemy, a different prophecy

The temple imagery is of the Church (and heaven). To understand this, v John expects us to view it as such: The Temple as a whole is the Kingdom of Heaven. The outer part of the Temple is the Church, the earthly part of the kingdom of heaven. This has been "unlocked" by one of the keys given to the seven churches (3:11), that the Pillars of the Temple (outer part) are believers. We already know that the unbelievers will trample the outer part of the temple (11:2)

The inner part of the Temple is spiritual, Heaven. This is how John the Baptist, Jesus, the Apostles, other disciples call the establishment of the church the establishment of the kingdom of heaven, while at the same time making references to the kingdom of heaven as a spiritual realm. The Kingdom is physically on earth in the form of the church's corporal members. Spiritually, the kingdom is of heaven, thus Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are in it (Luke 13:28). With Christ we are able to *pierce the veil*, or enter the Holiest places (Hebrews 9).



Figure 6: Model of Herod's Temple ²⁴

Finally, the outer part of the Temple is open, but the inner part has not yet been opened. Meaning: The Kingdom is accessed through the church, but heaven has not yet been entered. Perhaps we would then ask: When will the Inner Sanctum be opened for admittance? The inner sanctum was opened by Jesus Christ when He was glorified after the cross

²⁴ With permission by Juan R. Cuadra

John 1:51 And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

It was opened for the Holy Spirit to come as our Helper (John 15:26). It was opened for this message (Revelation 4:1), from Christ (1:11) through the Holy Spirit (1:9). Ultimately, admittance is when Christ brings all of His church to God (I Thessalonians 4, I Corinthians 15, Revelation 21)

The 7 Plagues

Plagues of Rome Revelation 16	Plagues of Egypt Exodus 7-11
Bowl 1: A foul and loathsome sore	Plague 6: Boils
Bowl 2: The sea became blood	Plague 1: All water turned to blood
Bowl 3: The rivers and springs of water became blood	
Bowl 4: The sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire.	Plague 7: Fiery hail
Bowl 5: The kingdom became full of darkness	Plague 9: Darkness on the land
Bowl 6: The river Euphrates was dried up	
Bowl 7: Lightning and earthquakes	

Can we find in history events that match up to the events of the plagues listed now? The answer is of course yes, but the problem is not finding matches, but discerning whether or not they are in fact what is referenced. For example, a massive plague struck 167AD and wiped out a huge part of the Roman population. This sounds similar to the events of this chapter, but truthfully, we would only be guessing, and therefore not producing a true result.

Instead, we will presume to believe that these plagues are either literal events *potentially* recorded in history, or that they are metaphorical (more likely) with historical events after the Revelation. In chapter seventeen we are given a kind of deadline of when these things will occur, in the next 10 rulers. This would put the end of these things no later than 300AD

As stated before, there are many historical events we could choose to identify within that time frame. Major plagues mentioned earlier; multiple wars and civil wars; German and Parthian invasions; dissolution of the empire by secession. It is probably of most importance to note that by 300 AD, the Roman Empire was no longer the beast of iron, but collapsing.

The Three Unclean Spirits

Now John sees three spirits, he calls unclean, emerge in the form of frogs. Again, the mind is taken to the plague of frogs in Exodus. The spirits came from the mouth of the dragon, the beast, and false prophet.

This is the first mention of the false prophet. We have a clear identification for the Dragon (Satan), and the Beast (The Roman Empire). Who is the prophet? John has in the pasted switched symbolism to give us a broader vision of the events he characterized; Jerusalem is called both Sodom and Egypt in chapter 11; The beast too will be identified differently in chapter seventeen. So perhaps what we see with the prophet is in fact a different view of the lesser beast, the Roman Emperor, of chapter thirteen. We see that the lesser beast was able to perform

“wonders” in that chapter, to deceive others into worshipping the beast. That would fit nicely with what we know generally about false prophets.

Armageddon

The war begun in chapter twelve now culminates with a gathering at Armageddon. *Armageddon* means Mount of Gathering. This Mt Megiddo is a physical place, with a similarly named city that sits near Mount Carmel. This place becomes symbolic of the gathering against God's people.

Mt Megiddo was the location of many battles, since it was a natural location of invading armies to assemble before entering Judea. Judges 5:19 records that the judge Deborah and Barak fought at this location. As well, the Roman army gathered here to assault Jerusalem, 68-69 AD. Finally, it was here that the last free king of Israel, Josiah, was defeated, (II Chronicles 35:22). Perhaps this is why many have mistakenly referred to Armageddon as a battle, when it is not called such. It is symbolic of enemies gathered against the Saints.

Armageddon does not represent a battle, but opposition to God. The significance is therefore in the name, not the place.

Justice of the 7th Plague

These images, of earthquakes, thunder and lightning, are meant to tell us God is behind the victory of the saints and the destruction of those who oppose the saints, through instruments He chooses. The Great City (identified in 17:9, 18) will be wasted, men will blaspheme God for what happens

PART IV: The Revelation of the Lord Pertaining to Rome

Chapter 17 – The Woman of Perdition

The next few chapters are a closer look into the judgments that have been brought from God onto Rome. One of the angels of the seven bowls speaks with John now, to bring him closer to the things he has seen in general. Here the Beast is identified with a woman who controls it. This will lead us into the next chapter, which is a repeat of the 2nd woe mentioned in 14:8. We saw God's wrath on this City in previous chapters. Now we see exactly on whom that wrath is falling.

The Great Harlot

We see now a woman, called Babylon the Great, the Mother of Prostitutes and of the Abominations. In Greek we could see the sentence structure as *megas-meter- porne*, or the "great mother (of)sexual immorality". Is she the great image of the lesser "Jezebel" in the church of Thyatira? No more hideous image could be applied that what is seen in this woman, drinking blood, covered with blasphemy.

We are told that it is in the wilderness John sees the beast with a woman on it, i.e. controlling it. Let us consider that fornication is an Old Testament expression or allegory for idolatry, false worship. What is remarkable is that we may have seen this woman at her "conception"

Zechariah 5:5 Then the angel who talked with me came out and said to me, "Lift your eyes now, and see what this is that goes forth." So I asked, "What is it?" And he said, "It is a basket that is going forth." He also said, "This is their resemblance throughout the earth: Here is a lead disc lifted up, and this is a woman sitting inside the basket"; then he said, "This is Wickedness!" And he thrust her down into the basket, and threw the lead cover over its mouth. Then I raised my eyes and looked, and there

were two women, coming with the wind in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the basket between earth and heaven. So I said to the angel who talked with me, "Where are they carrying the basket?" And he said to me, "To build a house for it in the land of Shinar; when it is ready, the basket will be set there on its base."

Here her name (Wickedness) in Hebrew is *rish'ah*, or "(feminine) immorality". She is taken to the Plain of Shinar, which is another name for Babylon (Daniel 1:2). She is having a house built; house is also sometimes the word for court or palace. When the house is complete, she would be set there. Since we have seen much of John's Revelation in Zechariah, it is not unreasonable to assume Zechariah is seeing the Great Harlot for the first time.

On a historical note: Zechariah wrote this passage between 520 and 518 BC (Zechariah 1:1); The Republic of Rome was founded 509BC. ²⁵

Great Harlot Explained

The angel now explains what John (and Daniel) have seen in the woman and the beast with horns. The woman sits on 7 heads, which are 7 mountains. Many cities have sat on seven hills, including ancient Athens, Constantinople, and even Jerusalem. However, the most commonly identified "City of Seven Hills" throughout history has been Rome.

²⁵ Encyclopedia Britannica : <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/857952/Roman-Republic/280097/The-expansion-of-Rome>



Figure 7: The Seven Hills of Rome

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Of course, even with this common nickname, the identity of the city is already clear. Since this city controls the beast, and we know the beast is the Roman Empire, we know the city is Rome. Too, the general understanding is that Babylon is Rome; remember this revelation is meant to parallel the OT history of Babylon and Judah's destruction (*She who is in Babylon, elect together with you – I Peter 5:13*)

²⁶With permission http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Seven_Hills_of_Rome-it.svg

We are now told that the seven heads are also seven kings; five have come, the sixth is now. If we begin with the first “king” of the Roman Empire (Julius Caesar dissolved the Republic by force after 49BC), we numerate as follows: (1) Julius, (2) Augustus, (3) Tiberius, (4) Caligula, (5) Claudius, then (6) Nero. The Seventh king would be the most difficult to identify, as three men fought for that title in the civil war which followed Nero’s assassination. It is possible that the seventh king is Vespasian, who seized control and stabilized the Empire.

The 10 Horns are 10 kings yet to come. It is not simple to count the king; for one thing, it is not clear if this means a sequential order or perhaps 10 kings of notable influence. As well, are we to include “pretenders” to the rule? Within the narrowest counting, we conclude around 117AD. Counting broadly, we arrive at the date of 211 AD. On thought is that it was the tenth immediate emperor, Trajan (98-117AD) who may have ended the official persecution of Christians, as seen when he ordered Pliny the Younger to cease searching for Christians.²⁷

John has revealed that the kings themselves are the cause of the demise of Babylon. In his series of books *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, historian Edward Gibbons identified internal decline as one of the great factors of the eventual failing of Rome²⁸. Therefore, history testifies on John’s behalf that Rome’s decline and fall was a result of leadership issues.

The important point of this is not to find the date, but to know that the persecution will soon come to an end. Some see the end of persecution with Trajan (117AD), or later in totality with Constantine in 325AD.

²⁷ Pliny, Letters 10.97

²⁸ .G.A. Pocock, "Between Machiavelli and Hume: Gibbon as Civic Humanist and Philosophical Historian," *Daedalus* 105,3(1976), 153–169

PART IV: The Revelation of the Lord Pertaining to Rome

Chapter 18 – The Fall of the Roman Empire

Fallen is Babylon the Great

What comes in chapter eighteen is a restatement of the end of the power of Rome, as revealed with the three proclamations of Revelation 14:7-11, and as brought about in chapters fifteen and sixteen with the seven bowls of wrath. Chapter seventeen was a close look at the city. Now we see again God's wrath against an ungodly nation.

The Lament for Babylon the Great begins with three voices from heaven. These voices tell us Babylon is fallen, and believers must come out from her. Why must believers separate themselves from Rome? Of course, we are brought to mind Paul's admonition to the Corinthians in II Corinthians 6 to "come out from among" the unrighteous, or to refuse to have fellowship with the works of sin. Another thought is that we see in history the actions of apostate Christians, who took out of the Roman government in the third century the authority and positions found there, and ultimately fabricated what we today call the Roman Catholic Church.

Babylon was the symbol of evil, but it was also an image of God's instrument. Rome is now this image, as Babylon was to Judea, Rome is now to The Kingdom of Heaven. God is going to end Rome (not as a city but as an empire). The language of the Old Testament is our companion to understanding these passages; when we read about God bring Babylon to ruin for their evil against Judah, we can grasp the language of this chapter.

Jeremiah 51:1-9 Thus says the LORD: "Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, Against those who dwell in Leb Kamai, A destroying wind. And I will send winnowers to Babylon, Who shall winnow her and empty her land. For in the day

of doom they shall be against her all around. Against her let the archer bend his bow, and lift himself up against her in his armor. Do not spare her young men; utterly destroy all her army. Thus the slain shall fall in the land of the Chaldeans, and those thrust through in her streets. For Israel is not forsaken, nor Judah, by his God, the LORD of hosts, Though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel." Flee from the midst of Babylon, And every one save his life! Do not be cut off in her iniquity, for this is the time of the LORD'S vengeance; He shall recompense her. Babylon was a golden cup in the LORD'S hand, that made all the earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; therefore the nations are deranged. Babylon has suddenly fallen and been destroyed. Wail for her! Take balm for her pain; perhaps she may be healed. We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed. Forsake her, and let us go everyone to his own country; for her judgment reaches to heaven and is lifted up to the skies.

God has physically destroyed cities in the past; Babylon is today a ruin, and we recall fulfilled promises to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, Tyre and Sidon. However, the destruction of Rome is more figurative. It is removing power that will never again come back.

As we have mentioned before, there are a number of events in history that would fit the descriptions John has given us. There was a series of horrific plagues that struck in the years around 167AD. There was also a time called the "Crisis of the Third Century"²⁹ (between 235AD to 284AD), when invasion, monetary devaluation plague and civil discord weakened Rome. Perhaps we are looking as far as the year n 310AD when the empire was divided.

²⁹ L. B. Moss, The Birth of the Middle Ages, p. 1

One God is in Control

As the worship of the Old Testament was a foreshadow of the truths of Jesus Christ, the recorded history of Israel was an example of the same God using the same punishments and powers to remind men of His control. The apostle Paul said in I Corinthians 10:11 that “*these things happened to them as examples*”. Here is imagery from Isaiah telling Jerusalem that God will bring His judgment upon them.

Isaiah 29:1-6 "Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt! Add year to year; Let feasts come around. Yet I will distress Ariel; there shall be heaviness and sorrow, and it shall be to Me as Ariel. I will encamp against you all around, I will lay siege against you with a mound, and I will raise siegeworks against you. You shall be brought down, You shall speak out of the ground; Your speech shall be low, out of the dust; Your voice shall be like a medium's, out of the ground; and your speech shall whisper out of the dust. "Moreover the multitude of your foes shall be like fine dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones like chaff that passes away; Yes, it shall be in an instant, suddenly. You will be punished by the LORD of hosts with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with storm and tempest And the flame of devouring fire.

There is a powerful lesson for us today. When nations begin to assert a national pride that rejects God, consequences can be catastrophic. History is full of examples of the pride of nations going before their fall.

PART IV: The Revelation of the Lord Pertaining to Rome

Chapter 19 – The Wedding Celebration

The judgment of God has at last arrived. The Harlot is destroyed, the beast is to be captured and destroyed. This is the rejoicing of the Saints to the promise and substance of victory. For those who are in the time of the tribulation, it is about the promise. To us today, who can look back and see this victory in time, it is the substance. Now we witness a celebration.

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

What is the marriage of the lamb? Marriage is the allegory used throughout the Old and New Testament of the relationship that God has with people. Since marriage is a covenant relationship (Malachi 2:14), and God's relationship with first Israel and then, through Christ, with the Saints, are called covenants, the use of marriage as the symbol is universally understood. For the purpose of this study we will define a covenant as being part contract (a promise), part law (a penalty).

Jeremiah 31:31,33 "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah....But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people"

Now begins a wedding feast. Many might be tempted to place this into an eternal, heavenly context, but it would not fit into the descriptions here, not in the usage of the "feast" parables given to us in the gospels.

Matthew 22:2-14 "The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his

servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. Again, he sent out other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding."' But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. 'Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.' "So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. "But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen."

The power of this parable is that, in one way, it gives us a simple summary of everything John is telling us in Revelation. Consider that we are introduced to the authority of Christ from the father, much as John shows us this authority in Revelation 4. We see judgment upon those who rejected the Christ, as we did in Revelation chapters 5-11, and the destruction of their city. And now we are at the feast.

In the parable, we see the guest who has come, but is not attired in the proper garment. We are told in scripture that whenever one is baptized into Christ, they have put on Christ (Galatians 3:27). We have already been admonished by the Lord in Revelation 16:15 not to remove our garment and be found naked; this reminds us of His command to remain faithful until the end.

One of the most beautiful Psalms pertains to Christ the King, as viewed by His bride. Note that the children of the bride will be princes on the earth.

Psalm 45:1-17 My heart is overflowing with a good theme; I recite my composition concerning the King; My tongue is the pen of a ready writer. You are fairer than the sons of men; Grace is poured upon Your lips; Therefore God has blessed You forever. Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Mighty One, With Your glory and Your majesty. And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth, humility, and righteousness; and Your right hand shall teach You awesome things. Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies; the peoples fall under You. Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions. All Your garments are scented with myrrh and aloes and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, by which they have made You glad. Kings' daughters are among Your honorable women; At Your right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir. Listen, O daughter, Consider and incline your ear; Forget your own people also, and your father's house; so the King will greatly desire your beauty; because He is your Lord, worship Him. And the daughter of Tyre will come with a gift; the rich among the people will seek your

favor. The royal daughter is all glorious within the palace; Her clothing is woven with gold. She shall be brought to the King in robes of many colors; the virgins, her companions who follow her, shall be brought to You. With gladness and rejoicing they shall be brought; they shall enter the King's palace. Instead of Your fathers shall be Your sons, Whom You shall make princes in all the earth. I will make Your name to be remembered in all generations; Therefore the people shall praise You forever and ever.

This feast is the kingdom then, as it is on earth, and as it has been since Christ arose from the grave. This is not the final work of the Messiah prior to his return. There are certain things Jesus promised when He left the earth: He would send the Holy Spirit, accomplished in Acts 2. He would use the Holy Spirit to reveal all things to His disciples, which we are told has been done (II Timothy 3:16-17, Jude 3). He would “come in the clouds”, that is, bring the day of vengeance to Jerusalem, which was the purpose of Revelation chapters 5 through 11, and was accomplished around 70 AD. He would destroy the beast, as Daniel foresaw, in Daniel 7. There remains one more enemy to destroy; this is the final work of the Messiah.

PART V: The Revelation of the Lord Pertaining to the Last Enemy

Chapter 20 – The Rest of Time

Two Enemies have been defeated (Judaism and Rome), Now the third is to be defeated. This enemy is death itself.

1 Corinthians 15:25-26 For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.

The switch in discussion from immediate events to something much further in the future may likely follow the same pattern Jesus used in Matthew 24 and Mark 13 and Luke 21. In those instances, it seems that Jesus changed topics as to the subject. Consider the original question asked of Jesus in those texts:

Matthew 24:3 Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, (1) when will these things be? And (2) what will be the sign of Your coming, and of (3) the end of the age?"

Mark and Luke's accounts do not list the third question, the end of the age. Let us look then in Matthew at a change in discussion format:

Matthew 24:35-42 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then two

men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.”

Let us compare the language of the discussion before Matthew 24:35 and afterwards:

Before Verse 35	After Verse 35
those days	that hour
many signs	no signs
anyone can read the signs	no one can know
Saints should flee Judea	Saints will be removed from the earth

The language of the conversation in some instances turns 180 degrees. Even more convincing though is the next statement Jesus makes:

Matthew 24:43-44 "But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

The “thief in the night” allegory becomes the most common reference to the final return of Jesus Christ. Here it is used by Paul and Peter:

1 Thessalonians 4:15-5:2 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise

first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words. But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

2 Peter 3:10-11 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

In these usages it seems clear that the Day in Question is the day of Resurrection, the day of heaven and earth passing away, the promised time when the Lord returns to bring forth the dead and living for judgment. It is this theme that Jesus continued on in Matthew 25 in the parable of the good and evil servants, the parable of the talents, and the parable of the 10 virgins. Ultimately, Jesus concludes the sermon by describing the day of final judgment in Matthew 25:31.

To be fair though, many look to Luke's account and see that Luke did not record Jesus' judgment language at the end. Is it possible all of Matthew 24 refers to the judgment on Jerusalem, and that there is no division at verse 35? Certainly; it does not violate our understanding of Scripture to say as much. This would mean that the final three chapters of Revelation do not pertain to a heavenly vision, but an earthly one. This would not alter in any way the fundamental principles of Christianity, or of eschatology. As long as there is agreement that there are no signs in place for the end of time itself (II Thessalonians 5:1-2), and

there is no denial of the resurrection (II Timothy 2:18), there is no division on what is a difficult passage.

That being said, while it is possible that All of Matthew 24/Mark 13/Luke 21 pertain to the destruction of Jerusalem, it is not likely. It is not likely because of the clear conversation of Matthew 25 pertaining to judgment (and the absence of a clear delineation point other than Matthew 24:35). It is clear because the apostles later referenced the "thief in the night" language and tying it to the resurrection. It is clear because Peter describes that day as the one that the heavens and earth pass away.

To quote the old adage: The likeliest answer is the correct one. Let us proceed on that thought, not condemning the possibility that these next chapters are more of the destruction, but taking the road most likely intended.

The Binding of Satan

Revelation 20:1-6 can be seen as a restatement in Hyperbole of the Gospel; it is history. Satan Is bound, and Jesus Christ reigns. We know that the binding of Satan is something that occurred when Jesus died and returned from the dead. Jesus Bound Satan when He defeated him.

Mark 3:27 "No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. And then he will plunder his house.

John 12:28-32 "Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." Therefore the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to Him." Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake. Now

is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself."

Jude 1:6 And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day;

2 Peter 2:4 For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment;

We are told that Satan no longer can deceive (the word for deceive in Greek here is the word *planao*, to cause to roam or stray). We want to understand that people still must choose to serve God in obedience or not; but the truth has been fully revealed, and all men can know it. As Jesus said, "the truth shall set you free" (John 8:32).

The 1000 Years

Of all the numbers issued to us in Scripture, perhaps no number has been more misused than this. The earliest cases of the misuse of this passage are found in the un-inspired *Epistle of Barnabas*, chapter 15:4, where the author ascribed each day of creation 1,000 years, and then the seventh day being a 1,000 reign of rest. Since then, many have attempted to literalize this 1,000 reign – from Charlemagne to Martin Luther to Adolf Hitler. We refer to the belief in a literal thousand year reign of Christ as *pre-millennialism*.

Pre-millennialism is a deadly idea, as it denies that the events in the first part of Revelation 20 have already occurred. Yet scripture says Satan was bound by Christ, and Scripture is clear that Jesus reigns now. Scripture is clear too that

His kingdom is now. To deny both or either one is to deny the very definition of Christ, that is, anointed one.

1 Timothy 6:15 which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords

Colossians 1:13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,

John 8:24 "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.

Scripture has not left us without understanding that the 1,000 years are a figurative application of the length of Christ's reign.

2 Peter 3:8 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day

We now see the thrones of those who reign with Christ. John started this book telling the seven churches they reign with Christ now (1:10). It is wonderful to consider the song of Revelation 3:21 in comparison to this song:

II Timothy 2:11-13 "For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.

The First Resurrection

John describes to us a first and second resurrection, and a first and second death. The first resurrection atonement from sin occurs while we are on the earth. It does not happen to everyone, but only those who obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Baptism is described as the moment it occurs. This resurrection is spiritual, not physical. (Rom 6:11-13, 8:10, Eph 2:1, Col 2:13)

Galatians 2:19-20 "For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

The First Death

The first death is the physical death of the flesh. It is something that happens to all men. At the moment our soul, spirit and flesh are separated, we have ended our life here.

Ecclesiastes 3:19 For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all is vanity.

The Second Resurrection

The second resurrection is the resurrection of the flesh from the grave. It will occur to all men. It is physical in nature.

John 5:28-29 "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth--those who have done good, to the

resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

The Second Death

The second death is the eternal damnation that is rendered to those who did not participate in the second resurrection. It is spiritual in nature.

The End of the 1000 Years

At the end of the figurative time of Christ's rule with the Saints, there is mention of Satan being released. Since his power was to deceive, he now has this power return. He is released to bring the world against God's Saints once more. The mention of Gog and Magog are literary tools from the Old Testament prophets, metaphors of the unbelieving nations that persecute Israel. ,

Ezekiel 38:18-19 "And it will come to pass at the same time, when Gog comes against the land of Israel," says the Lord GOD, "that My fury will show in My face. For in My jealousy and in the fire of My wrath I have spoken: 'Surely in that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land'"

There is once more a buildup against God's people, but this time, before any action can be taken, the end comes, and Satan is eternally banished. This imagery reminds us that God will overcome our enemies for us. We saw Him overcome the churches first enemy in the 6th seal of Revelation 6:15-17; we saw Him again overcome our second enemy when they gathered in Revelation 15:16-20.

If the events in these final three chapters are immediately sequential to the rest of the book, then likely these events are figurative of a victory of the Saints over the world. John describes such in I John 5:4, a victory over the world by faith.

However, if our assertions to the meaning here holds, then we are seeing the end, and the resurrection of the dead, and the final judgment.

The Final Judgment

The final judgment is described repeatedly throughout Scripture. The believer is warned of what they will be judged for, judged by, and the fate of judgment. There is no excuse that can be offered at that time; God's nature has been manifested throughout all nature (Romans 1:18-21), so that all men are without excuse. God expects all men to seek him (Acts 17:26-28), and promises that if we seek, we will find him (Matthew 7:7)

Scripture indicates that judgment begins with the household of fate. This judgment is likely the selection by Christ when he returns (I Thessalonians 4:17)

1 Peter 4:17 For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

In Revelation 20, the judgment begins with Satan being eternally punished. Then all of the dead are brought forward. The language here is that a book of life and the books of our deeds. The judgment is quick and absolute. There is no longer a reprieve, a hope for those cast away.

The last Return of Christ only takes one chapter because there are NO signs. This is an inheritance for those who overcome (vs 7).

PART VI: The Revelation of the Lord Pertaining to the Inheritance

Chapter 21 – The Heavenly View of the Church

The Bride of Christ

Throughout Scripture the church is identified as the bride of Christ, the Heavenly Jerusalem, the city of God. These references almost seem divided in nature; sometimes, it is clear that the church Jesus built is the City of God. However, sometimes it seems as though this city has not yet come. Let us say that this chapter tells us that both are true.

What John sees is the church, and it is heaven. The nature of Heaven is revealed in the Church. The membership of the church is synonymous with those who are enrolled in heaven:

Hebrews 12:22-23 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect,

The fellowship of the church is that of heaven:

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Matthew 22:30 "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven.

The relationship of Saints with God is described in both the same way, as God dwelling among us

Revelation 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

2 Corinthians 6:16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people."

We have seen that what John has said about the church and about heaven are much the same. There is no Second Death within the Church. There are no tears since we are those who are blessed to be comforted (Matthew 5:4 ,John 14:16. It is the location of the living water (john 4). Finally, it is the location of the wealth of God, since the wealth of God has been expressed in the Old Testament as being those who come to God

Isaiah 60:5 Then you shall see and become radiant, And your heart shall swell with joy; Because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, The wealth of the Gentiles shall come to you.

The church is built upon the Apostles. This truth is related here, as well as in Ephesians 2, where Paul makes us understand, that it is Jesus Christ that is the ultimate Rock upon which all is built:

Ephesians 2:19-20 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,

The church of Christ is the new covenant, and has the hope of salvation. Each of the seven Churches had a promise reward for overcoming; this is it,

Revelation 3:12 "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.

Overcoming has two meanings: Overcoming daily: something we do and have already done (I John 5:4). Overcoming in life - As what Jesus has done (John 16:33)

PART VI: The Revelation of the Lord Pertaining to the Inheritance

Chapter 22 – Back to the Garden

The Bible begins and ends with the Tree of Life. There can be no more beautiful symmetry than this. One might say that the Bible is a story of God returning man to that original state. Here too is the River of the Water of Life. Jesus has promised this would come to all believers

John 4:13-14 Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

It is that tree of life that fixes the attention of John. The story of the human race began in a Garden paradise

Genesis 2:8 The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. 9 And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. 10 Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads.

Now the Tree of Life is available again, in Jesus Christ. The benefit of the Garden, eternal life, has been restored. The Bible fills in the gap between two Gardens with the story of God's redemption through Jesus Christ. There is no longer any curse; God and man may once again dwell eternally

Conclusion of the Book:

We might call this last portion an epilogue, or perhaps an invitation. One from the Spirit of God, who is manifested in the Word of God, and the Bride of Christ, which is His church.

Again, we see the emphasis made that the events here are soon to come. This book of prophecy here will aid in seeing Him come in judgment, and what to consider for His final return.

The Invitation of The Spirit and The Bride

To wash our robes is the way to have the right to the Tree of Life and the City of God. The City of God is the church that belongs to Christ. If the Tree is Christ, we are washed into Christ in baptism (Galatians 3:26). Therefore the washing of Robes is referencing baptism, something WE do. "Blessed are those who wash their robes", not "those who have their robes washed"

Come unto God. Jesus said once before only those who are called by God come to God (John 6:44-46). He then said that we are called by learning (vs 45) the Words of Christ (6:63). This is very much the same as Paul telling us that Faith comes by hearing God's word (Romans 10:17). The Water of Life is without cost; Jesus has paid the price. There are conditions, which do not contradict the gift.

Romans 5:18 Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.

Final Admonition

John's last statement is that we are not to add to nor take from this prophecy. This is a statement true for any message from God, true of the entire Bible. It is the same message that Moses gave Israel when they received God's word.

Deuteronomy 4:2 "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

Proverbs 30:5-6 Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.

The Last Promise - "YES, I AM COMING QUICKLY"

The Last Response – "EVEN SO, COME LORD JESUS!"

APPENDIX 1: Roman History as it Pertains to Judea and Christians after Christ

AD 40 - Emperor Gaius (Caligula) attempts to force the Jews to put a statue of himself in the Temple; this does not occur due to Gaius's death

AD 48 - Approximate - Claudius expels Jews from Rome over "tumults instigated by Chrestus" (common Roman mis-spelling of Christ) for about 10 years

AD 64 - Fire in Rome - Nero blames this on the Christians; Tacitus records mass arrests, and Christians are both burned alive and fed to lions

AD 66 - The Jews in Jerusalem attack and drive out the Roman Garrison; this relates to the theft of the Temple treasury by Governor Florus in Jerusalem. Florus is generally blamed for causing the insurrection

AD 66 - The Jews in Caesarea are slaughtered by the Greeks in the city when a riot occurs over Jews being denied Roman citizenship. Jews in Alexandria are also similarly besieged by Egyptians in that city

AD 67 - Nero Caesar appoints Vespasian General of an Army of 50,000 to subdue Judea, now in revolt

AD 68 - Vespasian is appointed Legate, ultimately Emperor. During this time Jews under the Army of Simon and John (Jewish Generals) slaughter the Jews of the Army of Eleazer.

AD 70 - After considerable delay (due to turmoil in Rome, the year of 4 Emperors) Vespasian's son Titus besieges Jerusalem. Jerusalem falls on 26 September 70AD (Temple fell on August 1 70AD)

AD 74 - In the spring, the last Jewish stronghold, Masada, is captured after the suicide of the defenders. War ends

Roman Emperor:	Date:	Dynasty:	Known For:
Julius Caesar	46-44BC	Julian	The First Emperor
Augustus	27BC-14 AD		The real builder and organizer of the empire
Tiberius	14-37 AD		Laissez Faire attitude of rule
Gaius (Caligula)	37-41 AD		Tyrant, "Living god", tried to set his image in temple
Claudius	41-54 AD		Empire Builder (Britain)
Nero	54-68 AD		Tyrant, mass murderer; first persecution of Christians
Galba	68-69 AD		n/a
Otho			
Vitellius			
Vespasian	69-79 AD	Flavian	Judean war general; Set Rome in order with army
Titus	79-81 AD		Remembered as fair minded
Domitian	81-96 AD		Tyrant, may have persecuted Christians
Nerva	96-98 AD	Antonine	Liked by Rome, not by Army
Trajan	98-117 AD		Expanded empire, well liked. Ceased pursuing Christians, but did not end persecution
Hadrian	117-138 AD		During his rule 2nd Jewish Rebellion occurred