

# FROM ACTS TO APOCALYPSE

## SECTION I - SECTION II — SECTION III - SECTION IV

By David Lee Burris

**MATTHEW 24:14** – “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the **End** will come.”

THE END OF DAYS REFERENCED IN MATTHEW 24:3-34 AND ACTS 1:20 IS THE ELIMINATION OF PHYSICAL ISRAEL ALONG WITH JERUSALEM AS RELIGIOUS CAPITOL & CENTER OF MOSAIC SYSTEM OBSERVANCE



## Jesus Christ Answered Questions About The End Of The Jewish World & Earth's Ending

### **Contrasts in Matthew 24**

The disciples inquired, “Tell us when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (Matthew 24:3) “These things” refers to the buildings of the temple and their destruction (24:2). From verse 3 through verse 33, Jesus Christ discusses the desolation and destruction of Jerusalem. From Matthew 24:36-25:46, our Lord describes “the coming of the son of man and the judgment.”

### **The Pivotal Passage**

Matthew 24:34 is the pivotal passage. “Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.” Note again the reference to “these things.” “This generation” is defined by its earlier use in the book of Matthew.

(1) Matthew 1:17 - “So all the generations from Abraham to David are 14 generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are 14 generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are 14 generations.” (2) Matthew 11:16 - “But whereunto shall I liken this generation?”... The, “this generation,” of this text is the “now” of Matthew 11:12. (3) Matthew 12:39, 41, 42, 45 — “An evil adulterous generation...

this generation . . . this wicked generation” is that era, that day, the generation of Christ’s personal preaching, death, burial and resurrection (cf. Matthew 12:40,42). “Men of Nineveh” is the generation of Jonah. The “queen of the south” is the generation of Solomon contrasted with “this generation” of Jesus Christ.

(4) Matthew 16:4 - “A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah.” The “generation” of this passage is the Pharisees and Sadducees of Jesus’ day (cf. “sign” in Matthew 16:1,4). (5) Matthew 17:17 - “O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you?” That generation was the time Christ was “with” them. (6) Matthew 23:36 - “Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation.” Observe that the “this generation” is distinguished from “the days of (your) fathers” of verse thirty.

### **“That Day” vs. “Those Days”**

In describing the desolation of Jerusalem, Jesus Christ spoke of the tribulation of “those days” (Matthew 24:19, 22, 29), but when discussing the judgment, He spoke of “that day & hour” (Matthew 24:36, 42, 44, 50; 25:13). A sharpening of the contrast is seen “in the days that were before the flood” as opposed to “the day that Noah had entered into the ark” (Matthew 24:38). The parallel is “the days before the coming of the Son of man” as opposed to “the day and ‘the hour wherein the Son of man cometh” (Matthew 24:50; 25:13).

## Signs vs. Suddenness

Jesus told of the signs preceding the destruction of Jerusalem; namely, “false Christs and false prophets,” and wars and rumors of wars, famines and earthquakes - “all these are the beginning of sorrows” (Matthew 24:6-8). Further, He told them of “the abomination of desolation,” the Roman army (Matthew 24:15; Luke 21:20). “Then know that the desolation thereof is nigh” (Luke 21:20). They could “know” the destruction of Jerusalem was “nigh,” but the coming of the Son of man & the consequent judgment were to be without warning (Matt. 24:42,43,50; 25:13). Compare “then know” with “knew not” (Lk. 21:20; Matt. 24:39). *“So shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”*

The desolation and annihilation of “the buildings of the temple” were to be seen by signs — “When ye shall see a these things, know it is near, even at the doors . . . . But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only” (Matthew 24:33, 36). At least three times, Jesus specifically indicated that He was giving tangible evidence of the destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24:8,25,33), but the second coming and the judgment were to be sudden, unknown, as when a thief strikes (Matthew 24:42, 44, 50; 25:13; 1st Thess. 5:2 - 4; 2nd Peter 3:10).

## Local vs. World Wide

The destruction of Jerusalem was a local event as is seen in the following: (1) “Ye” versus the rest of the world (Matt. 24:6,15).

(2) The Roman army was “in the holy place,” not everywhere (Matthew 24:15). (3) The Judean saints were to “flee into the mountains” (Matthew 24:16), but why do this if the topic is the end of the world and the final judgment? Hence, the destruction is local in nature. (4) Commands to those on housetops and in fields (Matthew 24: 17, 18) have little relevance if the second coming and judgment is being considered; thus, the subject is local in occurrence. (5) The danger to pregnant women and to mothers with infants and the difficulty of flight in the winter or on the sabbath (Matthew 24:19, 20) are also unnecessary fears if the end of the world and the judgment are referred to; therefore, they are not in view. (6) Jesus spoke of “great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matthew 24:21). This implies that time will continue after “this time,” but there is no sense in saying, “nor ever shall be” if the end of the world and the judgment were being studied. (7) The same argument can be made from the next verse (Matt. 24:22). Those days evidently will “be shortened”; they will end, and the elect shall be saved because of it. But if the end of the world were in view, the elect would be saved whether the days were shortened or not. So, the destruction’s local, not world-wide.

However, the second coming and judgment are universal. They are compared to the “days of Noah” when “the flood came, and took them all away” (Matthew 24:39). The flood was not a local event. It was world-wide (2nd Peter 3:6). It “took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” In the destruction of Jerusalem, the saved are ordered to “flee” (Matthew 24:16), but at the coming of the Lord, they are “taken” (Matthew 24:40, 41).  
- *Guardian of Truth* XXIX: 19, pp. 588-589

## Flavius Josephus' Pre-War Revelation

*...a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared; I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable...were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals; for, before sun-setting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen running about among the clouds... Moreover, at that feast which we call Pentecost, as the priests were going by night into the inner temple...they said that, in the first place, they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise...*

Thus, Titus Flavius Josephus described the army in the clouds just prior to the start of the First Jewish-Roman War. A man born into a priestly lineage, who later became somewhat of a prophet to the Roman [Emperor Vespasian](#), Josephus' account of the cloud chariots seem eerily similar to that which is dictated in the *Book of Revelations*.

“The occurrence of this incident in the clouds was recorded by Josephus in 66 AD on the eve of the aforementioned Jewish War – a war founded in centuries of cultural differences, and then in greed, before finally escalating into the religious intolerance that led to the destruction and pillaging of the Temple of Jerusalem by the Roman army.” - *Internet Search*



# MacLaren's Expositions

## Matthew 27:51.

### **The rent veil proclaims the desecrated temple.**

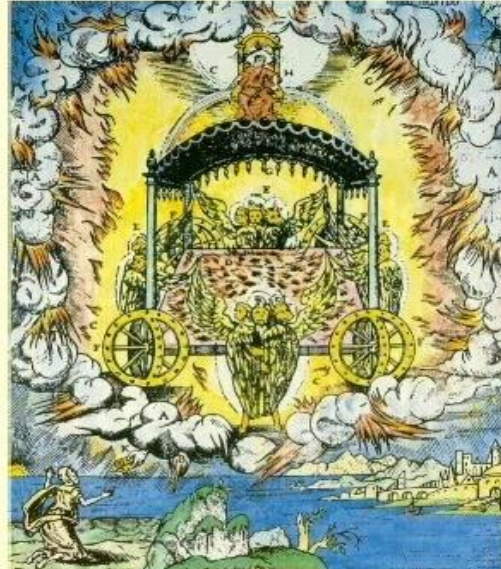
There is a striking old legend, preserved by the somewhat mendacious historian of the Jewish people, that, before Jerusalem fell, the anxious watchers heard from within the sanctuary a great voice saying, 'Let us depart hence!' and through the night were conscious of the winnowing of the mighty wings of the withdrawing cherubim. And soon a Roman soldier tossed a brand into the most Holy Place, and the 'beautiful house where their fathers praised was burned with fire.' The legend is pathetic and significant. But that 'departing' had taken place forty years before; and at the moment when Jesus 'gave up the ghost,' purged eyes might have seen the long trail of brightness as the winged servitors of the Most High withdrew from the desecrated shrine. The veil rent declared that the sacred soil within it was now common as any foot of earth in Galilee; and its rending, so to speak, made way for a departing God.

That conception, that the death of Christ Jesus was the de-consecration - if I may coin a word - of the Temple, and the end of all its special sanctity, and that thenceforward the Presence had departed from it, is distinctly enough taught us by Himself in words which move in the same circle of ideas as that in which the symbol resides. . . . You remember, no doubt, that, if we accept the testimony of John's Gospel, at the very beginning of our Lord's ministry He vindicated His authority to cleanse the sanctuary against the cavils of the sticklers for propriety by the enigmatical words, 'Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will build it up,' to which the Evangelist appends the comment, 'He spake of the Temple of His body,' that body in which 'all the fulness of the Godhead' dwelt, and which was all that the Temple shadowed and foretold, the dwelling-place of God in humanity, the place of sacrifice, the meeting-place between God and man.



## Finally, the glory of the Lord departs from the temple & goes to Babylon

- **Eze 10:18 WEB** *The glory of Yahweh went forth from over the ... the house, and stood over the cherubim.*
- Before leaving, an angel throws fire on Jerusalem
- **Eze 10:1-2 WEB** ... (2) *He spoke to the man clothed in linen, and said, Go in between the whirling wheels, even under the cherub, and fill both your hands with coals of fire from between the cherubim, and scatter them over the city. He went in as I watched.*



## Fire, smoke & sulfur – God’s judgment on the wicked



- **Gen 19:24-28 WEB** *Then Yahweh rained on Sodom and on Gomorrah sulfur and fire from Yahweh out of the sky. (25) He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew on the ground. ... (27) Abraham got up early in the morning ... (28) He looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and looked, and saw that the smoke of the land went up as the smoke of a furnace.*

# The Apostle Peter On The Day Of Pentecost Spoke To Jerusalem's Imminent Destruction

## *Blood, Fire, And Vapor of Smoke:*

*A.D. 70 Destruction of Jerusalem in Ancient Exegesis of Acts 2:19-21*

*By Francis X. Gumerlock*

### **Acts 2:19-21: Future or Fulfilled?**

IN THE SECOND chapter of Acts of the Apostles, Luke tells us about certain events that took place in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. A noise like a mighty rushing wind filled the house in which the apostles had been praying. Tongues of fire appeared to be distributed on each person, and everyone was filled with the Holy Spirit and miraculously began speaking in other languages. When amazement and perplexity overwhelmed those witnessing these things, Peter began to explain. "These men are not drunk ... this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel." Peter then proceeded to cite the passage in Joel, chapter two, where God promised to pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. In Acts 2:19-21, Peter continues quoting Joel 2:30-32, saying,

And I will grant wonders in the sky above, and signs on the earth beneath, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come. And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. (NASB)

Since Joel portrayed the wonders in the sky, i.e. the sun not giving its light and the moon turning red, and the signs on the earth, i.e. blood, fire, and smoke as events that were going to take place in the future, interpretive questions arise. Has this prophecy already been fulfilled, and if so, when? Or, are we still waiting a future fulfillment of this prophecy?

### **Preterist Interpretation of Acts 2:19-21: Empty Speculation?**

Dispensationalists generally hold that the prophecy of Joel, quoted by Peter in Acts 2, still awaits fulfillment, and that these signs in the heaven and on earth will take place near the end of the world. Preterists, on the other hand, generally see these signs as predictive descriptions of the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem by Romans.

There is a long-established exegetical tradition, stretching back all the way to the early Church, which understands that the prophecy of Acts 2:19–21 has already been fulfilled. Expositors of Acts and Joel who ministered in Syria between the fifth and ninth centuries A.D. believed that the prophecy of signs and wonders in Acts 2:19–21 was fulfilled in the crucifixion of Christ. In addition, certain Greek exegetes between the fifth and eleventh centuries interpreted Acts 2:19–21 as having been partially fulfilled in the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and partially awaiting fulfillment at the final judgment.

### Ancient Greek Exposition of Acts 2:19–21

Besides the ancient Syrian tradition of interpreting the events of Christ's crucifixion as a fulfillment of the prophecy of Acts 2:19–21, several ancient Greek expositors of the book of Acts saw the prophecy fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70. These include the bishop of Constantinople, John Chrysostom (d. 407), an eighth century author on Acts attributed to Ecumenius of Tricca, and an eleventh century bishop of Bulgaria named Theophylact.

On Acts 2:19—*And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs*—Chrysostom writes in a homily on Acts, “In these words he speaks both of the judgment to come and of the taking of Jerusalem. ‘Blood and fire, and vapor of smoke.’ Observe how he describes the capture. ‘The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood.’ This results from the internal affection of the sufferers. **It is said, indeed, that many such phenomena actually did occur in the sky, as Josephus attests.**” According to Chrysostom, the prophecy speaks not only of the future judgment at the end of the world, but also of the taking or capture of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70. To support this interpretation, Chrysostom refers to the Jewish historian Josephus, whose first-century *History of the Jewish Wars* described the sack of Jerusalem and mentioned signs in the heavens that were said to have taken place during the siege.

There is also preserved in Greek an eleventh century commentary on Acts by Theophylact, a bishop who served in an area north of Greece, which we know today as Bulgaria. His commentary on Acts 2:19–21, referring the signs and wonders to events that occurred in the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans, is quite detailed. He writes:

*He obviously taught beforehand these things concerning Jerusalem and those things which happened to the Jews on account of Him through the war of the Romans, when indeed so much blood was shed by them throughout Judea.*

*Smoke was generated when the towns & villages were burnt as the Jews were suffering punishments for their violence against Christ, violence that the sun itself could not sustain and so closed its eye, that is, its illuminating power. And the moon changed its face into a silver-red color. And this happened because of the affliction of those suffering. And many other things also are said to have happened in the sky around the time of the captivity and siege of Jerusalem, as Josephus testifies.*

In the prophecy, Theophylact says, the blood referred to the blood of the Jewish people spilled during the first-century war with the Romans. The fire and pillars of smoke were fulfilled when the Romans burned down the towns and villages of Judea. And like Chrysostom and the catena, Theophylact also mentions that Josephus the historian wrote of signs in the heavens that occurred during the A.D. 70 siege of Jerusalem.

## The Destruction of Jerusalem and New Testament Prophecy

The commentaries on Scripture from Theodore of Mopsuestia, Patriarch Timothy I, and Isho'dad of Merv in the ancient Syrian church explained the prophecy of the signs in the heaven in Acts 2:19-21 as having mainly occurred during the crucifixion of Christ. **In the Greek-speaking churches of ancient Christendom, John Chysostom on Acts, and Theophylact of Bulgaria all taught that the prophecy of Acts 2:19-21 was partially fulfilled in the events of A.D. 70 when the Romans besieged & captured Jerusalem.**

Contemporary dispensationalists have little fondness for interpretations of New Testament prophecies that see their fulfillments in the events of A.D. 70. They often disparage them, and sometimes even associate them with modern religious liberalism. However, the truth is that this line of interpretation has a very long history among biblical exegetes who greatly revered the word of God, a history that can be traced back to some of Christianity's earliest Syrian and Greek biblical interpreters.<sup>1</sup>

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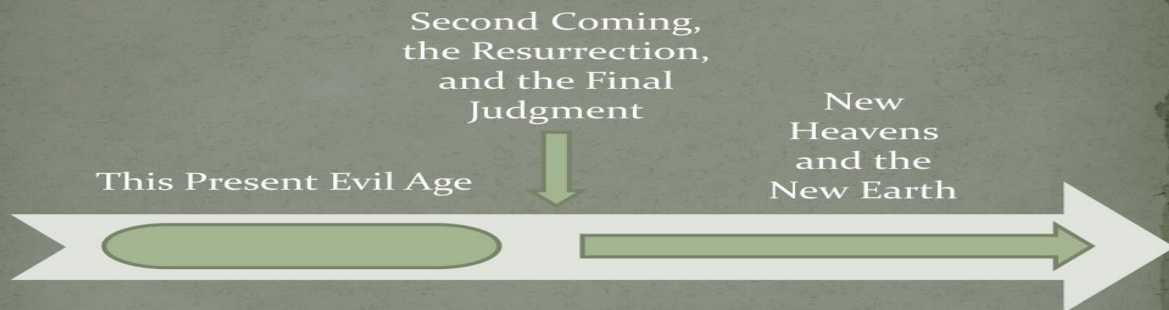
<sup>1</sup> DeMar, G., & Gumerlock, F. X. (2006). [The Early Church and the End of the World](#) (pp. 157-163). Powder Springs, GA: American Vision.

**INDIVIDUAL INTERPRET MATRIX**

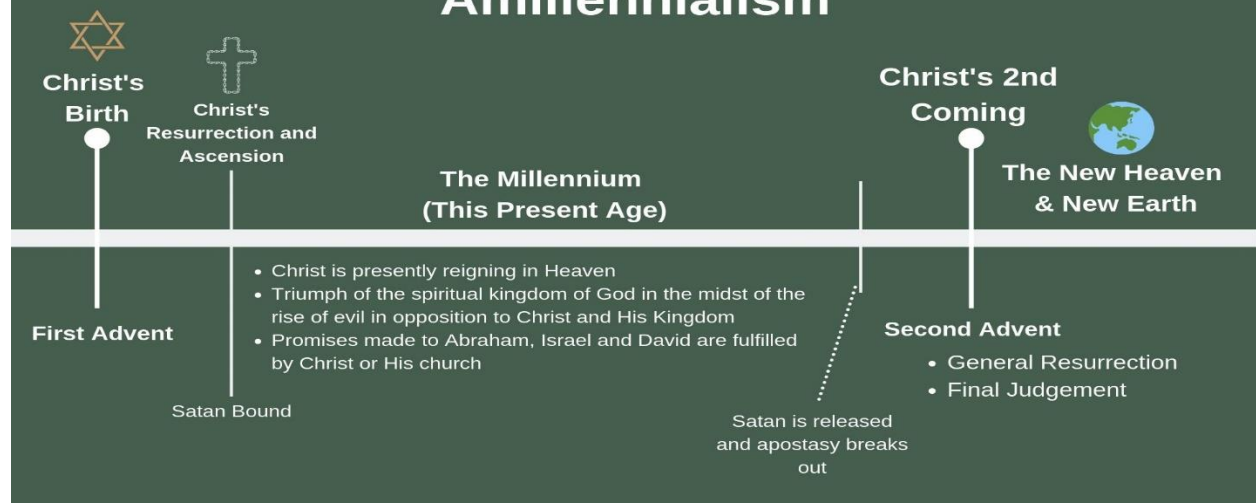
STORYLINE	Figure History	Figure Future
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UNFOLDING TIMELINE

**Amillennial Timeline**



**Amillennialism**



“Amillennialists believe the kingdom of God was founded by Christ at the time of his sojourn on earth, is operative in human history now and is destined to be revealed in its fullness in the life to come. They understand the kingdom of God to be the reign of God dynamically active in history through Jesus Christ. Its purpose is to redeem God’s people from sin and from demonic powers and ultimately to establish the new heavens and new earth. The Kingdom of God means nothing less than the reign of God in Christ over his entire created universe. The kingdom of God is therefore both a present reality and a future hope.” - *Meaning of Millennium* by Robert Clouse

**“An important piece of our background concerns the word ‘apocalypse’ itself. Today, the word conjures up images of disaster and destruction, but the author of the book used it to mean ‘disclosure’; that is to say *apocalypse* is an act of disclosure. The original Greek word *apokalypsis*, the first word in the book, is translated into English as ‘revelation’ to convey the sense of giving insight into mystery.” - Apocalypse Course Guide**

## THE HISTORICAL-BACKGROUND METHOD

The principles listed here will perhaps suggest a method which combines a part of the preterist method with a part of the philosophy of history interpretation.

1. This method keeps in mind that the writer wrote his message primarily for the encouragement and edification of the Christians of his own time. One who follows this method must, therefore, make a close study of the church of that day. He must, as far as possible, know the writer of the book, his condition when he wrote, and his relation to those who received the message. He must know the approximate date of the writing. He must acquaint himself with the moral, religious, social, and political conditions of the day when the book was written. He must know the mind of the people as they faced all the perplexities of a seemingly disastrous situation.

An important landmark for the guidance of the interpreter is to be found in the purpose of the book and the historical surroundings of its origin. The Apocalypse is cast in the form of a letter to certain Christian societies, and it opens with detailed account of their conditions and circumstances.... The book starts with a well-defined historical situation, to which reference is made again at the end, and the intermediate visions, which form the body of the work, cannot on any reasonable theory be dissociated from their historical setting.

The expositor continues to indicate the book arises out of local and temporary circumstances, that it is the answer of the Holy Spirit to the fears of the Asian Christians under the perils toward the end of the first century, and that all that throws light on Asia Minor from A.D. 70-100 and upon Christianity there in that period is of first importance to the interpreter of Revelation.

John was not writing about the twentieth century, nor any other century except that in which he lived.... To the struggling, persecuted churches which he addressed, the mere details of the future were a vanishing concern; what they needed was a revived confidence in the idea that Christianity was to have a future on earth. Dispensations and figures of distant ages could not have helped them in their desperate plight; they needed the light of Christian hope upon their own age.

2. A second principle of interpretation which must be kept in mind is that this book is written largely in symbolical language. The word "symbol" is from the Greek σύν, "with," plus the infinitive βάλλειν "to throw," hence "to throw together." A symbol is that which suggests something else by reason of relationship or association.



It is a visible sign of something invisible, as an idea or a quality. In this book symbols are used to picture or represent abstract ideas which the writer desires to present to his readers.

The book of Revelation (after the first three chapters) is a divine picture book, *a book of spiritual cartoons*, a pictorial presentation, through symbols of certain forces which underlie the historical development of the Christian Church and its unceasing conflict.

For this reason the ordinary rules of interpretation can't be followed. Usually the words of any passage of Scripture must be understood in their plain and natural sense, unless there is some reason to take them figuratively. The presumption is always in favor of the literal meaning; if one takes it otherwise, he must show the cause. This is not the case in Revelation. In this book, presented in pictorial form, one must assume that the symbols are to be taken figuratively unless there is good reason for regarding them as literal. There are few places where literal language is used in the midst of symbolical, but these stand out in bold relief as Greek words stand out in a context of English.

There is a double duty rather than a single one facing the interpreter of Revelation. When one reads in the twelfth chapter of Revelation about a battle between Michael with his angels and the dragon with his angels, he must see not just the story but what it symbolizes. He must not take it as information concerning a heavenly battle in which Satan lost his position in heaven in prehistoric time, but he must see that the scene symbolizes some fact or truth in the spiritual life or experience of Christianity. The interpreter who starts out to understand Revelation, so far as possible, to be literal, starts in the wrong direction, and the further he proceeds in this direction the less he will understand the book.

The writer uses these symbols to communicate his thought to the initiated who will read the symbols but at the same time to conceal his ideas from those outside the Christian circle. At the present time this last may not appear to be of great importance, but the conditions of the day in which the work was written reveal that it was extremely important then. The meaning of the greater part of the symbolism of Revelation is quite clear to the modern reader who is willing to see it. There are some symbols which are not so easily understood and where there is much room for diversity of opinion. About these one can ill afford to be dogmatic. The wise thing to do is to seek earnestly to find the most probable meaning of the symbol to those who first received the book and consider that as the most likely interpretation.

The symbolism of this book is often weird and grotesque. Wild beasts with characteristics quite untrue to nature are used to represent heathen worldly powers. Why should an animal have seven heads, or ten horns, or the feet of a bear and the mouth of a lion? (13:1-2.)

Surely there was never such a literal animal. All the combined efforts of P. T. Barnum and Robert Ripley could not have produced such a creature. The animal is so presented to symbolize a powerful and vicious antagonist met by the cause of righteousness in spiritual battle. No method of interpretation can get to the real message of Revelation unless it recognizes and follows this symbolism.

3. As a third important principle, one must keep in mind that Revelation uses Old Testament terminology with New Testament meaning. Old Testament expression and imagery thoroughly permeate the book of Revelation. Some expositors have fallen into the error of interpreting this language as it was used in the Old Testament. They have considered it as inevitable that if an expression means a thing in one part of the Bible it must of necessity mean the same thing every time it appears. This is a false premise which leads to countless errors. An expression or symbol means what the author intends it to mean in the place where he uses it. John uses some of the animals found in Daniel and much terminology from Ezekiel, but this does not mean that they are the same in interpretation; he has adapted them to suit his own message. Much of the dispensationalism that has cluttered the progress of interpretation has rested on the belief that Revelation foretells the “seventieth week” of Daniel just because some of the terminology is the same. The New Testament is primarily a Christian book, not a book of Judaism. Its message is its own whether the language is adapted from the Old Testament, the Apocryphal books, or is wholly original with John.

4. For the true meaning of Revelation, one must seek to grasp the visions or series of visions as a whole without pressing the details of the symbolism. It has been previously observed that many of the details are for the dramatic effect and not to add to the minute meaning of a passage. The details of a vision may have significance, but in most instances they are used only to fill out the scenery. In Revelation the details are added to make a tremendous impression of the things discussed. In Revelation 6:12-17 we have an overwhelming impression of approaching doom and human terror. This is sufficient without asking the minute symbolism of each falling star, the removal of the heavens, and the moving of each mountain. The safest policy is to find the central truth and let the details fit in the most natural way.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Summers, R. (1951). [\*Worthy is the Lamb: an interpretation of Revelation.\*](#) (pp. 45–51). Nashville: Broadman Press.

## Clues Concerning the Harlot's Identity

A number of statements made in chapter 17 give clues to the identity of Babylon the Great. They have been listed below with short comments.

**Clue # 1.** The woman is called a harlot (vs. 1), and the mother of harlots (vs. 5). **Comment:** There may be nothing in this world more disgusting to godly and upright people than the practice of common prostitution. But God used this word to describe the ungodly behavior of three famous cities in the Old Testament (Nineveh, Nah. 3:1, 4; Tyre, Isa. 23:15–17; Jerusalem, Isa. 1:21), and a fourth, Babylon, is called a mistress (Isa. 47:5–15). Not only is John's Babylon a harlot herself, but she is the mother of harlots, the source of evil and abominations that have corrupted the earth.

**Clue # 2.** This harlot sits upon many waters (vs. 1), which are identified in verse 15 as "peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues." **Comment:** The phrase many waters reminds us of Jeremiah's reference to Babylon which literally rested upon a series of rivers, moats, and marshes (51:13). With John's Babylon waters symbolizes the people over which the harlot reigned (17:15), and points to the "worldwide dominion and influence" of the woman (Roberts 135).

**Clue # 3.** The kings of the earth committed acts of immorality with the harlot, and those that dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality (vs. 2). **Comment:** It is the nature of a harlot to use her skills of seduction to entice her victim (Prov. 7:1–27). The kings and earth dwellers have been taken in by the harlot's charms, and intoxicated on the gifts that she can give. By participating in her system, they have fellowship in her sins and idolatries.

**Clue # 4.** The harlot was sitting upon the back of a scarlet-colored beast, which had seven heads and ten horns (vs. 3). **Comment:** Although there are minor differences in the descriptions, this beast appears to be the same as the sea beast in chapter 13. Its seven heads and ten horns symbolize the power of the empire which supported the harlot. There is clearly a close connection between the two, since the harlot "sits" upon the beast (vs. 1), and the beast is said to "carry" the harlot (vs. 7).

**Clue # 5.** The harlot was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold, precious stones, and pearls (vs. 4). **Comment:** Purple and scarlet were expensive materials worn by royalty and the wealthy. Gold, precious stones, and pearls also point to the harlots great wealth and worldly glory.

**Clue # 6.** In the hand of the harlot is a golden cup full of abominations and the unclean things of her immorality (vs. 4). **Comment:** A golden cup is also a symbol of luxury and wealth. But instead of being filled with a delicious beverage, this cup is filled with the abominations and unclean things of her immorality. This seemingly has reference to “idol worship and its defilements” (Hobbs 158), or as Hailey writes, “the detestable things of her idol worship, her vices and corruptions which the world offers and by which it would seduce mankind” (Hailey 346).

**Clue # 7.** The harlot is drunk with the blood of saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus (vs. 6). **Comment:** The Greek word (drunken) here is a present active feminine participle, which carries the idea of one who is continually drunk. Whatever conclusion one may reach about the identity of the harlot, she is undoubtedly involved in the persecution and martyrdom of Christians.

**Clue # 8.** “The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits ...” (vs. 9–14). **Comment:** This clue lies in the midst of a context that many consider the most difficult verses in all of Revelation. Expositors have offered a variety of suggestions to explain the seven mountains, seven kings, ten kings, etc. Whatever conclusion is reached, one must proceed carefully, drawing conclusions that are consistent with the theme of these chapters as well as the entire scope of the book.

**Clue # 9.** The woman is said to be “the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth” (vs. 18). **Comment:** Nineveh, Tyre, **Jerusalem**, and Babylon were great harlot cities of the Old Testament. John now reveals that the harlot of this chapter is also a great city, which has authority and dominion over the kings of the earth.

## Various Views Concerning Babylon the Great

As previously stated, there has been no lack of opinion concerning the identity of the great harlot. Below are listed five different positions along with one or two names of expositors who have defended these particular views. An attempt has been made to include a representative quote from their writings for the purpose of giving the reader a flavor for the position.

**1. Papal Rome (Albert Barnes).** Barnes suggests that the harlot is “a fit representative of an apostate, corrupt, unfaithful church ... The meaning is that Papal Rome, unfaithful to God, and idolatrous and corrupt, had seduced the rulers of the earth ... All the princes and kings of Europe in the dark ages and for many centuries were, and not a few of them are now, entirely under the influence of Papal Rome” (1692).

**2. The apostate and faithless church (William Milligan, A. Plummer).** “But it seems equally impossible to accept the view that this faithless portion of the Church refers to papal Rome, and none other. We must include all the faithless of God’s Church in all time” (Plummer 413). “By Babylon is to be understood the degenerate Church, or that principle of degenerate religion which allies itself with the world, and more than all else brings dishonor upon the name and the cause of Christ ... One explanation alone seems to meet the conditions of the case. Babylon is the world in the Church. In whatever section of the Church, or in whatever age of her history, an unspiritual and earthly element prevails, there is Babylon” (Milligan 289–90, 296).

**3. The city of Jerusalem (Foy Wallace, Arthur Ogden).** “These remaining chapters of the apocalypse surrounded only two opposite figures—the old apostate Jerusalem in contrast with the New Jerusalem, the Victorious Church of Christ” (Wallace 363). In his comments on 17:4 Wallace says that the figures of the verse are “all descriptive of the lewd character of the harlot woman, and symbolic of the unfaithfulness of Jerusalem, ‘the faithful city become a harlot.’ It was a lurid picture of the spiritual condition of Jerusalem and all Judea” (Wallace 368). “How could Rome have been the mother of harlots and abominations when she was only a baby contrasted with Jerusalem ... In fact, for centuries before Rome was born (753 BC), Israel and Jerusalem were being accused of fornication and adultery ... The whoredoms and abominations of no other city can compare to those of Israel in God’s sight because He was married to her. Rome does not even come close to filling the demands of the description given of this great harlot city” (Ogden 327).

**4. The world as center of antichristian seduction at any moment in history (William Hendriksen).** Hendriksen sees Babylon as a symbol of that which “allures, tempts, seduces, draws people away from God ... It symbolizes the concentration of the luxury, vice, and glamour of this world. It is the world viewed as the embodiment of ‘the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life’ 1 John 2:16.” Hendriksen goes on to say that the apostle sees “the Rome of his own day, filled with vanity, luxury, pleasure. It was a pleasure-mad city.” But he concludes that the figure of the harlot is not limited to Rome, but “represents the world as center of antichristian seduction at *any moment in history*” (Hendriksen 200–01).

**5. The city of Rome (Albertus Pieters, Ray Summers, Homer Hailey).** “Here Rome is pictured as a great harlot who sits upon many waters and practices her fornication with the kings of the earth; she is guilty of spiritual fornication in her idol worship, and she entices the kings of the provinces as she conquers them to partake of the evil with her” (Summers 191). “There can be little or no doubt that the Babylon of this section is Rome; and Rome itself is a symbol of the great world city of lust and seduction. In the Old Testament three cities are designated as harlots and another is as a voluptuous mistress given to pleasure.” Hailey goes on to describe Nineveh as the harlot of conquest, Tyre as the harlot of commerce, Babylon as the mistress of pleasure, and Jerusalem as the great religious harlot. He then adds, “So this harlot is a combination of the characteristics of the harlots of old ... Truly, Rome was an adequate symbol of all that had gone before her” (Hailey 343–344).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Copeland, W. (1994). [The Great City of Babylon](#). In F. Jenkins (Ed.), *Overcoming with the Lamb: Lessons from the Book of Revelation* (pp. 160–163). Temple Terrace, FL: Florida College Bookstore.

Date of Revelation	Early Date (ca. a.d. 69)	Late Date (ca. a.d. 95)
Christian literary evidence	Domitian ruled eleven months in Rome until his father Vespasian returned from the Jewish War; perhaps Irenaeus, wrong on other dates, got the evidence confused	Firm tradition in Irenaeus ( <i>Adv. Haer.</i> 5.30.3): “Seen not long ago, 5. 30. 3): “Seen not long ago, but almost in our own day, at the close of the principate [reign] of Domitian”
Church situation	Galatians quickly deserted (Gal. 1:6) and Paul’s companions shipwrecked in their faith (1 Tim. 1:19), so period needed for decline can be brief	Decline takes time: Ephesus has lost first love; Sardis is dead and Laodicea is now lukewarm; rise of Nicolaitan party shows time lapse
Historical situation	60s a turbulent time in Roman Empire with Nero’s suicide and year of four emperors	Reign of terror begins against Domitian’s enemies in a.d. 93
Persecution by Domitian	No literary evidence exists for Domitian persecuting Christians; he killed only presumed political opponents	Eusebius ( <i>Hist. eccl.</i> 3.17–20) calls Domitian a second Nero, who persecuted and martyred Christians
Food sacrificed to idols (2:14, 20)	Problematic “hot” issue among several churches in Asia	Issue appears resolved with only brief mention in <i>Didache</i> (6.3) and not mentioned by Ignatius
Asian earthquake in a.d. 60 (cf. 3:17)	Laodicea refused aid from Rome because of civic independence; her wealth enables city to begin rebuilding right away	Devastation of earthquake at Laodicea required decades to restore city to former grandeur
Great Tribulation (7:9–14)	Fiercest persecution of Christians occurred under Nero after Rome’s Antipas in Pergamum; expectation fire of 64; Tacitus ( <i>Ann.</i> 15.44) and of greater persecution suggests Clement ( <i>1 Clem.</i> 6:1) speak of “great multitudes” of Christians dying	Asian persecution limited only to later period

<p>Temple in Jerusalem (11:1–2)</p>	<p>That the temple can be measured suggests it is still standing</p>	<p>Reference to temple is from an earlier source incorporated into the vision</p>
<p>Political situation (13:1–8)</p>	<p>Beast need not refer to Domitian but could refer to earlier Caesar (Nero)</p>	<p>Beast depicts Caesar’s (Domitian’s) successful war against saints and his worship by all earth dwellers</p>
<p>Nero <i>redivivus</i> (resurrection) myth (13:3, 12, 14; 17:8)</p>	<p>First Nero pretender appears on Aegean island of Cythnus in 69 and his body is displayed publicly in Ephesus; myth circulates soon after</p>	<p>References to resurrected Beast suggest time period needed for myth to arise following Nero’s death in 68</p>
<p>Roman imperial cult (13:11–15)</p>	<p>Cult active in Asia since Augustus authorized temple in Pergamum in 29 b.c., and Tiberius authorized temple in Smyrna in a.d. 26</p>	<p>Worship of emperor as “Lord and God” reached zenith under Domitian; temple to Flavian dynasty built in Ephesus in a.d. 89/90</p>
<p>666 (13:18)</p>	<p>Gematria (numerology) in Hebrew fits only Nero</p>	<p>Apocalyptic tradition is now historicized and fulfilled in Flavian dynasty</p>
<p>Name “Babylon” (14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21)</p>	<p>If 1 Peter (5:13) and Rev. are dated before a.d. 70, this is early literary evidence for use of “Babylon”</p>	<p>Use of “Babylon” not documented in literary sources until after a.d. 70</p>
<p>Seven emperors (17:9–11)</p>	<p>Nero is the fifth “fallen” emperor of the principate</p>	<p>Domitian is the fifth “fallen” emperor among the principate’s tyrants<sup>4</sup></p>

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<sup>4</sup> Wilson, M. (2007). [\*Charts on the Book of Revelation: Literary, Historical, and Theological Perspectives\*](#) (p. 14). Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional.



Historic	Principate	Despotic	Antichrist	Tyrannical
<i>Five fallen</i>	<i>Five fallen</i>	<i>Five fallen</i>	<i>Five fallen</i>	<i>Five fallen</i>
1. Julius	1. Augustus	1. Augustus	1. Nero	1. Julius
2. Augustus	2. Tiberius	2. Tiberius	2. Galba	2. Gaius
3. Tiberius	3. Gaius	3. Gaius	3. Otho	3. Claudius
4. Gaius	4. Claudius	4. Claudius	4. Vitellius	4. Nero
5. Claudius	5. Nero	5. Nero	5. Vespasian	5. Domitian
<i>One is</i>	<i>One is</i>	<i>One is</i>	<i>One is</i>	<i>One is</i>
6. Nero	6. Galba	6. Vespasian	6. Titus	6. Nerva
<i>One not yet</i>	<i>One not yet</i>	<i>One not yet</i>	<i>One not yet</i>	<i>One not yet</i>
7. Galba	7. Otho	7. Titus	7. Domitian	7. Trajan
8. Otho	8. Nero	8. Domitian	8. Unidentified	8. Unidentified <sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Wilson, M. (2007). [\*Charts on the Book of Revelation: Literary, Historical, and Theological Perspectives\*](#) (p. 95). Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional.

## APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE & BIBLICAL NUMEROLOGY

Ferrell Jenkins said it best concerning *Apocalyptic Literature*: “This literature was highly relevant to the historical situations of the day. Daniel and Ezekiel wrote during the Babylonian exile to comfort people in their faithfulness, and to prepare them for trials even down to the times of Antiochus Epiphanes, and finally to the Roman Empire. The Book of Revelation was written when God’s Saints were being severely tried in the crucible that was called Rome. It served to reveal God’s power to overcome all enemies and His disposition toward His afflicted ones. This book should serve as an encouragement to God’s people, whenever they are persecuted, down to the end of time. In literature like the Apocalypse, one expects a great use of visions and symbols...” CARM’s Matt Slick writes of *Biblical Numerology* in both Hebrew & Greek: “It seems quite obvious that the Bible uses numbers in pattern. One of the interesting features of Hebrew and Greek is that in both written languages there are no numeric characters, where we have numbers and letters [In English], they have only letters. So, in each language the letters are also used as numbers. When they are used, the context tells us which is which. They knew when they were writing numbers and when they were writing letters.” Slick of CARM continues explaining that there is a number for Unity(1), a number for Division(2), a number for Divine Perfection(3), a number for Creation(4), a number for Grace(5), a number for Man(6), a number for Spiritual Perfection(7), a number for New Beginnings(8), a number for Judgment(9), a number for Testimony & Law(10), a number for Disorder(11), a number for Governmental Perfection(12), a number for Apostacy(13), a number for the Year of Jubilee Linked to the First Recorded Sermon of Jesus’ Earthly Ministry(444)... The number one thousand symbolized “multitude”, “immensity”, or “fullness of quantity.”

**1,000 Number In Reference To Time - Days, Years, & Generations:** “In every occurrence of such usage of the word ‘thousand,’ by itself, (1000) is not literal but symbolic. It represents a large (indeterminate) number or extended period of time.”

“666” **The Number of a Man** – [Referred to also as *The Mark of the Beast* @ Revelation Chapter 13 Verses 15 – 18]. In my opinion, both Homer Hailey & Arthur Ogden present two strong arguments equally credible. In *REVELATION: An Introduction and Commentary* Brother Hailey writes: “I believe, however, that the number does not represent an individual such as Nero, Domitian, or others per se, but the sum of that which is human... When John adds, ‘It is the number of a man,’ he omits the definite article before ‘man,’ thereby indicating that he has no particular individual in mind. He is saying that the number represents that which is human; it is therefore a human number... Since the Apocalypse abounds in the symbolic use of numbers which express ideas rather than persons or literal quantities, the same principle should be followed in the interpretation of this number. Throughout the book, seven expresses the idea of perfection or completeness: the seven churches, seven horns, seven eyes, seven spirits, and so forth. So six, which falls below the sacred seven, can never be seven or reach perfection; therefore, it symbolizes the imperfect, that which is human and destined to fail. It is said that to the Jews the number six was an omen or symbol of dread and doom, so when it was tripled, 666, it represented the completeness of doom and failure.” In his book *The Avenging of the Apostles and Prophets*, Brother Ogden makes a credible case for verse 18 as having application to a specific individual on the Throne of Imperial Rome: “This verse is intended to explain the significance of the preceding verse and to identify the specific administration in power at the time of the Apocalypse. The number of the beast ‘is Six hundred threescore and six.’ The reference is to an ancient practice of figuring the number of one’s name by adding up the assigned total for each letter in his name. Many ancient languages used alphabetical characters as numerical figures with specific values attached to the letters. The process is known as **gematria**. [The] number of the name *Neron Caesar* is 666 and identifies the specific emperor ruling Rome at the time of the Apocalypse. The explanation is simple, factual, and in perfect harmony with the subject material of the Apocalypse.”

Similarly, the “Man of Sin” of 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2 corresponds in timeline. Both Thessalonian Letters were written by Paul while in Athens around 51 AD., Caesar Nero ruled the Roman Empire from 54 AD to 68 AD, and the Jewish Campaign began approximately year 64 AD. [However, a plausible argument for the Late Date & Roman Punishment of Biblical Proportion could be made based on the unnatural number and large magnitude of Volcanic Eruptions, Earthquakes of Tectonic Plate Shifting, and Tsunami Tidal Waves wiping out many major coastal population centers of the Roman Empire Late First Century.]

### First Century Wisdom in Numerological Interpretation -

Author Bruce Winter in his recent book *Divine Honors for the Caesars: The First Christians Responses* in Section II: Playing the Numbers Game to Identify the Beast addresses how the original reading audience would have interpreted the meaning of Revelation 13:18. He writes: “A greater challenge was issued that would test the skills of his readership to under-take a more complicated form for numerical calculation - ‘this calls for wisdom,’ ‘here is wisdom,’ a term used in Greek for *skill*. The author of the letter uses it of *gematria*. He further defines the person possessing this skill as ‘the one having knowledge.’ The actual text does not have the Greek letter for six repeated three times but, 600, 60, 6. However, ‘the same numerical technique was used in the Hebrew alphabet, and ‘beast’ in the Hebrew alphabet is 666 (400,200,10,6,50). There is an **official external evidence of the numerical value of the name of Nero** in the Hebrew-Aramaic Script on an official deed of debt in A.D. 55 declared to be the second year of ‘Nero’.”

# What Happened in 70 A.D.?

Those who interpret the book of Revelation in connection with Domitian and Rome are forgetting what the book is presenting. Revelation is NOT just discussing the death of a “beast,” but also the downfall and destruction of some “Great City Babylon” and the end to some very threatening persecution. Those who apply the book to Domitian and Rome forget about these two events. They cannot explain how the city of Rome and the Roman persecution ended shortly after 96 AD! Rome didn’t fall for almost 400 years, and the Roman persecution continued until Constantine’s day (313 AD)! These events are not very “shortly” after 96 AD! It must be dealing with the Zealots and the Jewish persecution against the church, which did end very soon at 70 AD!

The other books of the New Testament often speak of a serious persecution which the JEWS inflicted upon the Christians (see - Matthew 10:16-23; 24:9,10,21; Acts 8:1; Galatians 1:13) This very JEWISH persecution came to a standstill in 70 AD! The death of Domitian did NOT stop the ROMAN persecution. Eusebius makes states clearly that Romans persecuted Christians for more than two centuries later. [Tertullian even said that the Roman persecutions helped the church grow (“seed of the kingdom”, *Apologies*)] ... The Roman persecution did not end “shortly” after 96 AD! But if the book was written shortly before 70 AD, there would be an end of some persecution “shortly” afterwards to fulfill it...

The Jewish temple-system (a physical, sacrificial system) was being challenged by a new spiritual system, and the Jewish religious leaders were OUTRAGED! As long as they were able (until 70 AD), they did everything in their power to blot-out Christianity before it became strongly established... - - *Edward E. Stevens*

In the Promotional Pamphlet for advertising his book “The Avenging of the Apostles & Prophets” Art Ogden writes of the absence of documental support for the late date: “Why did these men write so boldly of a Domitian persecution and fail to substantiate it by any historical documentation? There are two reasons why we wouldn’t document such a claim. First, the matter is accepted as historical fact needing no verification, or, second, there is no evidence by which to document the claim...

**THERE ISN’T ANY HISTORICAL EVIDENCE TO PROVE THAT THE ROMAN EMPEROR DOMITIAN WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATH OF A SINGLE CHRISTIAN MUCH LESS THAT HE SLEW MANY THOUSANDS BATHING THE EMPIRE IN THEIR BLOOD.**

No historian current with Domitian’s reign records any evidence of Christians being persecuted though they did record the Neronian and the Trajan persecutions. The evidence tends to suggest that the Domitian persecution is the creation of church writers late in the second and third centuries... Unless there is evidence to support a bloody Domitian persecution, which none of the many historical sources I have checked reveal, then, the affirmation of such a persecution is the affirmation of an untruth.”

**Clues from the Book Establishing the Specific Events Foretold**

**Argument #1**

A comparison of Revelation 10:7 with Luke 21:22 shows them to be dealing with identically and specifically the same thing.

Revelation 10:7	Luke 21:22
<p><i>"But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished as he hath declared to his servants the prophets."</i></p>	<p><i>"For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled."</i></p>

**Note Identical Points of Comparison**

<p>The Surrounding Context Shows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An Angel from the Throne of God with a book in his hand, holds <b>universal sway</b> (10:1-5).</li> <li>2. There would be <b>time no longer</b> (10:6).</li> <li>3. <b>The mystery of God</b>, by the prophets, to be <b>finished</b>; accomplished, completed, fulfilled (10:7).</li> <li>4. <b>The Temple</b> is then <b>measured</b> (11:1,2).</li> <li>5. The area outside the Temple and the Holy City is to be <b>trodden down by the Gentiles</b> (11:2).</li> <li>6. The City of <b>Jerusalem</b> is <b>identified</b> as the city (11:8).</li> <li>7. The <b>Prophets who testified were fulfilled</b> (10:7;11:3-12).</li> </ol>	<p>cf. Matt.24; Mk.13; Lk.21:5-36</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Gospel of the kingdom would be preached <b>in all the world</b> (cf.Matt.24:14; Lk.21:13).</li> <li>2. Then comes <b>the end</b> (Lk.21:9,20; cf.Matt.24:6,13,14).</li> <li>3. <b>All things</b> which are <b>written</b> may be <b>fulfilled</b>, completed, accomplished, or finished (Lk.21:22).</li> <li>4. <b>The Temple</b> is <b>surveyed</b> and its destruction foretold (21:5,6; cf.Matt. 24:1,2).</li> <li>5. Jerusalem shall be <b>trodden down of the Gentiles</b> (Lk.21:24).</li> <li>6. <b>Jerusalem</b> is specifically <b>identified</b> (Lk.21:20,24).</li> <li>7. <b>All things written fulfilled</b> (Lk.21:22).</li> </ol>
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*"This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled" (Luke 21:32).*

**Conclusion:**

1. Without question, the events of Lk.21:22 were fulfilled in 70 A.D.
2. But, Jesus said that *"All things written were fulfilled"* at that time.
3. Therefore, the Mystery of God, declared to God's servants the Prophets, were fulfilled in the Destruction of Jerusalem.
4. Therefore, **THE EVENTS SHORTLY TO COME TO PASS IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION CONCERNED THE DESOLATION OF ISRAEL AND THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM.**

## Argument #2

Comparing the two messages of Jesus concerning the Avenging of the Apostles and Prophets. The message of the book of Revelation is compared to the one spoken during His personal ministry.

### The Vengeance of Revelation

1. In the Apocalypse of chapters 4-11, vengeance is called for.

*"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (6:9-10).*

These are dead servants of God who have been resting for a while, unto whom white robes are given (v.11). These are Old Testament Saints martyred for their testimony. They anticipate and expect to be avenged.

2. At the close of this apocalypse, vengeance has been given.

*"We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name small and great; and shouldst destroy them which destroy the earth?" (11:17-18).*

3. In the Apocalypse of chapters 12-20, vengeance belongs to the Lord.

*"And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, Which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy" (16:5-6).*

*"Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her" (18:20).*

4. The reason for the destruction of Babylon the Great was:

*"And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth" (18:24).*

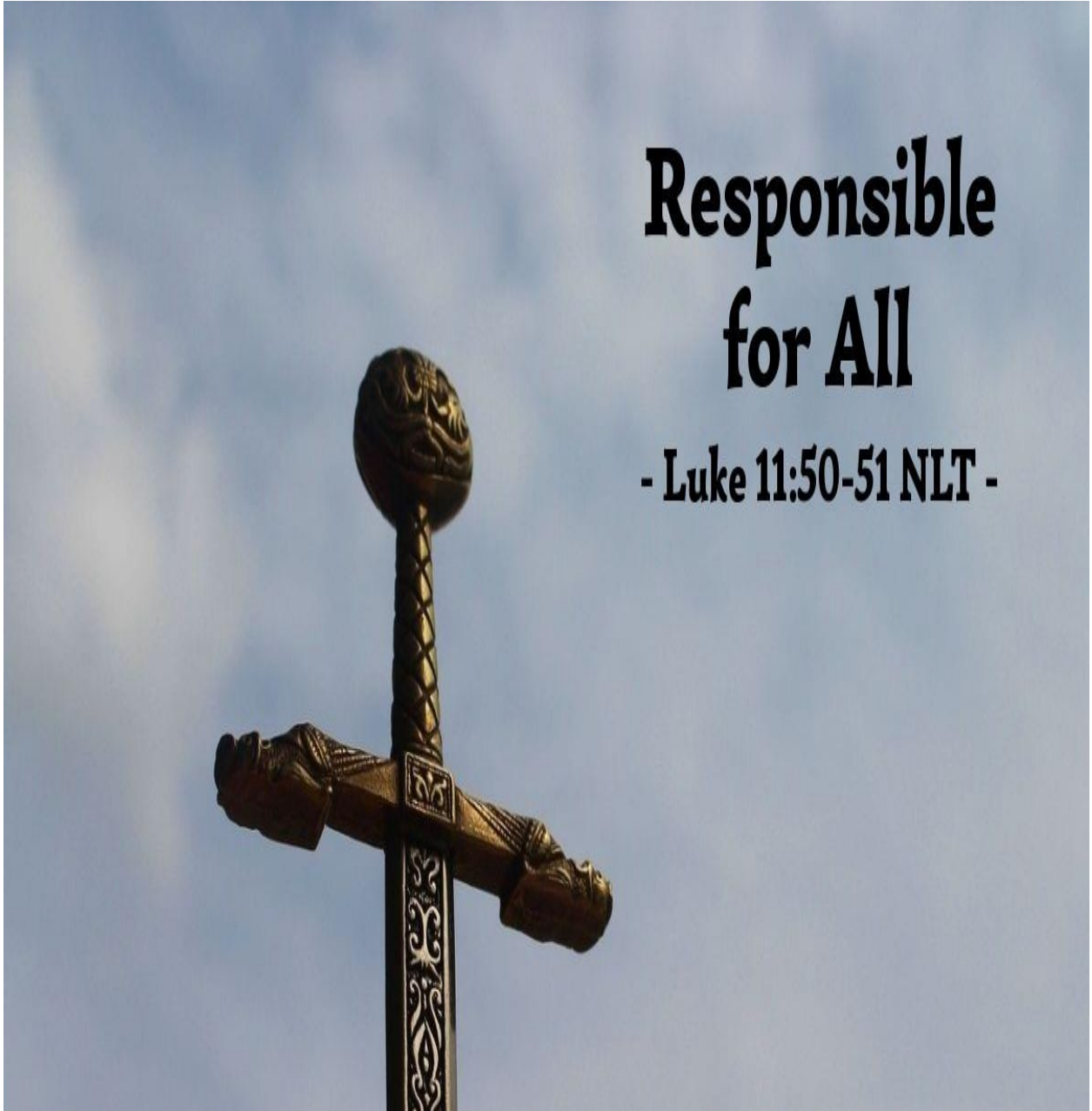
### Conclusion from These Facts:

1. A city is destroyed, called Babylon the Great, as Vengeance from God.
2. The reason was that in her was found the blood of prophets, saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.
3. When it was accomplished, it was to be considered as God's Avenging of the holy apostles and prophets.



# Responsible for All

- Luke 11:50-51 NLT -



### Argument #3

A comparison of Revelation 7:14 with Matthew 24:21 reveals periods of tribulation that are identical. Note the comparison:

*"These are they who have come out of **the great tribulation**"* (Rev.7:14, NIV. The KJV omits the definite article *"the"* which is found in the oldest manuscripts).

*"For then shall be **great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be**"* (Matt.24:21).

One is observed as *"**the great tribulation**"* (Rev.7:14) and the other as *"**great tribulation**"* such as never had been or ever would be. **If the tribulation period that preceded the destruction of Jerusalem was to be the greatest that ever was or ever would be, "the great tribulation" of Revelation 7:14 MUST of necessity be the same period of tribulation or it is not "the great tribulation"** (cf.Dan.12:1). To assign *"the great tribulation"* to another period of time is to again force a contradiction in scripture. Since there can be no question about the application of the *"great tribulation"* of Matthew 24:21, because it was to be fulfilled during the generation living when Jesus spoke the words (Matt.24:34), *"the great tribulation"* of the Apocalypse MUST be the tribulation period that preceded the destruction of Jerusalem. Again, there are no alternatives. The events that were shortly to come to pass center around the desolation of Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem.

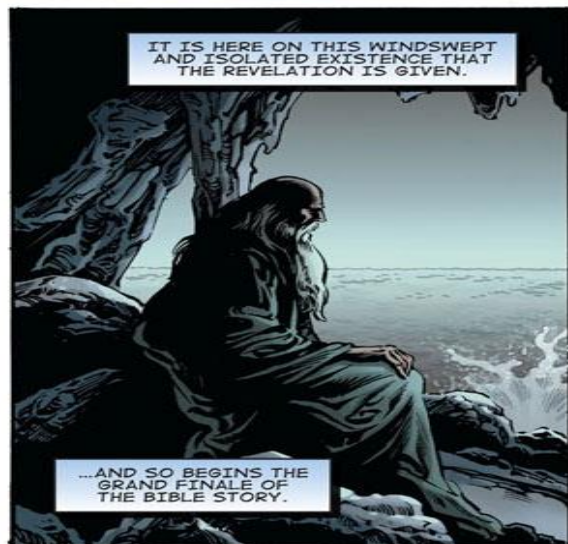
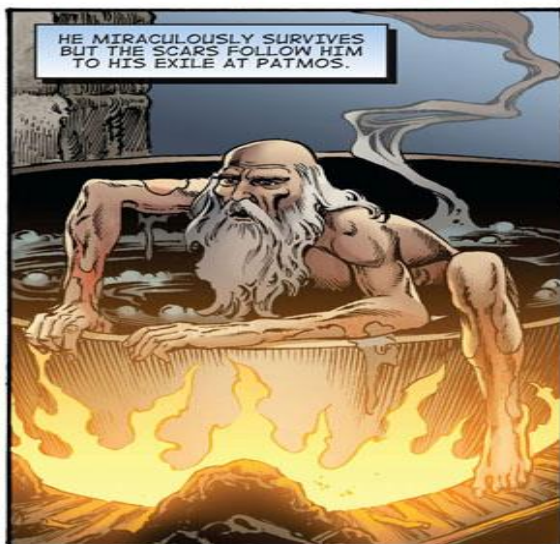
### Conclusion:

By identifying the *"things which must shortly come to pass"* with the desolation of Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem we have established three things:

1. **We have established that the book was written sometime prior to 70 A.D.** The most probable date is 65-66 A.D.
2. **We have established the correct method of interpretation to be used in understanding its application.** It is preterist and early historical. Preterist because it must be interpreted with the people of John's day in view and historical because the events foretold can be seen as fulfilled in the history of the times following.
3. **We have established what constitutes the subject matter of this great book and thus removed the need for speculation.** It is no longer needful to speculate concerning the application of the signs and symbols. They must be applied or interpreted in view of the desolation of Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem which at that time were *"shortly to come to pass."*

It is the triumph of faith and patience to be able to look at the book of Revelation with confidence that we **CAN** understand its message. Understanding is indeed the reward of this glorious work (1:3).

- **Tertullian in A.D. 200 wrote, "at Rome, the Apostle John, having been immersed in hot oil, suffered no harm at all from it" (The Prescription against Heretics, chapter 36). The claim is that because John wasn't killed that it led to his banishment to Patmos.**



# CONTENT

## John's Commission

**“WRITE THE THINGS WHICH THOU HAST SEEN,  
AND THE THINGS WHICH ARE, AND THE THINGS  
WHICH SHALL BE HEREAFTER” (1:19)**

<u>Past</u> “hast seen”	<u>Present</u> “Things which are”	<u>Future</u> “shall be hereafter” (Ch.4:1)
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Future Events (4:1) “things which shall be hereafter”

<b>IMMEDIATE</b> “shortly come to pass” <b>PRIMARY EVENTS</b> Chapters 4-19:10	<b>PROJECTED SECONDARY EVENTS</b>	
	↓ ↓	
	<b>EARLY CENTURIES</b> 19:11 – 20:6	<b>THE END</b> 20:7-15

*Literary Parallels Between Revelation's Prologue and Epilogue*

Prologue (1:1-8)	Parallel	Epilogue (22:6-21)
1:1	God sends his angel	22:6 (cf. v. 16)
1:1	His servants are shown	22:6
1:1	Things must soon happen	22:6
1:1	John a servant	22:9
1:2	John sees things	22:8
1:2	Testimony of Jesus	22:20
1:3	Blessing given	22:7
1:3	Keeping the words of the prophecy	22:7
1:3	The time is near	22:10
1:4	Seven churches addressed	22:16
1:4-5	Grace from Jesus	22:21
1:4	The Spirit mentioned	22:17
1:6	Freedom from sins	22:14-15
1:7	Jesus coming	22:7, 20
1:8	I am the Alpha and Omega	22:13 <sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Wilson, M. (2007). [\*Charts on the Book of Revelation: Literary, Historical, and Theological Perspectives\*](#) (p. 106). Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional.

# Literary Genres of Revelation

## *Apocalypse*

## *Prophecy*

## *Epistle*

Identifies itself as an apocalypse (1:1)

Identifies itself as a prophecy (1:3; 19:10; 22:7, 10, 18, 19)

Identifies author, thus not pseudonymous (1:4, 9; 22:8)

Angelic mediation (1:1; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14; 17:1-18; 21:9-22:6; 22:8-11)

Use of disclosure language: **δείκνυμι** (“show”; 1:1; 4:1; 17:1; 21:9, 10; 22:1, 6, 8); **σημαίνω** (“make known”; 1:1)

Recipients named (1:4)

Epiphany (1:12-20)

Language of fulfillment: **ἴδετε** **γενέσθαι** (“what must soon happen”; 1:1; 4:1; 22:6; cf. 1:19)

Epistolary greeting (1:4)

Persecution (2:10, 13; 6:9-11; 7:9, 14; 11:7-10; 12:11; 13:7; 16:6; 18:24; 20:4)

Receives word of God (1:2, 9; 6:9; 20:4)

Body (1:9-22:20)

First-person vision narratives (4:1; 5:1, 2, 6, 11; 6:1, 2; et al.)

Parenesis, or exhortations (1:3; 2:5, 7, 10, 11, 16, 17, 25, 26; 3:2, 3, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12, 19, 21; 12:17; 13:10; 14:12; 16:15; 21:7; 22:7, 9, 11)

Seven “letters” (2:1-3:22)

Future eschatological orientation (1:19; 4:1)

Suffering in exile (1:9)

Epistolary closing (22:21)

Visions (4:2-22:6)

Prophetic experiences “in the Spirit” (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10)

Otherworldly journey (4:1)	Commanded to write (1:11, 19; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14; 14:13; 19:9; 21:5)
Otherworldly writing (5-6:17; 8:1; 10:2, 8-11)	Present historical orientation (1:19)
Dialogue (7:13-17; 17: 6b-18)	Use of <b>Τάδε λέγει</b> (“Thus says ...”) declaration formula (2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14)
Auditions (11:15-18; 14:2-3, 13; 19:1-8)	Heavenly throne room vision (4:1-2)
Discourse (21:5-8)	Prophets mentioned (10:7; 11:10, 18; 16:6; 18:20, 24; 22:6, 9) <sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Wilson, M. (2007). [\*Charts on the Book of Revelation: Literary, Historical, and Theological Perspectives\*](#) (p. 20). Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional.

# Figures of Speech in Revelation

## **Metonymy**

2:3	“My name” refers to person of exalted Christ
6:6	“Oil and wine” refers to olive trees and grapevines
7:9	“Palm branches” refer to victory
7:14	“Blood of the Lamb” refers to atoning death of Christ
11:18	“The earth” refers to the people of the earth

## **Merism**

1:8; 21:6; 22:13	Alpha and Omega
1:17; 2:8; 22:13	First and last
21:6; 22:13	Beginning and end

## **Euphemism**

6:11	Rest/wait
17:10; cf. 14:8; 18:2	Fallen



## Paradox

2:9; 3:9	Synagogue of Satan
3:1	Reputation of being alive but are dead
3:16	Neither hot nor cold but lukewarm
3:17	Claim to be rich but wretched and poor

## Hyperbole

4:8; 7:15	Day and night
7:9	Great multitude that no one could count
9:16	Two hundred million
14:20	Blood to the height of the horses' bridles
18:5	Sins piled up to heaven
19:3	Her smoke rises forever and ever <sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Wilson, M. (2007). [\*Charts on the Book of Revelation: Literary, Historical, and Theological Perspectives\*](#) (pp. 54–55). Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional.

## Doublets In Revelation

Doublets	First Image	Second Image
Two thrones	Throne of God (40x)	Throne of Satan (2:13; 13:2)
Two riders on white horses	Conqueror with bow and crown (6:2)	Conqueror with sword and scepter (19:11, 15)
Two marks	Seal of God (7:3-4; 9:4)	Mark of Beast (13:17; 14:9, 11; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4)
Two multitudes	144,000 from Israel's twelve tribes (7:4-8; 14:1-5)	Great multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language (7:9-14; 19:1, 6)
Two witnesses	Two olive trees (11:4)	Two lampstands (11:4)
Two beasts	Beast out of sea (13:1-8)	Beast out of land (13:11-17)
Two harvests	Grain (14:15-16)	Grapes (14:18-19)
Two cities	New Jerusalem (3:12; 21:2, 10)	Babylon the Great (14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21)
Two women	Great Prostitute (17:1-18; 19:2)	Bride of Lamb (19:7; 21:2, 9)
Two banquets	Wedding supper of Lamb (19:7)	Great supper of God (19:17)
Two angels worshiped	John falls down (19:10)	John falls down (22:8)
Two battles	Armies of the Beast, False Prophet, and kings defeated (19:19-21)	Nations of Satan defeated (20:7-9)
Two heavens	First heaven (21:1)	New heaven (21:1)
Two earths	First earth (21:1)	New earth (21:1) <sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Wilson, M. (2007). *Charts on the Book of Revelation: Literary, Historical, and Theological Perspectives* (p. 56). Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional.

## Paired Characters in The Book of Revelation

### Lamb (Christ)

### Beast

Shares power, authority, and throne of God (3:21; 5:6; 7:17; 12:10; 22:1, 3)

Shares power, authority, and throne of Dragon (13:2, 7; 16:10; 17:13)

Triumphed over enemies (5:5)

Triumphs over the saints (11:7; 13:7)

Slaughtered but living (5:6)

Wounded fatally but healed (13:3, 12)

Rules over every tribe, language, people, and nation (5:9; 7:9)

Rules over every tribe, people, language, and nation (13:7; cf. 11:9)

Every creature worships him (5:13)

Earth dwellers worship the Beast (13:4, 8, 12, 15; 14:11; 16:2; 19:20)

Seal/mark on forehead of followers (7:3; 9:4; 14:1; cf. 22:4)

Mark on forehead of followers (13:16; 14:9; 20:4)

Has names-Faithful and True, Word of God and King of kings and Lord of lords (19:11, 13, 16)

Has blasphemous names (13:1; 17:3)

Wears many diadems (19:12)

Wears ten diadems (13:1)

### Two Witnesses

### Beast out of the Earth

Receive (authority?) from Lamb (11:3)

Receives authority from first beast (13:12)

Prophets who prophesy (11:3, 6, 10)

False Prophet (16:13; 19:20; 20:10)

Two olive trees; two lampstands (11:4)

Two horns (13:11)

Fire comes from their mouths (11:5)

Causes fire to come from heaven (13:13)

Perform great signs (11:6)	Performs great signs (13:13, 14; 19:20)
Torment earth dwellers (11:10)	Deceives earth dwellers (13:14; 19:20)
Receive breath of life from God (11:11)	Gives breath to image of first beast (13:15)
Taken up to heaven (11:12)	Cast into lake of fire (19:20; 20:10)

## **Bride**

## **Prostitute**

Wife of the Lamb (19:7; 21:9)	Mother of prostitutes (17:5)
Dressed in fine linen, bright and clean (19:8; 21:2)	Dressed in purple and scarlet (17:4)
Related to Holy City (21:2)	Related to great city Babylon (17:5, 18)
Sits on a high mountain (21:10)	Sits on seven hills (17:9)
Adorned with gold and precious jewels (21:11, 18-21)	Adorned with gold, precious stones, and pearls (17:4; 18:16)
Everything unclean banned (21:27)	Haunt of every unclean thing (18:2)
Drinks of river of water of life (22:1)	Drinks of cup of abominations (17:4)
Seen by John in new heaven & earth (21:2, 10)	Seen by John in desert (17:3) <sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Wilson, M. (2007). [\*Charts on the Book of Revelation: Literary, Historical, and Theological Perspectives\*](#) (p. 57). Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional.

## ■ Circularity -

Circularity refers to concentric development of a passage so that the ending reflects the beginning - chapter four door to door and chapter twelve-character conflict - cosmic conflict - heaven's battle.

Revelation 17:1 through 19:10 is enclosed by an antithetical ring.

Circularity consists of a concentric development of words, syntactical forms, or motifs. The seer tends to develop his material concentrically into ever-widening rings - i.e. 'Those that Conquer'.

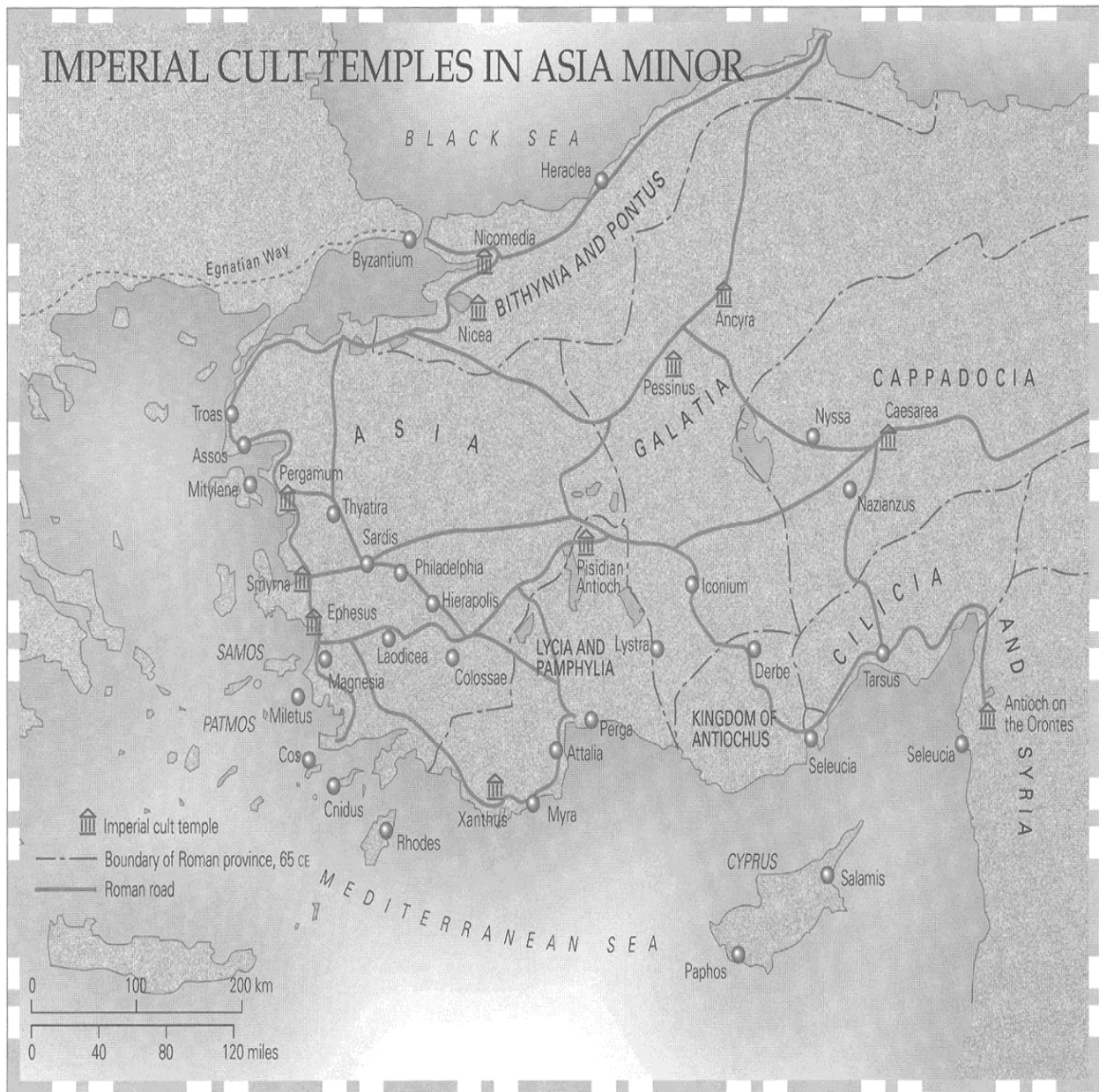
The final section (22:6) circles back to the first three chapters.

- The Use of Irony
- Similes & Metaphors
- Puns and Word Plays -

The seer often creates puns and word plays on the different meanings of a word. Ephesians cannot *bear*, *bearing up*, their *toil*, and they *have not grown weary*. Sardis has a reputed *name* - but not one based in reality. Philadelphians assured because they *kept* - God will *keep*.

Verbal play can be seen in the reversals of the Ephesians and those at Thyatira: the Ephesians should do their *first* works (2:5), whereas the latter works of those at Thyatira exceed their *first* (2:19). Those at Laodicea must open the door (3:20), but Philadelphians have an open door set before them (3:8). Those at Smyrna are poor but rich (2:9), while those at Laodicea are rich but poor(3:17).

*“The New Age Had Began Before  
The Old Age Was Fully Gone!”*



# The Audience Addressed

## The Persecuted Diaspora

### Pressures of Assimilation

#### Problems of Complacency





ON A SUNDAY AS HE WORSHIPPED – CAME A LOUD VOICE LIKE A TRUMPET: JOHN RECEIVES FROM GOD MESSAGES FOR SEVEN OF THE CHURCHES OF ASIA – WHICH ARE INSTRUCTIONS FOR CHURCHES OF ALL AGES.



JOHN SEES SEVEN GOLDEN LAMPSTANDS AND SOMEONE "LIKE A SON OF MAN,"

JOHN, THE CLOSE DISCIPLE OF JESUS WHO KNEW EXACTLY WHAT CHRIST LOOKED LIKE, IS AWED WHEN HE SEES HIM NOW IN HIS RESURRECTED BODY.

JOHN WAS OVERWHELMED AND "FELL AT HIS FEET AS THOUGH DEAD."



DO NOT BE AFRAID. I AM THE FIRST AND THE LAST. I AM THE LIVING ONE; I WAS DEAD, AND BEHOLD I AM ALIVE FOR EVER AND EVER! AND I HOLD THE KEYS OF DEATH AND HADES.

WRITE, THEREFORE, WHAT YOU HAVE SEEN, WHAT IS NOW AND WHAT WILL TAKE PLACE LATER.



## OVERCOMERS, APOSTATES & THE BOOK OF LIFE (3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12)

In 3:5 the overcomer will be clothed in white garments and that person's name will not be erased from the Book of Life. Christ will confess the overcomer's name before his Father and the angels. In parallel passages those who confess Christ in the midst of hostile societies he also will confess before God, and those who deny him will be denied access to his kingdom (e.g., Luke 12:8-9; Matt 10:32-33; 2 Tim 2:14-15; *2 Clem.* 3.2). In short, such passages along with Revelation promise that those who faithfully wear Christ's name in the present age will be granted access to Christ's heavenly kingdom in the age to come.

The thought behind the Book of Life in 3:5 relates to God's remembrance of the faithful and their good works (cf. Mal 3:16). This book does not actually provide eternal life for those whose names are found in it; rather, it simply identifies those who have life in the age to come and are enrolled for citizenship in God's fully realized kingdom (Rev 20:12-15). The overcomers receive their rewards at the *parousia*. Hence, the promise of not being blotted out of the Book of Life is a future assurance for them in the present. As they continue to persevere in the present age, they can be confident that they will eventually be rewarded with life in the age to come and a place in the New Jerusalem (21:27 cf. 21:23).

Some scholars imply or suggest the possibility that individuals whose names appear in Book of Life can be erased/blotted out (ἐξάλειψω) of it if they do not persevere. Thus, "I will certainly not erase his name from the Book of Life" in 3:5 implies the possibility that a person's name *can* be removed from the book. This would mean that such a person is no longer recognized as belonging to Christ; he or she has been removed from citizenship in God's kingdom. It is unlikely that the phrase merely functions as a *litotes* so that an affirmative is meant by the negative or contrary expression, "I will not erase ...": i.e., that the overcomer's name will *definitely be* listed in the Book of Life. This polemical reading of 3:5 tends to mitigate implication related to apostasy, and the condemnation of the opponents against the Christians is being thrown aside as false. Perhaps more relevant to the thought in 3:5 are passages derived from Israel's scriptures that support the reality of having one's name erased from a divine book of enrollment (Exod 32:32-33; Ps 69[68]:27-28; cf. Isa 48:19; 56:5; *1 Clem.* 53.4-5). That a name is blotted out from under heaven generally suggests a removal of that person or nation from the memory of God's people. In Greco-Roman tradition Athenian criminals would be blotted out of the roll of citizens before execution.<sup>156</sup> **These sources tend to support the idea that John's audience, who seem to be familiar with both early Jewish and Hellenistic traditions, would have understood the possibility of a name being once included in God's heavenly roll book but later erased from it.**

In 17:8 the earth dwellers' names have not been written in the Book of Life "from the foundation of world." Another interpretation of this verse, however, is that due to solecism, ellipsis, or something dropping out of the original text, either the Beast or the Book of Life was the original referent for that which was from "the foundation of the world." If so, then it could be argued that the Book of Life starts with either a clean slate or includes everyone's name at the beginning of creation. The assumption might be that God or angels then record human deeds and include or exclude names based on those deeds. This explanation would be compatible with other passages on the Book of Life from Jewish tradition. Problematic with this perspective is the lack of ancient textual variants to support the Beast or Book of Life as the proper referent for "from the foundation of the world." In the most reliable manuscripts of 17:8, the earth dwellers seem to be the appropriate referent. They are always categorized as unbelievers in Revelation (cf. 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:14; 17:2), and 17:8 seems to mean that God knew their deeds beforehand and could thus record them as excluded from the Book of Life from the very beginning of time (cf. *T. Mos.* 1:14; 12.4–5, 13).

Revelation 13:8 also mentions the Book of Life, affirming that either the Beast or its worshippers are not written in the Book of Life of the Lamb that was slain "from the foundation of the world." Here the phrase may refer to the Lamb's redemptive act of being slain "from the foundation of the world," perhaps **suggesting that the plan of salvation through Christ has been established from pre-historic times** (cf. 1 Pet 1:18–20; *T. Mos.* 1.14). Alternatively, when we compare this verse with 17:8, the phrase could refer to the worshippers of the Beast. A third option is that the Beast's name has not been written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world. With this third option we have a unique individual (or role) that is either predestined in pretemporal history. In this manner the Beast functions as a parody of the preexistent Christ who is the Alpha and Omega.<sup>160</sup> Unlike Christ, however, the Beast who "was, and is not, and is to come" (cf. 17:8) is neither eternal nor preeminent but is destined instead for destruction instead of permanent dominion over creation (Rev 19:20; 20:10; cf. 2 Thess 2:3, 8). Nothing is mentioned about the Beast's freedom to thwart his satanic role and repent—this is not the point of the visions. He functions as Christ's nemesis in the book, and the readers are assured that God knew all along that this enemy of the church would not ultimately prevail; despite his success and power over earth dwellers, his fate has been sealed from the foundation of the world.

Even if we accept this third interpretation as correct, and 13:8 does not refer to an entire multitude of people who have never been included in the Book of Life, there remains a tension between the possibility of removing names from the Book of Life in 3:5 and the non-possibility of including names in 17:8. If the destinies of the righteous and wicked in chapters 4–22 seem to be more fixed than in the admonitions to the seven churches in chapters 1–3, this has much to do with the apocalyptic form the book adopts in the later chapters.

Chapters 1–3 function more as a letter with prophetic discourse. Prophecy is not as dichotomous between wicked and righteous; it hopes the former would repent and the latter persevere in faithfulness. Apocalypticism is adopted by an oppressed community, a minority group anticipating an “eschatological denouement, in which they would be rewarded and the wicked punished.” The impasse we seem to face when comparing 3:5 and 17:8 turns on genre differences.

If these verses do not contradict one another, then any prior divine knowledge of names that are included or excluded from the Book of Life should not rule out human repentance and the ability to change one’s course from spiritual death to life. Christ’s invitation to any human individual in 3:20 strongly attests to this. Equally one’s course can change from spiritual life to death, as in Sardis. The dangers of apostasy in the churches of Asia Minor are real enough, and the stakes are no less than eternal. If we must use theological categories to affirm consistency between 3:5 and 17:8, then at least on an individualistic level some sort of non-coercive foreknowledge may be entertained. More appropriately, however, we should allow for the tension to remain and respect genre differences. Ancient readers were obviously more comfortable with such paradoxes than we are today.

With this qualification established, we can now venture into some uncharted territory with the goal of raising new possibilities and perhaps relieving some older tensions. One major distinction between 3:5 and 17:8 is that the former has in view individual Christians in the present rather than an entire multitude of unbelieving people in a vision portraying the future, as is the case with the latter. Whatever else we might discover by comparing the two verses, we probably should not assume automatically that because the flat characters of a corporate group of unbelievers have always been excluded from the Book of Life, then this means that believers as individuals have always been *included* in the Book of Life and can never be erased from it. There remains a strong possibility that even though the earth dwellers as a corporate entity are foreknown to destruction, individual earthlings may still have opportunities to repent and escape the coming judgment. This assumption seems to be one of the main reasons why even in the final phases of eschatological calamities the gospel is still preached and, incidentally, certain unbelievers turn to God (10:11; 11:3, 13; 14:6–7). This phenomenon happens despite the counter images of unbelievers who refuse to repent after experiencing certain plagues (9:20–21; 16:9, 11). **In a similar manner, even if we assume that the community of saints has been included in the heavenly registrar from the beginning of time, this does not preclude that individual names and churches from among this community could be erased if they turn away from God.<sup>11</sup>**

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<sup>11</sup> Oropeza, B. J. (2012). [\*Churches under Siege of Persecution and Assimilation: The General Epistles and Revelation\*](#) (Vol. 3, pp. 211–216). Eugene, OR: Cascade Books.

## *Structure of Revelation*

### **Threefold Structure Based on 1:19**

- I. What You Have Seen (1:1–20)
- II. What Is Now (2:1–3:21)
- III. What Will Take Place Later (4:1–22:21)

### **Fourfold Structure Based on “In the Spirit” Experiences**

- I. In the Spirit on the Island of Patmos (1:9–10)
- II. In the Spirit in Heaven (4:1–2)
- III. In the Spirit in a Desert (17:3)
- IV. In the Spirit on a Mountain (21:10)

### **Chiastic Structure**

- A Prologue and Greeting (1:1–8)
  - B Seven Churches (1:4–4:2)
    - C Seven Seals (3:21–8:5)
      - D Seven Trumpets—Angels—Two Witnesses (8:2–11:19)
        - E Woman, Dragon, and Male Child (12:1–17)
        - D’ Two Beasts—Angels—Seven Bowls (13:1–16:21)
      - C’ Destruction of Babylon (16:18–19:10)
    - B’ New Jerusalem, the Bride (19:6–22:9)
  - A’ Closing and Epilogue (22:6–21)

### **Sevenfold Drama Structure**

- Prologue (1:1–8)
- Act 1 The Seven Golden Lampstands (1:9–3:22)
- Act 2 The Seven Seals (4:1–8:4)
- Act 3 The Seven Trumpets (8:5–11:18)
- Act 4 The Seven Tableaux (11:19–15:4)
- Act 5 The Seven Bowls of Wrath (15:5–16:21)
- Act 6 The Seven Judgments (17:1–20:3)
- Act 7 The Seven Great Promises (20:4–22:5)
- Epilogue (22:6–21)<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Wilson, M. (2007). [\*Charts on the Book of Revelation: Literary, Historical, and Theological Perspectives\*](#) (p. 31). Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional.

## Section\_II Chapters - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10 - 11

### Four Divisions of the Book

1 <sup>st</sup> Chapters 1-3	2 <sup>nd</sup> Chapters 4-11	3 <sup>rd</sup> Chapters 12-20	4 <sup>th</sup> Chapters 21-22
CHRIST AMONG THE CHURCHES	The HEAVENLY APOCALYPSE	THE EARTHLY APOCALYPSE	THE NEW JERUSALEM

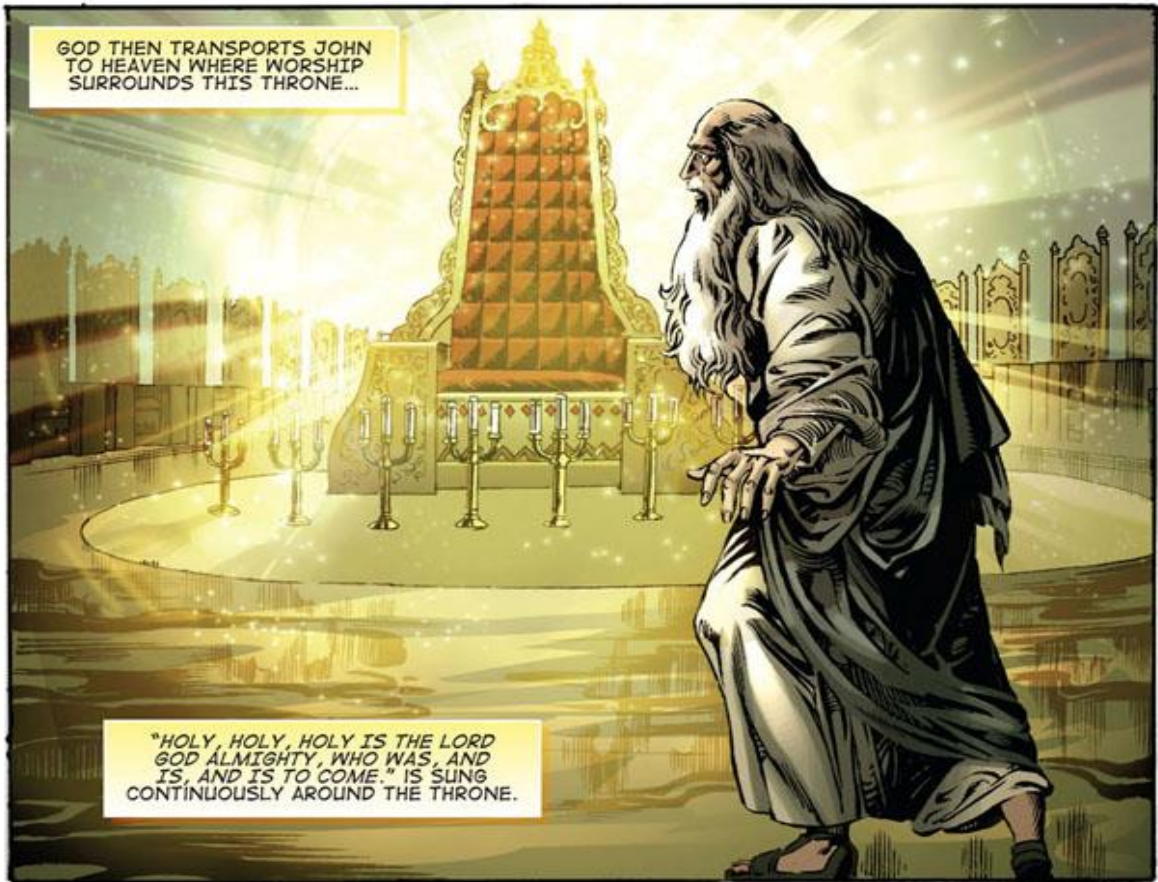
The clues to the understanding of the subject matter revealed in Revelation are found in the two middle sections, chapters 4 -20. These clues may be divided into two parts: (1) those which reveal the primary and (2) secondary subject matter. Study the following passages in the Apocalypse which establish the primary subject under consideration.

## THE HEAVENLY APOCALYPSE Chapters 4-11

### THE SEVEN SEALS Chapters 6-11

The Throne of God

		6:1-2	6:3-4	6:5-6	6:7-8	6:9-11	6:12-17	CHAPTER 7:1-17
		1 <sup>ST</sup>	2 <sup>ND</sup>	3 <sup>RD</sup>	4 <sup>TH</sup>	5 <sup>TH</sup>	6 <sup>TH</sup>	
Chapter	Chapter	W	R	B	P	S	G	Interlude
4:1-11	5:1-14	H	E	L	A	O	R	Between
		I	D	6 <sup>th</sup> & 7 <sup>th</sup>				
		T	H	C	L	L	A	Seals
O.T.	N.T.	H	H	H	H	U	E	144,000
		O	Sealed					
THRONE	THRONE	R	The					
		S	Innumerable					
		Multitude						




## †APOCALYPSE OF THE CONQUERING CHRIST† (CHAPTERS 4 TO 11)

*With this section begins the Revelation proper, following the antecedent vision of Chapter One and the preliminary messages to the seven churches of Asia.* This section surrounds Christ as conqueror, in conflict of his Cause with the secular powers and Jewish authorities. The developments are gathered around the divine promise of 1:7--"Behold he cometh," and chapter 22:7--"Behold, I come quickly," coupled with and corresponding to the closing prayer "even so, come Lord Jesus."

**It signified the coming of the Lord in the immediate great events.**

Albert Barnes remarked that he was unable to apply the symbols of Revelation until he had read Gibbon's history of Rome. Philip Schaff said that the internal evidence is strongly in favor of the conclusion of many scholars who hold to the early date--between A.D. 60 to 70 -- before the destruction of Jerusalem, supporting the view that it was written under the Neroan period rather than the Domitian, being descriptive of the approaching destruction of the City of Jerusalem, the downfall of Judaism and dissolution of paganism and the heathen world by expansion of Christianity.

The imagery therefore surrounds the ancient city of Jerusalem, not Rome. The inclusion of the Roman Empire into the symbols was collateral to the persecutions - Roman emperors representing the secular power with which the destinies of Jerusalem and of Judaism were affiliated in the political history. The contents of the book confirm this conclusion of an impressive number of scholars & the **past historical exegesis** rather than the prophetic or continuous-historical theory is the only satisfactory application of its majestic and magnificent imagery. - *Foy Wallace*



**REVELATION**  
Taught by Art Ogden

5<sup>th</sup> Class  
May 15, 1987  
Revelation 4 - 7

## The Throne of God ([Revelation 4](#))

The entire 4th chapter of Revelation is a vision of the throne room of God. The seven churches have been addressed and it is now time to move into the task of revealing those things that must shortly come to pass.



## Four Living Creatures with Background in Ezekiel & Isaiah

Revelation	Ezekiel 1	Ezekiel 10	Isaiah 6
In heaven (4:1)	In heaven (1:1)	On earth (10:20)	In heaven (6:1)
Around throne (4:6; 5:6; 14:3)	Around throne (1:26)		Around throne (6:1)
Rainbow mentioned (4:3)	Rainbow mentioned (1:28)		
Four living creatures (4:6)	Four living creatures (1:5-24)	Four living creatures/cherubim (10:15-22)	Seraphim (6:2)
Sea of glass like crystal (4:6)	Expanse appearing like crystal (1:22)	Expanse overhead (10:1)	
Bodies covered with eyes (4:6)	Wheels full of eyes (1:18)	Bodies and wheels covered with eyes (10:12)	
First creature like a lion (4:7)	Four faces: face of a man (1:10)	Four faces: face of a cherub (10:14)	
Second like an ox (4:7)	Face of a lion (1:10)	Face of a man (10:14)	
Third with a face of a man (4:7)	Face of an ox (1:10)	Face of a lion (10:14)	
Fourth like a flying eagle (4:7)	Face of an eagle (1:10)	Face of an eagle (10:14)	
Six wings (4:8)	Four wings (1:6, 11)	Four wings (10:21)	Six wings (6:2)

Eyes under the wings (4:8)

Wings full of eyes (10:12)

Say, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty" (4:8)  
Wings sound like voice of the Almighty (1:24)  
Wings sound like voice of God Almighty (10:5)  
Say, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty" (6:3)

Fall down before the Lamb, God (5:8; 19:4)

Hold bowls of incense: the prayers of the saints (5:8) (1:13)  
Appearance like Cherub hands fire to man wearing coal from the altar (10:7)-(6:6)  
Seraph holds live coal from the altar (6:6)  
8 LXX)

Surrounded by angels (5:11; 7:11)

Say, "Amen" (5:14; 19:4)

Each says in voice like thunder, "Come" (6:1, 3, 5, 7)  
Wings sound like rushing waters, tumult of an army (1:24)

Voices shake doorpost and thresholds (6:4)

At the temple (15:6)

In the temple (10:3-5)  
In the temple (6:1)<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Wilson, M. (2007). *Charts on the Book of Revelation: Literary, Historical, and Theological Perspectives* (p. 72). Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional.

The entire 4th chapter of Revelation is a vision of the throne room of God. The seven churches have been addressed and it is now time to move into the task of revealing those things that must shortly come to pass.

God is sovereign over all His creation, therefore it is only fitting for the first vision to establish His glory and supreme power. Before any of the trials of the Christians, before any of the atrocities of their enemies, we first get to see the supreme God, creator and ruler of the universe on His throne. As mentioned previously, the figurative language isn't meant to be taken literally, rather it is designed to illustrate things by association inside the imaginations of the first readers.

Before we try and break every aspect of this vision down, we're first going to take a broad view of the vision as a whole. The throne scene of chapter 4 is a very easy vision to understand so this will be a relatively easy and straightforward exercise. The means by which we first look at this vision will form the pattern for later more difficult visions. The approach we are going to use for these visions is going to be to allow the Bible to explain the details to the greatest degree possible and to try to choose what would make the most sense to someone reading this letter in the first century. We are going to keep in mind that those living in the first century are going to read this letter and naturally associate it with the circumstances under which they are living. And for good reason because Revelation was addressed to them, it was delivered to them first, the visions described therein fit with their historical circumstances so closely that it cannot be dismissed as coincidence. Therefore, we are going to look at this marvelous work, to the greatest degree possible, through their eyes.

The Broad View of Chapter 4. Who are the characters in the vision? What are they doing? What activities are taking place overall? The answers to these and similar questions will better help us to realize what these visions mean in the grand scheme of things.

God is the chief and primary subject in view. He is pictured as being seated on a throne. The language describing Him paints a picture of glory, power, and majesty in the imaginations of the readers. God is being worshipped and exalted by all the rest of the characters of the vision continually. Who worships God? All of His creation who willingly choose to do so. Now that we have formed a general picture of what the vision is all about, keeping that in mind, we will now move on to the specifics.

Looking back in the Old Testament we see Ezekiel's vision of the throne scene. It is of great interest that we observe the similarities between the two visions and consider that the first readers of this Revelation, especially the Jewish Christians would be familiar with the imagery and would be able to visualize an association between the two. As we look at John's vision of God's throne, let's keep in mind Ezekiel's as well.

#### **Ezekiel 1:25-28**

*25 And there was a voice above the firmament that was over their heads: when they stood, they let down their wings.*

*26 And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone; and upon the likeness of the throne was a likeness as the appearance of a man upon it above.*

*27 And I saw as it were glowing metal, as the appearance of fire within it round about, from the appearance of his loins and upward; and from the appearance of his loins and downward I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness round about him.*

*28 As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Jehovah. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.*

Revelation 4:1

*After these things I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice that I heard, (a voice) as of a trumpet speaking with me, one saying, Come up hither, and I will show thee the things which must come to pass hereafter.*

After the messages to the churches were delivered, John looked and saw into heaven. And he heard the same voice he heard earlier speaking to him. This voice was like a trumpet, coming through loud and clear and it was telling him to approach and see the things which must happen later.

Revelation 4:2

*Straightway I was in the Spirit: and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and one sitting upon the throne;*

And immediately John was under the influence of the Holy Spirit and he was shown a vision of a throne placed in heaven and there was someone setting on that throne. A throne represents a place from which someone of authority rules his subjects.

Revelation 4:3

*and he that sat (was) to look upon like a jasper stone and a sardius: and (there was) a rainbow round about the throne, like an emerald to look upon.*

And He that sat upon the throne shone like diamonds and sardius stones. Sardius stones were a bright red stone found mainly near Sardis and named for it. They are said to be the modern-day equivalent of the carnelian. The first readers of Revelation knew exactly what they were and it is possible they would associate the blood red color of a sardius stone with Jesus' blood of the new covenant. God's everlasting covenant

never to destroy the earth with a flood again was sealed with a [rainbow](#) in the clouds. The [rainbow](#) would likely symbolize an everlasting covenant with God to the minds of the first readers.

#### Revelation 4:4

*And round about the throne (were) four and twenty thrones: and upon the thrones (I saw) four and twenty elders sitting, arrayed in white garments; and on their heads crowns of gold.*

The twenty-four elders were setting on thrones in this image. Thrones and crowns are representative of a position of authority so these elders are going to be prominent figures in the minds of the first readers. There were [twelve](#) Patriarchs of the tribes of Israel, the sons of Jacob, and there were [twelve](#) original apostles of Jesus Christ. It is almost certain the 24 elders mentioned in this vision are representative of these individuals. These elders, dressed in white which represents purity, were seated round about the throne of God which places Him as the centerpiece of their attention. All eyes are on God.

#### Revelation 4:5

*And out of the throne proceed lightnings and voices and thunders. And (there was) seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God;*

The lightnings, voices and thunderings are reminiscent of the conditions surrounding Mount Sinai while the people waited for the giving of the law. "*And it came to pass on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud; and all the people that were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai, the whole of it, smoked, because Jehovah descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly*" (Exodus 19:16-18).

The seven lamps of fire are described as being the seven Spirits of God. We know God only has one Spirit (Ephesians 4:4), so the seven is therefore representative of the totality of God's Spirit which rounds out the image of His complete power and sovereignty. It is only fitting that a vision of the throne room of God include His Holy Spirit, present with Him in a position of authority, glory and power.

Revelation 4:6

*"and before the throne, as it were a sea of glass like a crystal; and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, four living creatures full of eyes before and behind."*

In the imaginations of the 1st century Christians, the sea, being a source of many a storm and the death of many a mariner, represents something violent, unpredictable and dangerous. But the sea in this vision is still, calm & tranquil. Jesus calmed the storms as recorded in Mark 4:39. As powerful as God is and as ominous as the thunders and lightnings are, those in His immediate presence are on calm, peaceful waters, having nothing to fear. Those standing about the throne of God have come thru the storms and are on a sea that has been calmed, at peace and is still.

The sea of glass like a crystal is a barrier between the Christians and God on His throne. Christians walk by faith and not by site, not being allowed in the literal presence of God in His throne room. At the end time when the redeemed inherit their home in heaven, they will have to access God through the limitations of any barriers. They will be in his literal presence. In Revelation 21 we are given a vision of Heaven and in verse one, the sea which is present in this vision is absent.

The living creatures in John's vision are similar to Ezekiel's vision of the four creatures in chapter 1; *"And out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance: they had the likeness of a man" (Ezekiel 1:5). "As for their rims, they were high and dreadful; and they four had their rims full of eyes round about" (Ezekiel 1:18).*

The number [four](#) was symbolic of the world in which we live and when the first readers saw this number they would then associate it with all life on this earth. In interpreting what these living creatures are, it's important to examine their characteristics & what they were doing. They were alive and were assembled about God's throne, in verse 9 they are worshipping God on His throne, giving thanks to Him. All mankind is commanded to give "*thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Ephesians 5:20). Examine the activities and qualities of these figurative animals and compare them with who or what we know in existence that would best match their characteristics and behavior. The four living creatures assembled all around the throne are representative of all of mankind in God's creation who are saved.

Revelation 4:7

*"And the first creature (was) like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face as of a man, and the fourth creature (was) like a flying eagle."*

These characteristics are exactly like those of the creatures in Ezekiel's vision; "*As for the likeness of their faces, they had the face of a man; and they four had the face of a lion on the right side; and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four had also the face of an eagle.*" (Ezekiel 1:10).

Looking closely at the creatures in Ezekiel's vision we see one of their characteristics that sheds tremendous light on what they represented.

*"And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; they turned not when they went"* (Ezekiel 1:12). The creatures in Ezekiel's vision followed wherever the Spirit led never turning from their course.

All four creatures represented mankind as a whole, each individual creature exhibited one of man's unique qualities when taken as a whole separate mankind utterly from the rest of the animal kingdom and from the lost. The saved who were assembled about the throne were noble like a lion, domesticated and in servitude like a calf or an ox, wise like men



who had ears and listened to what the Spirit said they came from the far corners of the earth, soaring high above the lost of the world, like eagles on wings. Noble, in faithful service, wise, and soaring high above the lost on earth. Who is this a picture of? They are the saved of the earth that follow wherever the Spirit leads.

#### Revelation 4:8

*"and the four living creatures, having each one of them six wings, are full of eyes round about and within: and they have no rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, (is) the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come."*

Here we have the four living creatures praising God in the same fashion as the Seraphim in Isaiah 6:2-3, *"Above him stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory."*

Some have suggested that the four living creatures of Revelation 4 are representative of the Seraphim in Isaiah because of the similarity of the six wings. The living creatures in Ezekiel have four wings each while the Seraphim each have six which match the wing count of the four living creatures in Revelation. It should be noted that the number of Seraphim in attendance around the throne of God is not mentioned while the living creatures of Ezekiel are and are described with the same facial features and animal likenesses. It is often the case in Revelation that John draws on the imagery of numerous accounts in order to complete the total picture of what he is seeing in his own vision. The purpose for this is to refer the reader's mind back to other Biblical imagery to help form in his mind a picture of the vision in John's mind. It is helpful to focus more on the activities than the specifics. What's going on? What are they doing? Who is being worshipped and who is doing the worshipping and how are they doing it? It is this Bible student's opinion that the imagery of the four living creatures is not an either/or case, rather they are representative of a combination of the two in appearance and activity.

The four figurative creatures in John's vision had more wings than an ordinary eagle. The characteristics one would associate an eagle with are amplified in this vision threefold. These creatures never cease from worshipping and thanking and giving honor to God. This is representative of an everlasting eternity in presence with God where the saved will honor and glorify Him who existed before anything did, is living now and will come again which is representative of Jesus Christ.

#### Revelation 4:9-10

*"And when the living creatures shall give glory and honor and thanks to him that sitteth on the throne, to him that liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders shall fall down before him that sitteth on the throne, and shall worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and shall cast their crowns before the throne, saying,"*

And when all of saved mankind from the earth worship God on His throne who lives forever and ever, the 24 elders fall down before the throne and worship God with them, throwing their crowns on the ground at the foot of God's throne. The elders are not in any way the recipients of worship. The worship of the living creatures and the elders is directed wholly and solely upon God. All the figurative crowns, which came from God, are removed and thrown at His feet. When God is worshipped, all eyes, all glory, all reverence, all praise and all attention is directed solely at Him.

#### Revelation 4:11

*"Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power: for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and were created."*

God claims to be worthy to receive glory, honor and power. This is in contrast to those of the first century who demanded to be worshipped as Gods on earth but were not worthy. The word "for" introduces an explanation of what was first stated. The Roman emperors didn't create anything. It was not because of their will that anything existed. They built a lot of temples to their own glory but they didn't create anything. It was God's will that all things were created and existed...

No man had anything to do with that and inspiration claims this makes God worthy of glory and honor. "*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork*" (Psalms 19:1).

There were so many false pagan gods one could worship. These Gods were dreamed up in the minds of men & were a reflection of man's capricious ways. These Gods were often portrayed as possessing lustful and worldly characteristics of the people that dreamed them up. The God we serve is not like those gods. The pagan gods invented and served by men were no better than they were. The one true and living God we serve is true, just, trustworthy and pure. God is incapable of any unrighteous act and is the image of absolute holiness and perfection and is powerful beyond human comprehension. Inspiration used the creation in this example to illustrate God's power. Consider for a moment just how vast the known universe is and what it must have entailed to bring about its creation from nothing. The Roman emperors who proclaimed themselves to be gods & required the worship of men could not create the dust on their sandals. They were untrustworthy, cruel and followed after the lusts of their own hearts.

We serve a powerful, caring, just, honest, trustworthy, righteous and deserving God. Our God is perfect and is worthy of the honor and glory of His creation. Our God is worth living for and certainly worth dying for if necessary. And as we will see later on, many did die for Him. - *Church of Christ Articles*

### Revelation 5:1

*"And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back, close sealed with seven seals."*

God was holding in His right hand a book. The right hand is symbolic of a favored position. The right hand of God is where Jesus is pictured as ruling His kingdom (Hebrews 8:1, 10:12, 12:2, 1 Peter 3:22). Notice that the book in God's hand was written on the inside and on the back. Typically, things written in the first century were on scrolls & they would be rolled up. This scroll had writing on the front and back which gives the impression that there is a lot to be revealed. The book is full and complete. There is no more room for anymore writing or anything to be added to it or changed in any way and when it is opened the people will know all they need to know.

This scroll is also tightly sealed with seven seals. The number seven representing total completeness means that the book was sealed in such a way that it was not going to be easily opened. The picture here is that the future cannot be in any way known but by the intervention of Jesus Christ and will remain a secret until he comes along and reveals it. No one can know the mind of God until it has been revealed. Paul taught, *"but as it is written, Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, And (which) entered not into the heart of man, Whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him. But unto us God revealed (them) thru the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God."* (1 Corinthians 2:9-11).

### Revelation 5:2,3

*"And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a great voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no one in the heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book, or to look thereon."*

And John sees in his vision a powerful angel. Obviously not all angels are created equally, there being some kind of hierarchy among them. We do not know how this works however we see in scripture where Michael the archangel contended with Satan for the body of Moses.

In the Greek the word for archangel means "chief angel". This angel was powerful and high in authority which suggests that any angel less than he was not even in consideration as a candidate for the task of revealing the future.

Power alone is not qualification enough to reveal these secrets either. The proper candidate had to be worthy of this task. This is a significant point. Jesus was worthy in light of His righteousness, having lived life on earth as a man and successfully enduring having never sinned, not even when scourged and crucified by His own creation. Jesus earned the right to reveal the secrets of God.

Revelation 5:4

*"And I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open the book, or to look thereon"*

The Christians were living in desperate times. John was told to come see what would happen in chapter 4 verse 1. The persecution was bad and it was going to get worse. Keep in mind that John was on Patmos at the time he received these revelations. Patmos was a forced labor prison facility. John was not there of his own choosing so he most likely felt the pressure of persecution. He was on an island of rock far away from his beloved brethren and was undoubtedly greatly concerned for their well-being. He was undoubtedly anxious, possibly frantic to know what the fate of his brothers and sisters would be, not to mention the fate of the Lord's church in general. With the lives of his brethren hanging in the balance, it looked like no one was going to be able to tell him what he so desperately wanted to know. So, in despair he wept for his brethren, the church and for himself.

### Revelation 5:5

*"and one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not; behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath overcome to open the book and the seven seals thereof."*

John was comforted with the words that Jesus had overcome sin and was able to reveal God's message. The lion, because of its strength & courage is known as the king of beasts. The Lion of the tribe of Judah signifies the kingly power and majesty of Christ the Lord. He is the conqueror, He is the Ruler, the King whose lineage is traced through tribe of Judah. *"For it is evident that our Lord hath sprung out of Judah; as to which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests"* (Hebrews 7:14). King David, son of Jesse (Ruth 4:22), was a descendant of the tribe of Judah. Therefore, the root of Jesse and of David shows Jesus' connection with that lineage. *"And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit"* (Isaiah 11:1). Reference also Isaiah 11:10, Jeremiah 23:5, Romans 1:3.

God spoke to David through the prophet Nathan; *"And it shall come to pass, when thy days are fulfilled that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will set up thy seed after thee, who shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build me a house, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son: and I will not take my lovingkindness away from him, as I took it from him that was before thee; but I will settle him in my house and in my kingdom forever; and his throne shall be established forever"* (1 Chronicles 17:11-14).

### Revelation 5:6

*"And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth."*

And John sees in the midst of it all Jesus Christ, the Son of God pictured here as both a powerful and noble lion, ruling over the other beasts, and as a sacrificial lamb with seven horns, meaning perfect power, and seven eyes, meaning perfect all seeing vision.

Being pictured in the midst of the throne conveys the idea that Jesus was sharing the throne with God. "*He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne*" (Revelation 3:21). "*for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes*" (7:7). "*And there shall be no curse any more: and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein: and his servants shall serve him*" (Revelation 22:3).

Jesus is pictured here as a lamb which is symbolic of the sacrificial system and thus represents the redemption of sin. "*On the morrow he [John the baptist], seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29). "*He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; And as a lamb before his shearer is dumb, So he openeth not his mouth*" (Acts 8:32). "*but with precious blood, as of a lamb without spot, (even the blood) of Christ*" (1 Peter 1:19).

The seven eyes of the lamb which are the seven Spirits of God is representational of the perfect and complete Spirit, the Holy Spirit, given to Jesus without measure. "*For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for he giveth not the Spirit by measure. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand*" (John 3:34-35).

Revelation 5:7

*"And he came, and he taketh (it) out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne."*

Jesus, the Son of God, the only one in existence worthy to unseal the revelation of God has taken it from the right hand of God the Father. John who wept because no one could be found who could reveal the will of God now saw the book containing that message in the hands of Jesus Christ. It should be noted here that this vision is not just a vision of the revelation at hand, but a general representation of God's will overall being given into the hands of Jesus. Jesus has been given all authority in heaven and on earth, (Matthew 28:18) and has the right to execute judgment (John 5:27).

The book taken from the hand of the Father by Jesus is representative of the eternal purpose of God's plan for man's salvation. All authority has been passed to the Son in His ascension to reign at the right hand of God the Father. And only He is able to open this book & reveal the contents.

The things said to be in that book represented the plan formulated in the mind of God before time began and was a mystery until the fullness of time when it was brought forth and revealed. "*making known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in him unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth; in him, (I say,) in whom also we were made a heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will*" (Ephesians 1:9-11). See also Romans 16:25, 2 Timothy 1:9 and Titus 1:2.

In this vision we are seeing a grand scene of the overall passing of authority from God the Father to God the Son and His ascension to the throne where He now rules. One almost gets the feeling they are witnessing a coronation ceremony of sorts where the one who prevailed and has passed the test now assumes the apex role promised Him since before time began.

Revelation 5:8

*"And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints."*

And when Jesus the Lion and the Lamb, who had prevailed had taken possession, and the authority of, God's word, all creation, represented as the creatures over whom the Lion of Judah reigns, fell down before Him. We notice here that the Son of God is worthy to receive worship.



All those around the throne have in their possession harps and vials of odors which are the prayers of the saints. These instruments of worship are purely figurative and especially do not have any present application to advance any argument approving of instrumental music in worship today. Harps are Old Testament symbols of praise to God. Harps, psaltries and viols were instruments of praise in King David's worship and were never used in the new covenant worship during the first century nor for about a thousand years afterwards. Paul referred to the harp, pipe and trumpet in 1 Corinthians 14:7-8 in order to illustrate a point, but gave no indication they were used in worship. John later wrote of hearing the one hundred and forty-four thousand whose voice was "*as the voice of harpers harping with their harps*" (Revelation 14:2), and he saw those who were victorious before the beast & his image "*having the harps of God*" (Revelation 15:2). Whatever these harps are in the throne room of heaven, we know they were provided by God and were suitable for use there, but on earth, God "*dwelleth not in temples made with human hands, neither is he worshipped with men's hands as though he needed anything*" (Acts 17:24-25 KJV). In contrast to the heavenly instruments mentioned here, they are all to be silenced in fallen Babylon (Revelation 18:22). If one is going to literalize the harps here and take them to authorize manmade musical instruments in worship to God on earth today then they better at least acknowledge that the harpers and other musicians would not have been completely silenced after the fall of the Jewish religious system if there were any of them performing in the Lord's church at that time.

The "*golden bowls full of incense*" were identified as being the prayers of the saints. In Old Testament worship incense was burned in the temple while prayers were being offered outside (Luke 1:10). In Revelation 8:3-4 the same figurative language we see in verse 8 is also used to illustrate the prayers of the saints; "*And another angel came and stood over the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should add it unto the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand.*"

The incense and the harps in this vision were Old Testament symbols which represented the prayers and the praise of the Christians. If we were going to literalize the harps, then consistency would demand that we also literalize the incense and start burning it during our prayer in worship to God.

In this verse we see the prayers of the saints coming before the Throne of God. Our prayers are heard by God. James taught that the "*fervent prayers of a righteous man availeth much*" in James 5:16. "*And this is the boldness which we have toward him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of him*" (1 John 5:14-15). "*Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth*" (John 9:31). What a comfort it must have been to the persecuted Christians to know that their prayers of affliction and supplication were heard by God.

Revelation 5:9

*"And they sing a new song, saying, Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou was slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood (men) of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation,"*

The new song being sung here is the new song of redemption...

A song never before heard because Jesus Christ was slain as the perfect sacrifice and with His blood accomplished something the blood of bulls and goats could never do; the removal of sin completely. The old law of Moses with the animal sacrifices was unable to make the Israelites perfect (Hebrews 10:1). The blood of bulls and goats could not take away their sin (Hebrews 10:4). It was only a temporary measure until Jesus' blood would redeem them completely. Those who lived faithfully under the old covenant and offered the blood of the sacrifices were purchased by the blood of Jesus when He died on the cross (Hebrews 9:15). Those today who live after the cross do not have to offer the yearly sacrifices because we have been purged & been made complete (Hebrews 10:1-10). Today we have a faultless covenant, being established on better promises (Hebrews 8:6-7), with Jesus as our High priest and mediator.

And this blood sacrifice of Jesus was for all mankind, not just for those living under the old law (Hebrews 10:10, Ephesians 2:12-18). All the faithful children of God who lived under the old law, and all the saved under the new covenant both Jews & Gentiles were singing the new song of redemption, never before heard or known until Jesus Christ came and offered His blood for all sins forever and then sat down on the right hand of God (Hebrews 10:12-14).

Revelation 5:10

*"and madest them (to be) unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon earth."*

Under the old law, the Jewish High Priest offered up the sacrifices for the sins of the people after he had offered up sacrifices for his own sins (Hebrews 7:27). The Jewish high priests were taken from among men so they were imperfect (Hebrews 7:28). Jesus' blood purged the sins of all His children forever (Hebrews 10:14) and there is no longer a need for a Jewish High Priest to offer up sacrifices. Jesus is our High Priest now and because of the blood of His sacrifice all His children are now able to offer up their own sacrifices and praise and worship to God. The kingdom mentioned here is the kingdom of God which is peopled by the "called out" or in the Greek is the word "Ekklesia" to be translated "church" in the New Testament. The Ekklesia is not a building, rather it's a people made up of all the saved in Christ. And all the members of the Ekklesia have been purged of their sins by the blood of Christ and can therefore serve as a priest in their own capacity. In short, all who are saved can now offer praise and worship to God directly without having to go through a Jewish High Priest as a mediator. Our mediator today is not some man who is himself sinful, but Jesus Christ who is sinless and is the perfect High Priest. The kingdom of God is the total assembly of His children today & it's a kingdom because everyone in it is a royal priest unto God.

*"But ye are a elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for (God's) own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: who in time past were no people, but now are the people of God: who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (1 Peter 2:9-10).*

### Revelation 5:11

*"And I saw, and I heard a voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands"*

What John was seeing here was the whole creation; angels, elders and the redeemed assembled about the throne of God and they were too numerous even to count.

### Revelation 5:12-13

*"saying with a great voice, Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might and honor, and glory, and blessing. And every created thing which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things are in them, heard I saying, Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, (be) the blessing, the honor, the glory, and the dominion, forever and ever."*

In chapter 4 we saw God on His throne with His Spirit receiving the worship of all creation. In chapter 5 we see His Son, Jesus introduced, worthy and receiving all the worship of all the creation as well. Notice carefully the wording "*Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb*". The Lamb is equally worshipped with He who is sitting on the throne. The Godhead is made up of three persons, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, perfectly united with one single nature, thus when God is worshipped on His throne, all three are.

### Revelation 5:14

*"And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the elders fell down and worshipped."*

The word "*Amen*" means "*be it so*". Jesus Christ, the Son of God has been presented as the only one worthy to reveal the word of God and to receive the worship and adoration of all the creation. Looking at this through the eyes of the first century Christians living under oppression we see a contrast between this and what the Imperial Cult insisted on. The emperors were not worthy of the worship. They did not become demi-gods after death as claimed nor did they resurrect from their graves.

To the first readers of the Revelation, God is presented as the only true and worthy recipient of man's worship and this has to be a tremendous comfort to those who are being persecuted because of their faith. Total and complete praise is seen as being offered to God and God alone. His throne rules, be it so. [Edited Content @Church of Christ Articles]

First Seal	Second Seal	Third Seal	Fourth Seal	Fifth Seal	Sixth Seal
White Horse	Red Horse	Black Horse	Pale Horse	Great Tribulation	Heavenly Signs
					
Deception	War	Famine	Pestilence		
Revelation 6:1-2	Revelation 6:3-4	Revelation 6:5-6	Revelation 6:7-8	Revelation 6:9-11	Revelation 6:12-17



## *Seven Seals and Apocalypses in the Synoptic Gospels*

**Revelation 6**

**Matthew 24**

**Mark 13**

**Luke 21**

Seal 1. ConquerorFalse Christs (vv. 4-False Christs (vv. 5-False Christs (v. 8)  
as false Christ (vv.5) 6)  
1-2)

Seal 2. War (vv. 3-Wars (vv. 6-7a) Wars (vv. 7-8a) Wars (vv. 9-10)  
4)

Seal 3. Famine (vv.Famines (v. 7b) Earthquakes (v. 8b)Earthquakes (v.  
5-6) 11a)

Seal 4. DeathEarthquakes (v. 7b)Famines (v. 8b) Famines (v. 11a)  
[Pestilence] (vv. 7-  
8)

Seal 5. PersecutionPersecutions (vv.Persecutions (vv. 9,Pestilences (v. 11a)  
(vv. 9-11) 9-10) 11-13)

Seal 6. Earthquake,Solar and lunarSolar and lunarSolar, lunar, and  
solar eclipse,eclipse, stars falling,eclipse, stars falling,astral signs,  
ensanguinal moon,heavenly bodiesheavenly bodiesheavenly bodies  
stars falling, skyshaken (v. 29) shaken (vv. 24-25) shaken (vv. 11b,  
rolling up (vv. 12- 25-26)  
14)

Seal 7. HeavenlySon of Man comesSon of Man comesPersecutions (vv.  
silence (8:1) (v. 30) (v. 26) 12-17)

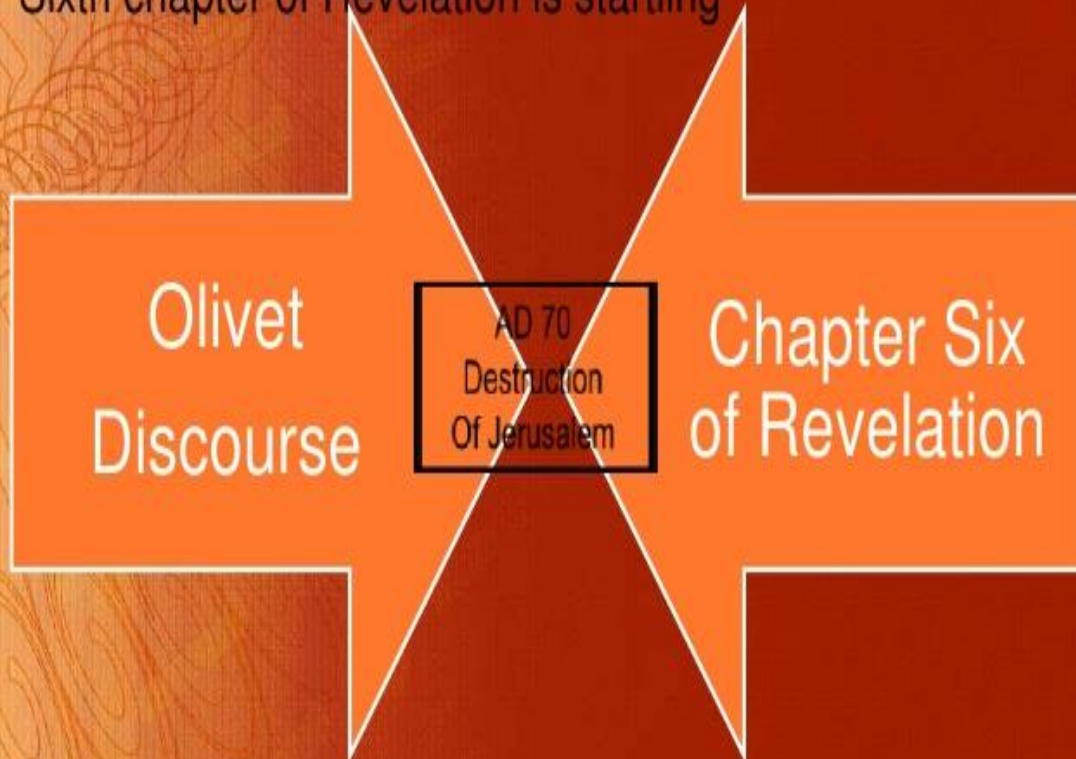
Son of Man comes  
(v. 27)<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Wilson, M. (2007). *Charts on the Book of Revelation: Literary, Historical, and Theological Perspectives* (p. 77). Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional.

## Summary of Chapter Six---Six Seals

- Very hard to deny the pre-70 date of book of Revelation
- Correspondence between Olivet Discourse of Jesus (recorded in Matt 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21/23) and the Sixth chapter of Revelation is startling



### Revelation 6:1

*"And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, Come."*

The [Lamb](#) and the creatures represent the same thing they did in earlier parts of the vision. Once their identity is established in a vision, it remains consistent throughout. Jesus is opening the first seal. A seal in this usage represents something that is hidden from view. The breaking or loosing of the seals is figurative for revealing the contents therein. Jesus is starting to reveal the contents of the scroll and the creature is telling John to come.

### Revelation 6:2

*"And I saw, and behold, a [white horse](#), and he that sat thereon had a bow; and there was given unto him a crown: and he came forth conquering, and to conquer."*

[Horses](#) were always a war animal, especially when someone is pictured as seated on them with weapons of war in their possession. White is the symbol of purity and righteousness so this white horse is symbolic of something good. In the Old Testament prophecy of the coming of Jesus Christ we read:

*"From him shall come forth the corner-stone, from him the nail, from him the battle bow, from him every ruler together. And they shall be as mighty men, treading down (their enemies) in the mire of the streets in the battle; and they shall fight, because Jehovah is with them; and the riders on horses shall be confounded. And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them back; for I have mercy upon them; and they shall be as though I had not cast them off: for I am Jehovah their God, and I will hear them" (Zechariah 10:4-6).*



The cornerstone and the house of Judah is representative of Jesus Christ. Earlier in John's vision, the lamb was also called the [lion](#) of the tribe of Judah. We know that Jesus Christ descended from the patriarch Judah (Hebrews 7:14). We see in the prophecy of Zechariah the conflict, the battle, and the battle bow.

Jesus is pictured in Revelation as riding a white horse, carrying a bow and conquering. The prophecy of Zechariah 10:4-6 is fulfilled in Christ and confirmed in Revelation 6:2. The loosing of the first seal was the coming of the Gospel, the perfect plan of redemption for man, the law of Christ.

The crown given to Jesus was the crown of a winner indicating victory in the conflict as He went forth conquering and to conquer. Jesus overcame the world and lived a sinless life. He delivered the New Covenant, the law of Christ while He was on earth and after being crucified, He arose, conquered death and ascended to Heaven where He reigns as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords at the right-hand side of God the Father.

Revelation 6:3-4

*"And when he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, Come. And another (horse) came forth, a red horse: and to him that sat thereon it was given to take peace from the earth, and that they should slay one another: and there was given unto him a great sword."*

The persecutor of the church is introduced. He is pictured riding on a [red](#) horse. The color red was associated with bloodshed in the minds of the first century Christians so the red horse here is a symbol of bloody persecution. The rider on the red horse was given the power to wage war and would cause the inhabitants of earth to kill each other. Swords are used in battle to kill one's opponents, thus we see more reference here to the shedding of blood. Jesus had come on the white horse and had delivered the way of righteousness and established His church. Close upon His heels came the rider on the red horse who would persecute the Christians in the Lord's church.

This persecution was nothing new to the Christians. *"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake" (Matthew 24:9). "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matthew 5:10-12). The churches had already been warned earlier that persecution was coming and who was the cause of it in Revelation 2:10, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."*

#### Revelation 6:5-6

*"And when he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, Come. And I saw, and behold, a black horse; and he that sat thereon had a balance in his hand. And I heard as it were a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, A measure of wheat for a shilling, and three measures of barley for a shilling; and the oil and the wine hurt thou not."*

The color black is representative of darkness and oppression. Darkness came over the earth when Jesus died on the cross. The life of the light of the world was being extinguished and left darkness in its path. There were a lot of trade guilds in the Roman empire. These trade guilds were similar to the labor unions of today. One had to be a member of the trade guild in order to work in that profession. These trade guilds were idolatrous and would offer worship to various pagan gods. Those trade guilds that properly worshipped were well favored and were allowed to conduct business unmolested.

This presented a serious problem for the Christians. They couldn't be a part of these trade guilds and participate in their idolatrous practices. Not being a member of these trade guilds meant they couldn't get good jobs which resulted in leaving them poverty stricken.

A balance was a simple set of scales used to evenly and fairly weigh out such things as silver, gold and food. They were constructed with a simple beam with a balancing point or fulcrum in the center. They worked by placing an object with a known weight on one side of a beam and when the food or other substance to be weighed was placed on the other side, the equal weights on both sides would cause the whole to balance.

Balances were an emblem justice in Biblical times, (Job 31:6; Psalms 62:9; Proverbs 11:1) and today as well. Our justice system in the US today is represented by a blindfolded woman holding a set of balances on which truth is weighed out fairly. Balances were used to weigh out food in order to exchange for money and a shilling was about a days wages for a days work for someone in the lowest working class. The first century Christians, incapable of working the better jobs found themselves struggling just to earn money enough to feed their families.

Oil and wine were luxuries beyond necessary needs. The Christians who were forced to work the lowliest jobs were unable to buy such things, restricted to only that which would sustain their lives and barely enough of that. They couldn't afford oil, wine or other luxuries and those who were represented by the rider on the black horse held it out in front of them, taunting them with it.

The rider in the black horse with the balance in his hands had the power to tip the scales against the Christians thus causing poverty and hardship for them. In Jesus' letters to the churches of Asia, one of the things stressed the most was the forbidding of participating in the riotous public feasts where the meat sacrificed to pagan gods was eaten. Hunger and poverty was a powerful means of persecution in the first century and we see this vividly portrayed in the rider on the black horse carrying the balances.

### Revelation 6:7-8

*"And when he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, Come. And I saw, and behold, a pale horse: and he that sat upon him, his name was Death; and Hades followed with him. And there was given unto them authority over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with famine, and with death, and by the wild beasts of the earth."*

The color of dead flesh is pale. The rider on this horse is picturesque of our modern-day grim reaper. His name is death and he is populating the realm of the dead with the souls of men, especially the righteous. The Christians were put to death by swords, they were starved out and they were slaughtered in the imperial arenas by gladiators and by wild beasts. History records that Nero blamed the great fire of Rome on Christians and used them as scapegoats in an attempt to detract from the multiple rumors blaming himself. The executions of Christians was intended to be a spectacle. Those professing faith were often sewn up inside the skins of wild animals and thrown into the arena where dogs tore them apart. Others were covered in flammable material and burned alive to light Nero's gardens at night while he rode around in his chariot among them. Some fell by the sword, others were beheaded, still others were tortured to death. All in all, this was the most widespread and brutal persecution of Christians to date.

The fourth part of the earth is interesting. To those living in the first century, the number four was symbolic of the world in which we live. In Revelation 20:8, all of the people on earth are represented by nations "in the four corners of the earth." so it is probable that the fourth part of the earth could well be the whole world. The imperial cults that existed under Nero had spread throughout the empire. Therefore, seal number four is really representative of the world-wide persecution of the saints - from all sources - during this period of the Roman Empire.

### Revelation 6:9

*"And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held"*

In the vision of the opening of the fifth seal we see a picture of all the multiplied thousands of Christians who had been slain because of their faith. These are the Martyrs of Christ. These are the ones who sacrificed everything for the testimony of the word of God.

*"Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you" (Matthew 5:10-12). "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it" (Luke 9:24).*

### Revelation 6:10-11

*"and they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And there was given them to each one a white robe; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, who should be killed even as they were, should have fulfilled (their course)."*

The souls of those who had been slain wanted to know when justice would be served to their murderers. This indicates that those who are dead are conscious and aware of the circumstances around their death. The account of Lazarus and the rich man portrays the lost rich man as being in torment & begging for relief while Lazarus was being comforted in the company of Abraham.

They were pictured as being given white robes. As is often the case, the book of Revelation often explains itself: *"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, These that are arrayed in white robes, who are they, and whence came they? And I say unto him, My lord, thou knowest.*

*And he said to me, These are they that come of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."*

The tribulation was the great persecution of the saints prior to and in the wake of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. And the white robes worn were made spotless by the blood of Jesus. Obviously, this is figurative, not to be taken literally. Blood would not wash anything white. The imagery here is of the sacrificial blood of Jesus washing away the blackness of sin from the redeemed. Clothing is usually the first thing we notice when we see someone else. Sin cannot be hidden from God, therefore the stains of sin are pictured as being out there in plain view, on their garments and not hidden beneath. Those who are clothed in white garments overcame, kept themselves pure and are clothed in righteousness. *"But thou hast a few names in Sardis that did not defile their garments: and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy. He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels"* (Revelation 3:4-5)

They were told to rest *"until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, who should be killed even as they were, should have fulfilled (their course)"*.

The Christians who were killed were told that more would die before it was all over. This persecution had been going on for some time and it was going to continue for a while. In the garden of Eden, God granted man the freewill choice to decide whether to obey or rebel and this choice has never been taken away. When someone really loves someone, they give them a choice. God has never forced mankind to follow Him and is longsuffering of rebellion. *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9).

No one who died lost during this interval will ever be able to say they didn't get a fair chance to repent. *"And the rest of mankind, who were not killed with these plagues, repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and the idols of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and of stone, and of wood; which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk: and they repented not of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts"* (Revelation 9:20-21).

Of importance also is that while so many had been killed because of their faith, and that so many more were going to be killed, the Christian facing such tribulation has the promise from God that they will never be put on a situation where they would be tempted beyond what they were able to withstand. Paul wrote, *"There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it"* (1 Corinthians 10:13). This is an important promise in that it teaches us that God knows individually what each of His children can endure and that Satan will not be permitted to force a child of God to sin against his or her ability to withstand. A way of escape is promised and to the faithful martyrs of Christ, this way of escape was mortal death. *"Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints"* (Psalms 116:15).

Revelation 6:12-13

*"And I saw when he opened the sixth seal there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood; and the stars of the heaven fell unto the earth, as a fig tree casteth her unripe figs when she is shaken of a great wind."*

We are getting into a part of the Revelation now that would be dangerous to the Christians in the first century in the hands of their oppressors. This is the beginning of the judgment of the enemies of God and if they could understand what it meant, it would make life for the Christians all the more difficult. The Revelation would be rounded up and denied from circulation by the authorities. By now, the Christians reading it know that the key to understanding the message is the rest of the Bible.

The first visions were easily associated with Jesus Christ and have become progressively more difficult as we get deeper into the letter. The faithful Christians reading it are easily taught in a progressive manner to look to the rest of scripture for the keys to unraveling the symbols and their meaning while those who have no knowledge whatsoever of Christ or of Old Testament scripture are left in utter bewilderment and confusion over it. They will not perceive any danger or threat to themselves, merely thinking the Christians who cherish this letter are foolish idiots following after a confusing God who communicates in unintelligible ways.

The genius of God is so evident in how this letter is presented. The book is given in such a way that only those familiar with the symbolism could understand it and at the same time pointing His faithful children into a study of His word for the deeper things they do not understand. God communicates to His afflicted saints while protecting them from their enemies and at the same time sends them through a journey of scripture unlike anything else could have. One can visualize the old grey headed Jewish Christians who had grown up under the old law setting with the younger ones studying this cherished message of hope from God by inspiration of John and combing through the Old Testament scriptures to show them what all these symbols meant. There were plenty of people with the knowledge and ability to comprehend the Revelation and to teach those who could not how to understand it.

What's the big picture so far? Laying aside the imagery of all the symbols and focusing on the activities, what is going on so far in the opening of the seals? The first seal was the coming of Jesus, the second seal represented the coming of the persecutor of the church, the third seal saw this persecution on a worldwide scale, the fourth seal was the death of the saints by persecution, and the fifth seal was a picture of the slain crying out for the killing to end and for justice. Since this letter is addressed specifically to seven of their congregations and in consideration of the fact that the first sentence of the letter told them the events contained therein were going to "*shortly come to pass*", this letter is in reference to their immediate situations.



The opening of the sixth seal brings the judgment of the persecutors of the church into view. The martyred saints had cried out for justice and were told to wait yet a "*little time*" and now in the opening of the sixth seal, we see God's assurance to them that He will avenge their blood on those who inflicted their deaths and caused such hardship. By inspiration, John pictures a world in upheaval, with earthshaking natural events, the falling of earthly kings, the loss of the light of righteousness and encroachment of darkness upon an evil oppressive people.

To illustrate this, inspiration draws heavily on Old Testament pictures and descriptions brought upon earlier heathen nations who had sought the destruction of God's people. Isaiah used similar language to describe the downfall of Babylon, "*Behold, the day of Jehovah cometh, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger; to make the land a desolation, and to destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in its going forth, and the moon shall not cause its light to shine*" (Isaiah 13:9-10). "*She shall be visited of Jehovah of hosts with thunder & with earthquake, and great noise, with whirlwind and tempest, and the flame of a devouring fire*" (Isaiah 29:6). "*I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering*" (Isaiah 50:3).

The prophet Joel used these symbols to describe a future judgment against Israel in connection with the coming of the Messiah, "*And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of Jehovah cometh*" (Joel 2:30-31).

Like many times before, the imagery of falling empires is pictured as the shaking of mountains, the falling of the stars, things turned to blood, loss of light, the encroachment of darkness, smoke, fire and desolation. This picture of the judgment of God coming on the Babylon of Revelation is nothing new in the minds of Christians familiar with similar events foretold in the Old Testament.

### Revelation 6:14

*"And the heaven was removed as a scroll when it is rolled up; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places."*

Here is more Old Testament imagery used to visualize the judgment of God against ancient order. *"And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their host shall fade away, as the leaf fadeth from off the vine, and as a fading (leaf) from the fig-tree"* (Isaiah 34:4). [Mountains](#) were symbols of permanence, of strength and the foundations of the earth were going to be removed from their places. These are not literal mountains, but rather are utilized as a figure for the religious and societal systems which seemed to be invincible and unconquerable in their power.

The [islands](#) represented to the 1st century people the outer reaches or most remote lands and far away possessions of a nation. At the fall of Tyre, God said the islands would shake, *"Thus saith the Lord Jehovah to Tyre: shall not the isles shake at the sound of thy fall, when the wounded groan, when the slaughter is made in the midst of thee?"* (Ezekiel 26:15) *"Now shall the isles tremble in the day of thy fall; yea, the isles that are in the sea shall be dismayed at thy departure"* (Ezekiel 26:18). The coming of judgment of God on the enemies of the Christians would shake the powers of the earth to their furthest reaches.

### Revelation 6:15-16

*"And the kings of the earth, and the princes, and the chief captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman and freeman, hid themselves in caves and in the rocks of the mountains; and they say to the mountains and to the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb!"*

All the inhabitants of the earth from the slaves to the kings are stricken with terror as the judgment of God descends upon them. They will go anywhere to hide from the destruction associated with the fall of a great world power. There was always death and destruction and great fear when a long-established civilization was conquered.

This is not a picture of the end times judgment as many today try and teach. These people have time to hide in the caves and the rocks of the mountains. There is not time to hide when Jesus returns for the final judgment. This return will be in the twinkling of an eye, (1 Corinthians 15:52), as a thief, in which day [singular] "*in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up*" (2 Peter 3:10). The judgment in view here is not the judgment of all creation, rather the judgment of the Capitol City of Ancient Judaism.

Revelation 6:17

*"for the great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to stand?"*

Jesus has opened the sixth seal which is the judgment of the enemies of all righteousness. Nothing can stop it, nothing can stand in the way. God is seated on His throne, in complete control and nothing can interfere or stand in the way of His judgments. Jerusalem is doomed!

Who is able to stand? Nahum asked this same question as God's judgment was about to fall on Nineveh. Once repented at the preaching of Jonah, but forsaking God and returning to her evil ways, she faced the same fate as the City of Jerusalem before the wrath of God.

Nahum 1:3-6

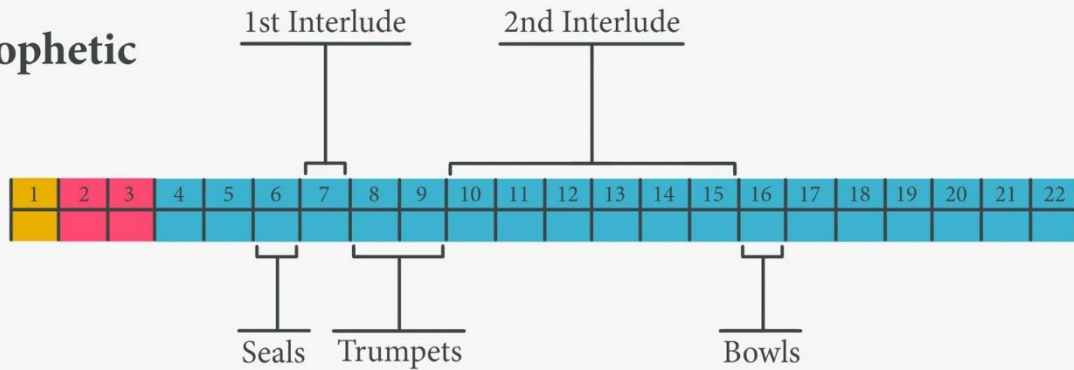
*"Jehovah is slow to anger, and great in power, and will by no means clear (the guilty): Jehovah hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel; and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt; and the earth is upheaved at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken asunder by him."*

# Timeline

■ Past

■ Present

■ Prophetic



## THE FIRSTFRUITS FOR GOD!

➤ I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel. REV 7:4 HCSB

1 ...on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with Him were 144,000 who had His Name and His Father's Name written on their foreheads.

3 They sang a new song before the Throne...but no one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the Earth.

4 These are the ones not defiled with women, for they have kept



Ch\_7

### Revelation 7:1

*"After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that no wind should blow on the earth, or on the sea, or upon any tree."*

Here we have the number [four](#) used multiple times which was symbolic of the world in which we live. We see the four corners of the earth, the four winds coming from all directions being overseen by four angels. This is figurative for the entire world which in the minds of the first century readers encompasses all of the Roman Empire and the nations it was unable to conquer such as the Parthians. The [winds](#) are an Old Testament symbol which was a figure of divine retribution. The winds being held back by the angels was the wrath of God on the enemies of righteousness. And we have a vivid picture in the Bible account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah what can happen when the winds of God's retribution are released.

We also notice that God's wrath is aimed at natural things of the earth. We learn in later accounts of John's visions that God used natural calamities to pour out His retribution on the persecutors of the early Christians. History records devastating earthquakes and other natural disasters which occurred in the first century which can be associated with the Revelation. For example, great earthquakes destroyed several cities in Asia Minor at different times and let's not forget the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius which obliterated the cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum in the first century.

### Revelation 7:2-3

*"And I saw another angel ascend from the sunrising, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a great voice to the four angels to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we shall have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."*

The angels who have the power to bring God's retribution upon the earth are told to wait until the servants of God are sealed. The word "sealed" is translated from the Greek word sphragizo (sfrag-id'-zo); which means to stamp (with a signet or private mark) for security or preservation (literally or figuratively). This is the same word used in John 6:27; "*Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed*", and in Ephesians 1:13, "*In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the holy Spirit of promise.*" When any person believes and obeys the gospel, they're said by scripture to be "*sealed*" or "*marked for preservation*". God's retribution on the earth was to be postponed until all of God's servants were marked for their preservation. As we saw in Ephesians 1:13, this sealing will occur at the very moment of our conversion, so the servants of God who are to be marked for identification include those who will respond to the gospel and become Christians as well as those who already had.

Being sealed on the forehead is not to be taken literally. Paul taught in 2 Timothy 2:19, "*Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*" All Christians have the assurance that God knows who His children are and that they are in real-time fellowship with God the Father and with Jesus Christ, (1 John 1:3), so it follows to reason that God knows each of His children on a personal level. Anyone whom God knows and fellowships with is identified for such preservation. Being sealed on the forehead therefore means to be recognized by face on sight.

Revelation 7:4

*"And I heard the number of them that were sealed, a hundred and forty and four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the children of Israel"*

The number 144,000 is the number 12, which is a symbol for organized religion, multiplied by the number 1000 which 10 multiplied by itself three times. The number 10 is the number for completeness and the

number 3 was symbolic for God. This brings the number to 12,000. This number is then multiplied again by 12 which is the number for organized religion which brings it to 144,000. Another way of expressing this figurative number is "the total sum of all God's children from all nations." Some religious organizations today try & literalize this number saying this is all that will be in heaven. They fail to read a few sentences onward where John sees the same group of people in this same vision, *"a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation and of (all) tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb."* One must ask why anyone would literalize the 144,000 and then turn around and ignore the innumerable multitudes of the saved out of every nation of the earth standing before the throne of God. So often it is the case that Revelation explains itself but one has to look at the whole vision, taking into consideration all of what is happening, not just isolated components of them and then trying to build a doctrine out of it. The symbolic language in Revelation must be interpreted in light of what the rest of scripture says, not the other way around. **[If the literalize the number they need to literalize the character - all these being virgins.]**

#### Revelation 7:5-8

*"Of the tribe of Judah (were) sealed twelve thousand; Of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand; Of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand; Of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand; Of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand; Of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand; Of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand; Of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand; Of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand; Of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand; Of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand; Of the tribe of Benjamin (were) sealed twelve thousand."*

Of interest here is that verse 4 closed with the words *"sealed out of every tribe of the children of Israel"*. The twelve tribes that are listed are not the complete list of the actual patriarchs of the 12 tribes of ancient Israel. Ephraim and Dan are not mentioned. They were replaced with Levi who did not receive a land inheritance and Joseph, the father of Manasseh and Ephraim who were two of the Patriarchs.

So, we can rule out the original tribes of Israel and the original children of Israel as being the subjects of this vision. The Israel in view here is the spiritual house of Israel, not the old Israel. The term "*house of Israel*" occurs in the Old Testament 146 times in reference to old Israel. The New Testament Israel is referred to as a spiritual house in 1 Peter 2:5 so we see a contrast between the old Israel and the new. The Israel in view here in John's vision is the Israel of the New Testament which included all the gentiles. "*For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit*" (1st Corinthians 12:13). The "*children of Israel*" under the new covenant is the body of Christ. Also known as the kingdom of Christ (Ephesians 5:5, Colossians 1:13), the body of Christ (Romans 12:5, 1 Corinthians 12:27), and the church of Christ (Romans 16:16).

#### Revelation 7:9

*"After these things I saw, and behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation and of (all) tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands"*

As soon as John is finished describing the sealing of the children of Israel under the new covenant, the scene switches immediately backwards to the throne room of God where we get a vision of all the saved of all the ages.

Keeping in mind this is the answer to the question "*who will be able to stand?*", this is a picture of the souls who will be preserved and will be able to stand through God's retribution on the unrighteous. The fact that every single one of them came from what was referred to as a "tribe of Israel" indicates that only the children of God will be preserved. This effectively leaves out everybody else.

Those who are arrayed in white robes is explained fully in verse 14. The palms they are holding is an Old Testament symbol taken from the Feast of Tabernacles and represents the joy resulting from deliverance and the peace which comes from assurance of future preservation.



## The 144,000 in Revelation Chapter Seven

There are some minor differences of opinion among reputable Bible scholars as to the identity of the 144,000 in Revelation 7.

John T. Hinds argued that the number referred to those who were saved from the physical nation of Israel (112).

Others, like J. W. Roberts, felt that this company is spiritual Israel, i.e., the church (71). Some think this group represents the martyrs who have given their lives for the cause of Christ.

Be that as it may, it is generally acknowledged that:

*“The number is obviously symbolic. 12 (the number of the tribes) is both squared and multiplied by 1,000 – a twofold way of emphasizing completeness” (Mounce)*

We must emphasize the following two points:

First, one simply cannot take a symbolic section of scripture and interpret it in such a fashion as to make it contradict other clear, literal portions of the Bible.

Second, any doctrine which logically implies an absurdity is false and must be rejected. The Watchtower theory regarding the 144,000 violates both of these principles.

– The Apologetics Press

### Revelation 7:10

*"and they cry with a great voice, saying, Salvation unto our God who sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb."*

The persecution of the Christians living during the reign of the Emperor Nero was horrendous. They were starved, discriminated against, beaten, enslaved, captured and killed just for being Christians. It looked like oppression was coming from every conceivable direction and nothing could save them. The immediate application for them was that there was indeed salvation from the persecution, but only through God's plan of redemption. The application for all is that the terms for salvation of all mankind is only through God and the sacrifice of the Lamb, His Son for the sins of all. The first century Christians were needing saved from their immediate circumstances, but that was secondary in importance to being saved from eternal destruction. This is the salvation which is of the most importance.

*"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). "And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).*

### Revelation 7:11-12

*"And all the angels were standing round about the throne, and (about) the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, (be) unto our God forever and ever. Amen."*

This is again another vision of the worship of God in His throne room. Interestingly, there are seven attributes given to God the Father here in praise. Likewise in the throne scene in Revelation 5:12, there were seven given by the angels to Jesus as well. This cannot be a mere coincidence and serves to symbolize the sevenfold perfection of God.

### Revelation 7:13

*"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, These that are arrayed in white robes, who are they, and whence came they?"*

One of the elders in John's vision asked him who those wearing the white robes were and where they came from. This question was asked so that it would be answered. This is one of those times when the visions explain themselves. The forthcoming answer will serve to identify the 144,000 as those who were of the great innumerable multitude clothed in white and standing before the throne of God. These words used to explain these victorious saints make up some of the most beautiful imagery in all of the Revelation. This is a wonderful and comforting picture of what awaits not only the 1st century Christians, but all who come through the trials of life and emerge triumphant over the evil influences of sin.

### Revelation 7:14

*"And I say unto him, My lord, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they that come of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."*

The great tribulation in view here is the State and religious persecution of the Jerusalem dispersed early Christians. Those who shall stand are the ones who come through the great persecution, faithful unto death. The sacrificial blood of Jesus washed away all their sins and they are clothed in righteousness, having their garments without spot, white and free of the darkness of sin.

### Revelation 7:15

*"Therefore are they before the throne of God; and they serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall spread his tabernacle over them."*

And because they were arrayed in white robes they are envisioned before the throne of God where they serve him constantly. There is no day and night in heaven as we know it. This is merely a figure of speech meant to form a picture of perpetual worship to God.

The tabernacle spread over them by God is an Old Testament figure of the old tabernacle where the Israelites worshipped before the first temple was built. The tabernacle was where God dwelt among the Israelites. Having His tabernacle spread over them would then mean that they are sheltered in the dwelling place of God. "*LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart*" (Psalms 15:1-2). The entire 15th Psalm is a description of who will dwell in the tabernacle of God.

#### Revelation 7:16

*"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat"*

These are pictures of various persecutions under which the Christians were living as described in the fourth seal. The hunger and the thirst they went through was very real. Christians were denied the ability to work good jobs and to buy or sell in the Roman Empire. Hunger was a very common trial for them. The sun or heat spoken of is probably an illusion to the fact that many of them were burned to death. History records that Nero would douse Christians in a flammable substance and set them on fire in his garden at night, using their burning bodies as night lights while he drove his chariot among them. We do not know this for a certainty but tradition has it that even faithful Antipas, was martyred & publicly burned to death in the streets of Pergamum.

#### Revelation 7:17

*"for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes."*

Jesus described Himself as the "*good shepherd*" that "*giveth His life for the sheep*" (John 10:11). The Psalmist wrote, "*The Lord is my shepherd*" who leads me "*beside the still waters*" (Psalm 23). Jesus is well known in the minds of His children as the lamb and the shepherd who gave His life so that His sheep could live.

God Himself is pictured here as wiping the tears from the eyes of His children. There will be no tears in heaven, God having removed any cause for sorrow. What a beautiful & comforting picture this is for any Christian but especially to those who are suffering because of their faith.

The fountains of the waters of life. Fountains would suggest that the living waters are plentiful and the waters of life is reminiscent of Jesus' words to the Samaritan woman He spoke with at Jacob's well: "*Jesus answered and said unto her, Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life*" (John 4:13-14).

So many times in Revelation, John sees the faithful in the throne room of God. There are those in the world today who try and use these visions to set forth the teaching that all Christians who have died are presently in heaven. Biblical teaching elsewhere in scripture places the souls of the faithful dead in a place of paradise within the Hadean realm where they await the coming of Jesus. The saved thief on the cross joined Jesus in paradise (Luke 23:43) and we know from other scripture that Jesus went to Hades after His death on the cross (Acts 2:27). Lazarus and the rich man likewise went to Hades upon their deaths (Luke 16:23).

In Acts 2:34 we read that "*David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand*". Jesus Christ is the only one who has been resurrected from the Hadean realm and has ascended to Heaven. The faithful dead have not yet been resurrected and are therefore awaiting this event in the paradise section of the Hadean realm.

John 5:28-29

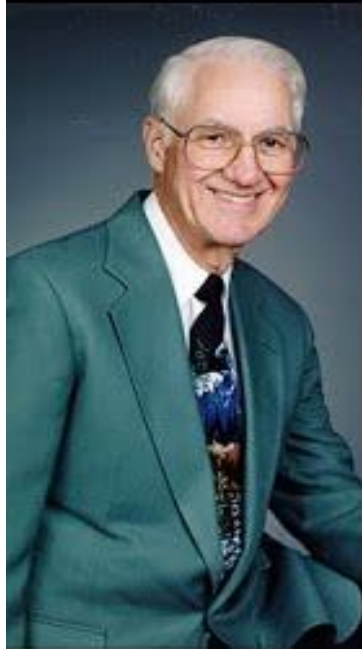
"Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." This event has not yet occurred therefore nobody but Jesus has ascended to heaven.

It is often the case in Revelation that events which are to happen in the near and/or far future are visualized as having already been accomplished. This is to convey the impression of the absolute surety of the event. The gathering of God's saints about Him in Heaven is so certain that it is spoken of in the same past tense terms. It is also significant to note within the vision itself that the scene switches from the saints on earth while actively under the persecution - immediately to the Heavenly throne room where they were again pictured in the presence of God while in reality many of the 144,000 were still alive on earth, some of which were yet to respond to the gospel and come into fellowship with God.

## Revelation 7-8 parallels Ezekiel 9-10



- It's time for judgment to begin
- First, God's people are identified (Rev. 7)
- Then, judgment comes from the altar
  - *Rev 8:5 WEB* The angel took the censer, and he filled it with the fire of the altar, and threw it on the earth. There followed thunders, sounds, lightnings, and an earthquake.



# REVELATION

Taught by Art Ogden

6<sup>th</sup> Class

May 15, 1987

Revelation 8 - 11

## 7 Trumpets of Jericho FORESHADOW 7 Trumpets & 7 Bowls of Revelation!



- 1<sup>st</sup> Day March once around City = 1<sup>st</sup> Trumpet
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Day March once around City = 2<sup>nd</sup> Trumpet
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Day March once around City = 3<sup>rd</sup> Trumpet
- 4<sup>th</sup> Day March once around City = 4<sup>th</sup> Trumpet
- 5<sup>th</sup> Day March once around City = 5<sup>th</sup> Trumpet
- 6<sup>th</sup> Day March once around City = 6<sup>th</sup> Trumpet
- 7<sup>th</sup> Day March **7x's** around City = **7 Bowls of WRATH** During 7<sup>th</sup> Trumpet WRATH



- 7<sup>th</sup> Day 1<sup>st</sup> March = 1<sup>st</sup> Bowl of Wrath
- 7<sup>th</sup> Day 2<sup>nd</sup> March = 2<sup>nd</sup> Bowl of Wrath
- 7<sup>th</sup> Day 3<sup>rd</sup> March = 3<sup>rd</sup> Bowl of Wrath
- 7<sup>th</sup> Day 4<sup>th</sup> March = 4<sup>th</sup> Bowl of Wrath
- 7<sup>th</sup> Day 5<sup>th</sup> March = 5<sup>th</sup> Bowl of Wrath
- 7<sup>th</sup> Day 6<sup>th</sup> March = 6<sup>th</sup> Bowl of Wrath
- 7<sup>th</sup> Day 7<sup>th</sup> March = 7<sup>th</sup> Bowl of Wrath



Joshua 6:20 "the wall fell down flat" ↔ "the cities of the nations fell"

Revelation 16:19



RevelationScriptures.com

The trumpets reverse the work God did at Creation:		
	<p><b>First day of Creation</b></p> <p>«God said, 'Let there be light.' (...) God divided the light from the darkness.» (Genesis 1:3,4)</p>	<p><b>The work of the 7 trumpets</b></p> <p>«The day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.» (Rev. 8:12)</p> 
	<p><b>Second day of Creation</b></p> <p>«God said, 'Let there be a firmament in the middle of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.' (...) God called the firmament Heaven.» (Genesis 1:6,8)</p>	<p><b>The work of the 7 trumpets</b></p> <p>«There arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke.» (Revelation 9:2)</p> 
The trumpets reverse the work God did at Creation:		
	<p><b>Third day of Creation</b></p> <p>«God said, 'Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree.' » (Genesis 1:11)</p>	<p><b>The work of the 7 trumpets</b></p> <p>«The third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.» (Revelation 8:7)</p> 
	<p><b>Fourth day of Creation</b></p> <p>«'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; (...) to give light on the earth.' » (Genesis 1:14,15)</p>	<p><b>The work of the 7 trumpets</b></p> <p>«The third part of the sun was smitten, and of the moon, and of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened.» (Revelation 8:12)</p> 
The trumpets reverse the work God did at Creation:		
	<p><b>Fifth day of Creation</b></p> <p>«God said, 'Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature. (...) Multiply, and fill the waters in the seas.' » (Genesis 1:20,22)</p>	<p><b>The work of the 7 trumpets</b></p> <p>«The third part of the sea became blood; and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died.» (Revelation 8:8,9)</p> 
	<p><b>Sixth day of Creation</b></p> <p>«God said, 'Let us make man in Our image. (...) Multiply, and replenish the earth.' » (Genesis 1:26,28)</p>	<p><b>The work of the 7 trumpets</b></p> <p>«By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone.» (Revelation 9:18)</p> 



### [Revelation 8:1](#)

*"And when he opened the seventh seal, there followed a silence in heaven about the space of half an hour."*

The seventh seal is now opened. God is on His throne and He's put up with the persecution of His children all He's going to. The Angels are silent, all the martyrs and the redeemed are silent. In the earlier parts of the vision, all the attention was focused on the throne and on God and the lamb and His Spirit. All worship has stopped, all activities have ceased. There is not a sound made. All attention is now diverted to the earth. Everyone who would be saved out of the Jewish Ministry has been identified and preserved. The New Babylon has run out of time just like the Babylonian Empire as recorded in [Habakkuk 2:20](#), *"But Jehovah is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him"*.

### [Revelation 8:2](#)

*"And I saw the seven angels that stand before God; and there were given unto them seven trumpets."*

The seventh seal will not be like the other six which came one after another with great action. This will be a series of seven trumpets. Let's keep in mind that this is a vision which is intended to form an idea of what is taking place. We need to focus on the picture as a whole and not so much on the minute details. A trumpet was used as a symbol for announcing important events or actions so this was the alert to warn of the approach of the woes which are to fall upon the world. The number 7 symbolizes the meaning of totality or completeness associated with God's authority on the earth so the seven angels with seven trumpets are a picture of unity, perfection, and fullness of what God was going to do.

### [Revelation 8:3-4](#)

*"And another angel came and stood over the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should add it unto the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand."*

Incense was a symbol of ascending prayers to God. It comes directly from the Old Testament altar of incense before the Tabernacle, nearest to the mercy seat where the Levitical priests burned incense each and every morning. The golden censer was a pan on which live coals from the altar were placed which was used to burn the incense.

We remember the story of Nadab and Abihu who died before the Lord for using strange or unauthorized fire. The fire which was to be used to burn the incense in the golden censer had to be taken from the altar. No other fire was acceptable. The golden censer and the altar in John's vision is reminiscent of the one in the story of Nadab and Abihu.

In temple worship, the aroma of the burned incense represented the prayers of the Israelites to God and this meaning is carried forward into John's vision. The assurance to the first readers of Revelation and all thereafter is that God hears the prayers of His children and will answer. It must have seemed to the Christians living under the great persecution that God was not listening because they were being killed and mistreated because of their faith. And it is difficult when life's trials get oppressive, we often wonder if God is even listening to our prayers. Think how much worse it would be if our fellow saints and loved ones were dying because of their faith. The Christians living under the great persecution needed to be reassured that God was hearing their prayers and that He was going to help them. But they also needed to understand that there would be more persecution & many of them would die. We will see later on in this study of Revelation that so many did die that the enemies of righteousness even thought they had stamped out Christianity forever. **God never promises His faithful children a life of ease. Such a thing became impossible when God granted all mankind unconditional free will.**

Yes, God hears the prayers of His children. We know this from verses of scripture such as [James 5:16](#), [1 Peter 3:12](#), [1 John 3:22](#) [1 John 5:14](#). The vision of God receiving the prayers of His children served as a great comfort to those living under the great persecution and we know from the large quantity of incense given to the angel in the vision that there were a lot of prayers to be heard.

Revelation

8:5

*"And the angel taketh the censer; and he filled it with the fire of the altar, and cast it upon the earth: and there followed thunders, and voices, and lightnings, and an earthquake."*

The angel that offered the prayers of the persecuted Christians then fills the censer full of fire from the altar and casts it upon the world of the ungodly. This is God's response to the cries of His oppressed children. The thunders, voices and lightnings were introduced earlier as expressive of the divine power, majesty and authority of God ([Revelation 4:5](#)). An [Earthquake](#) is a familiar Old Testament figure used to describe God's judgment against the enemies of His people. **¡Historic Earthquakes!** God's tolerance of the persecution of His children has reached His limit.

We need to keep in mind here that this vision is an overall picture of God's handling of the enemies of His children throughout the Roman Empire over a period of time. All of these things did not boil up to a head with God destroying the empire in a single blinding act of Godly retribution. Yes, there were severe natural calamities such as exploding volcanoes, earthquakes, plagues and famines, but these events were spread out over vast expanses of territory and decades of time. God gave the woman represented as Jezebel time to repent, ([Revelation 2:21](#)). In Revelation 9 we see later on in this vision where God released numerous plagues on the enemies of His children with the intent of bringing the survivors to repentance, ([Revelation 9:20](#)). In [Revelation 16:9-11](#) we see that God poured out His wrath on the enemies of His children so that they would repent. God didn't just reach his limit and destroy all the enemies of His children at once.

What happens today when a horrendous natural disaster or major calamity befalls mankind? When people are faced with insurmountable, unexplainable events such as earthquakes, Tsunamis and terrorist attacks where hundreds and thousands of innocent people lose their lives there is always many who turn to God for comfort and support. Are we today so different than those who lived in the first century?

Would there not be those who turned to God in the first century when Mt. Vesuvius exploded and incinerated Pompeii and Herculaneum? When people of all times who are comfortable and think they don't need anything, including God, are slapped in the face with their own mortality and helplessness in the face of devastation and destruction, there are some who will turn to God for comfort.

The angel filling the censer with the fire from the alter and casting it upon the earth is a picture of God's wrath unleashed on the elements of the earth with a twofold purpose. The primary purpose was to warn everybody in the Roman Empire against evil and to bring them to repentance and the second purpose was to deplete their resources to the point that they would be conquered. God's primary purpose has always been salvation of the lost.

[Revelation](#) [8:6](#)

*"And the seven angels that had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound."*

In [Amos 3:6](#) and [Hosea 5:8](#), trumpets were used to sound an alarm to warn of approaching danger. The picture here is that angels were preparing to warn of the retribution and judgment of God on the enemies of righteousness. **The visions of the seven trumpets are reminiscent of the plagues of Egypt, all of which were designed to demonstrate God's power and bring Pharaoh to repentance.**

It is key to note that when the first four trumpets were sounded, various parts of the physical world were effected. Natural disasters are a tremendous drain on the resources of any empire or nation. Vast resources are used to try and alleviate the suffering of the effected people and in so doing deplete a nations ability to protect itself from hostile enemies. Bible World Cities of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century were destroyed by earthquakes and some of them were outright incinerated by eruptions. There was a famine of such magnitude that sufficient food for the population was unavailable. The hunger of the famine was so severe, people were eating foods which were unhealthy just to survive and this sparked a plague which swept across the empire, lasting over a decade and killing untold millions of people. History records that entire cities were totally depopulated from plague.

It is not going to be possible to match up the following events heralded by the trumpets with actual events of history. We are going to have to recognize the fact that God did use natural events to help bring about the punishment and downfall of entire civilizations and not so much to try to pinpoint them to specific disasters. They were spread out over the region separated by both geography and time. History bears out the fact that this is indeed what happened. A combination of natural disasters and internal depravity and unrest combined to weaken the prevailing social order.

[Revelation](#) [8:7](#)

*"And the first sounded, and there followed hail and fire, mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of the earth was burnt up, and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up."*

The first trumpet sounds and we have God's retribution in the form of intense weather. Fire and burned trees and grass are descriptive of a long hot dry spell which depletes the agricultural products for the people and grass necessary to graze livestock. Long hot dry spells leave a nation in a weakened state and are miserable to have to endure and live through. The third part of the earth indicates that this was occurring over a vast territory of land but was by no means empire wide.

[Revelation](#) [8:8-9](#)

*"And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; and there died the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, (even) they that had life; and the third part of the ships was destroyed."*

And when the second angel sounded his trumpet, earthquakes and burning mountains which are picturesque of volcanic eruptions are in mind here. When these events occur in the seas they can cause devastating tidal waves. The eruptions are often time accompanied with the release of poisonous or super-heated gases which are deadly to life both in and out of the water. History records that this was indeed the case in the empire.

We know of the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius and what it did to Herculaneum and Pompeii. And this was only one of several which occurred in the empire and was not the worst by any means. Offshore earthquakes cause monstrous tidal waves which wash ships and fish ashore and we know from history that this happened to the Roman Empire as well.

Again, the third part of creatures in the sea and the ships destroyed indicate *extensive but not total destruction*.

Revelation 8:10-11

*"And the third angel sounded, and there fell from heaven a great star, burning as a torch, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of the waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter."*

A star falling from heaven shows that this retribution was coming from God above. In this judgment scene, the fresh water supply is affected. During this time of the Classic Period most fresh water came from springs, rivers or shallow hand dug wells. They did not have the technology to drill deep wells into fresh water sources and pipe it to all the people. When something happened to effect the water supply, there was little they could do to alleviate the problem.

Wormwood in the Old Testament was used to denote judgment, especially in instances of idolatry: *"lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from Jehovah our God, to go to serve the gods of those nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall & wormwood"* ([Deuteronomy 29:18](#)).

Jeremiah prophesied of the judgment of the Israelites for the worshipping of Baalim: *"therefore thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink"* ([Jeremiah 9:15](#)).

The term wormwood symbolizes Calamity, sorrow and bitterness of life. Now, because of their state persecution of Christians through the Guild Relationships of the Emperor Cults, the Roman empire come to also taste the bitterness of the wrath of God. It is not possible to relate this event to anything specific but our own experiences with natural disasters may give some insight on what is happening to the water supply in this vision. Destructive huge scale natural disasters kill many people leaving few to clean up the aftermath. Where the seas or oceans are involved, flood waters inundate the effected areas, killing on a massive scale and polluting the fresh water sources with sewage and the dead bodies of both animals and humans. This polluted water becomes disease ridden, foul smelling and bitter and to drink it without boiling it would be hazardous to the health of anyone or anything drinking it. People and livestock must have fresh water to survive and when the water supply has been disrupted and all that is available to drink is fouled then life is going to get difficult indeed.

### Revelation

8:12

*"And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; that the third part of them should be darkened, and the day should not shine for the third part of it, and the night in like manner."*

The [moon](#) and the [stars](#) represented figures of authority in the minds of the first readers of Revelation. The Sun mentioned alongside the moon and stars here would put it in the same category. When a devastating natural calamity occurs the authorities in charge of maintaining law and order are often unable to function properly. Those without food or necessities and in desperate situations will take from those who have by force. There is all kinds of looting, stealing and profiteering going on and the people in charge of enforcing law are unable to keep these things in check.

People are displaced from their homes, millions are dead, food and water is scarce, violence is raging unchecked and where are the soldiers? Where are the authorities? Where are the rulers who have governed and kept the peace and provided protection and security from their enemies for so long? They can't be seen amid the destruction and people are in despair. The rulers and kings they had worshipped and trusted for so long can't help them in the face of God's wrath. The times are indeed dim for those suffering the judgment of God. The powerful Emperors with their glistening armies all bright and shining and proud and the powerful rulers of the provinces in their shining palaces are eclipsed into darkness in the face of the wrath of the real authority in charge; the one true & living God.

Of importance here is that the judgments announced by the first four trumpets were a call to repentance and not the total destruction of the enemies of God. They were a selective application of God's retribution over specific portions of the known world designed to bring the enemies of righteousness to a realization that their emperors, false gods, kings and governors were not the ones in charge and that there was a higher power that demanded their obedience and was intolerant of their persecution of His faithful children.

[Revelation](#) [8:13](#)

*"And I saw, and I heard an eagle, flying in mid heaven, saying with a great voice, Woe, woe, woe, for them that dwell on the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, who are yet to sound."*

The [eagle](#) was representative in this vision of a bird of ill omen as seen in Old Testament writings such as [Jeremiah 49:22](#) and [Hosea 8:1](#). This eagle is proclaiming to those who live on earth and have seen and survived the first four judgments that they haven't seen the end of it yet and the worst is yet to come. The first four trumpets symbolized the smiting of the natural world and the consequences thereof, but now they will have far more to worry about than ever before when the last three trumpets are sounded.

- *Church of Christ Articles, Edited*



## Third trumpet: Fresh water disaster

- **Rev 8:10-11 WEB** *The third angel sounded, and a great star fell from the sky, burning like a torch, and it fell on one third of the rivers, and on the springs of the waters. (11) The name of the star is called "Wormwood." One third of the waters became wormwood. Many people died from the waters, because they were made bitter.*
- Again, this sounds like the plague on the Nile water



## The background of the first four trumpets is the plagues of Egypt



- The plagues were designed to make Pharaoh repent; instead, he became more belligerent
- The enemies of God in Revelation also become more belligerent, so God has to make the warnings increasingly severe

## The purpose of the six trumpets was to warn men, so they would repent



- **Rev 9:20-21 WEB** *The rest of mankind, who were not killed with these plagues, didn't repent of the works of their hands, that they wouldn't worship demons, and the idols of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and of stone, and of wood; which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk. (21) They didn't repent of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their sexual immorality, nor of their thefts.*

## Foy Wallace's Interpretation of Chapter Eight From His Commentary:

Revelation 8 Verse 1 The silence period (seventh seal) – 8:1-6. The disclosures of the seventh seal consist in the signals of the seven trumpets, announced in the order of events by the seven angels. The trumpets sounded the beginning of the end of Jerusalem, of the Jewish temple, of Judaism and of all that constituted the Jewish state. It signaled the end of the world of Matthew 24:3; Matthew 24:14 – not the inhabited world, but the Jewish world. As the seven trumpets of Jericho, borne and blown by the seven priests, signaled the fall of the Canaanite city standing in the way of Israel's conquest (Joshua 6:13), so did the seven trumpets, sounded successively by the seven angels of Revelation, signal the fall of Jerusalem. They signaled the end of the once "faithful city, turned harlot" (Isaiah 1:21); "the great city, spiritually called Sodom and Egypt where also the Lord was crucified" (Revelation 11:8; Revelation 11:13). It was the end of the apostate Jerusalem which stood in the way of conquest of the gospel; the Jerusalem that refused the "testimony" which the martyrs under the altar of Revelation 6:9 had "held"; the word of God which the same enthroned souls of Revelation 20:4 had "witnessed." It was the Jerusalem of Galatians 4:25-26, which was "in bondage with her children." The old Jerusalem was doomed to destruction before the advance of the "Jerusalem above" of Galatians 4:26 "heavenly Jerusalem" of Hebrews 12:23, and the "new Jerusalem" of Revelation 21:1 – the church of the new covenant, the "holy city" and "temple" of the Christ who was the Lamb of Revelation. When the angel opened this seventh seal, before the momentous announcements were heard, a dread and awful silence was recorded. "There was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour."

– 8: 1. This scene was in Heaven: It was the place where all of these correlated visions were disclosed. The "silence" here was accentuated by the contrast with the "voices" in the six seals before it. It was the silence of dreadful suspense, fearful expectation, a calm before the storm. The silence period was for the space of half an hour: It was the symbol of pause, the sign of shortness of time. A similarity exists between this silence and the cessation of singers and trumpets in the cleansing of the temple by Hezekiah when the king and all the congregation "bowed themselves and worshipped." (2 Chronicles 29) The silence here followed in immediate succession the scene of chapter 7, where all the angels, elders and beings "fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God." The similarity between the cessation of the singers and the silence of the angels was impressive. The former was a cessation of reverent worship, after the "singers sang" and the "trumpeters sounded" at the altars of Hezekiah. The latter was a silence of waiting awe, after the voices of "all the angels" in chapter 7 had ceased; it was a silence significant of what was about to occur in the final scene of the seventh seal.

Verse 2 "And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets."—8:2. The angels were the announcers; the trumpets the signals for what had been announced to begin. It followed the vision of "the day of wrath" in the sixth seal, and was a further vision of judgments, of things "shortly" to come to pass, which had been set forth in the six preceding seals. The trumpets of the seventh seal were the signals to proceed to the accomplishment of that which the seals signified.

Verse 3 "Another angel came and stood at the altar having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense that he should offer with prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar before the throne" – 8:3. The altar was a place for sacrifice; the throne was a mercy seat. The angel stood at the altar before the throne to join with those who prayed. The angel offered much incense . . . with the prayers of all the saints – This more than usual incense had a significance – the additional incense was because of the prayers of all the saints in contrast with the prayers of only those saints which were under the altar—of chapter six. It was added to the prayers of the great multitude of chapter 7, in behalf of the comparatively few souls of saints under the altar. This superadded prayer in which the angel joined was the same in character and purpose with the prayer of the martyrs in chapter 6:9, for the Lord to "avenge" their blood. The martyrs had been told to rest, or wait, until the time (Revelation 6:9-10). The time was about to be signaled, the prayer was about to be answered, joined by all the saints, superadded by the angel; that for which they were to be avenged, for which they were told to wait, was about to be done - it was ready to be executed.

Verse 4 "The smoke of the incense which came up with saint's prayers ascended up before God, out of the angel's hand" –8:4. The smoke ascended in acknowledgment of the prayers being heard, recognized and received at the throne. The incense ascended to God out of the angel's hand, which was the sign that the answer to the prayers of all the saints, joined with the cry of the souls under the altar, would be forthcoming.

Verse 5-6 "The angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, thunderings, lightnings and an earthquake" – 8:5. The same fire that consumed the incense would speedily destroy the enemies of the saints, and the apostate city of Jerusalem, and the temple of Judaism. The fire-filled censer was cast into the earth. As previously shown "the earth" signified the place of the persecuting powers. The censer filled with the fire of the altar was "cast into the earth" as an act to cause explosion –and the result was symbolized by voices, thunderings, lightning and an earthquake.

This was the fourfold sign of the judgments ready to come, gathering as a storm approaches with thunderings & the earthquake signified the shaking of persecuting powers. The four angels and four trumpets were four signs that these events were about to break in fury. "And the seven angels which had seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound"

–8:6. The procession of events was ready to begin.

Verse 7 **THE SOUNDING OF THE SEVEN TRUMPETS** (Chapters 8:7-9:21)

When the silence of the seventh seal ended, seven angels stood ready, with seven trumpets, to signal the commencement of the series of judgments, woes and plagues. The descriptive language employed in the revelation of these trumpet signals and woes was parallel in character and substance with Luke's record of the startling signs and the astronomical terrors which the Lord told the disciples would be fulfilled before that generation passed away. (Luke 21:25-26) There is no way to dissociate the record of Matthew and Luke foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem from the visions of Revelation. The earth smitten – (the first trumpet) –8:7. "The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt-up." 1. The hail, fire, blood, cast upon earth. These descriptions were symbols of devastation. The earth, as in previous signs, denoted the place of the powers (Ezra 1:2), and here applies to the Jewish powers (Romans 9:28), as the comparison with the records of Matthew and Luke have verified. It is the trumpet of devastation on the land of the Jews, and of judgments on the land beast, the Jewish persecutors. 2. The trees and green grass. These symbols signified that the plague of devastation affected the earth and all that was naturally of it, or the total destruction of that part of the nations represented by the Jewish powers. The meaning of a third part was based on the three woes, one part for each woe of devastation.

Verse 8-9 The sea smitten–(the second trumpet)–8:8-9. "And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea & had life, died, a the third part of the ships were destroyed." 1. The burning mountain. The mountain was used to signify a powerful monarchy, as in Amos 4:1 –and the mountain burning with fire in this symbol signified that the powers which hindered the church were seething in the fury of preparation for attack and destruction. The same imagery is used of Israel's powerful enemies in Isaiah 40:1; Isaiah 41:5. In this vision of the tribulations which were so soon to overwhelm the church, the burning mountain symbolized the lust of war, and it was descriptive of the Roman and Jewish persecuting powers. 2. The mountain cast into the sea.

The great burning mountain was seen in the vision as being cast into the sea. The Roman emperor was symbolized as the beast of the sea and was represented as coming up out of the sea: and this symbol evidently signifies that the government which would wage this war against the church would be the empire and its tributary powers. 3. The smitten sea. As earth referred to the Jewish powers in the land of the Jews, the sea signified the Roman powers. The smitten sea meant the destruction of the power of the sea beast—the Roman persecutors ceasing to make war against the church. The creatures of the sea died and the ships were destroyed; all of which were symbolic descriptions of the broken powers of persecution.

Verse 10-11 The rivers smitten—(the third trumpet)—8:10-11. "And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter." 1. A great star from heaven. The falling star, as in Matthew 24:29, Mark 13:25 and Luke 21:25, represented the downfall of authorities and rulers of the persecuting governments—falling as it were a burning lamp, or torch, as a spent meteor of the heaven, falling from their former power & dominion. The same imagery was in Isaiah's description of the fall of the Babylonian rulers; the constellations were used as the symbols of their positions & the same figures of speech were used by the prophet as metaphors of the darkness that settled over the empire in the destruction of ancient Babylon. "The stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give. their light: the sun shall be darkened . . . and the moon shall not cause her light to shine . . . and I will punish the world for their evil and the wicked for their iniquities." (Isaiah 13:10-11) The Babylonian "world" and its rulers were the objects of the punishment in this passage. The same familiar symbols are employed by Jesus in the gospel records of Matthew, Mark and Luke, and by John in the visions of Revelation, foretelling the ruin of Jerusalem, the doom of Judaism and the downfall of their rulers. 2. And it fell upon rivers, fountains of waters: The smitten rivers are the representations of the drying up of the source of the existing powers. The fountain is the source of a stream; the river is the channel of flow. When the persecuting powers were smitten the fountain of waters dried up, and the river of their power ceased to carry the evil flow. 3. The waters became wormwood and; many died because they were made bitter. Wormwood was the name of a plant, distinguished for intense bitterness, and used to denote anything offensive & nauseous. The use of it to designate either food or water was a sign of extreme suffering. In this connection the name of the falling star was called Wormwood, for the bitter effects accompanying the downfall of the powers here symbolized, which attended the siege & destruction of Jerusalem.

It was so revolting that even the mental picture of the physical putrification turns to nausea, the bitterness of which only wormwood could signify. Matthew's record says "for then shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." (Matthew 24:21) Mark's record reads: "For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be." (Mark 13:19) Luke tersely says: "For there shall be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people." (Luke 21:23)

Verse 12-13 The sun smitten—(the fourth trumpet)—8:12-13. "And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise. And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!" 1. The sun, moon and stars: The blackout of the sun, the moon, and the stars, the darkness of the day and even the denseness of the night are the signs of the stark distress and pall of gloom descriptive of the fourth stroke of the trumpets, in the darkness that settled over the Jewish state and nation. The four trumpets have sounded a cycle of judgments, land, sea, rivers and luminaries, a complete sphere of symbols, envisioning the descending distress and tribulation, suffering and sorrow, in signs comparable to the calamities of the seals in the symbols of earthquakes, famine, pestilence and carnage. All of these visions announced with profound proclamations of the trumpet symbols that the time of these terrors was at hand. 2. Angel flying midst heaven: Here is an angel differing from all others of the visions before this scene. This flying angel was the imagery of the eagle, and flying "in the midst of heaven," was symbolic of a swift messenger of warning to the existing powers of the quickly coming calamities. 3. Saying with a loud voice. The voice of this angel was loud, not in sound, but in meaning—a great voice, a portentous message of immediate importance, revealing its imperative character. The angelic voice vibrated with the intonations of woe—"woe, woe, woe" — in awful refrain to enhance the gravity of the pronouncements. 4. Other voices . . . yet to come. It was "by reason" of three trumpet pronouncements to follow that the flying angel called his woes. The fearful plagues of the four trumpets that had been sounded were only a start in the succeeding terrors. The "other voices" were the messages of the angels of the remaining trumpets "yet to come," which was "reason" for the flying eagle of woe. In the series of seven trumpets, four had sounded, three remained. The woes of "the other voices" of the three angels and trumpets "yet to sound," in their respective turns, held forebodings "to the inhabitants of the earth" beyond all that had been theretofore depicted. The "inhabitants of the earth," does not mean all the people in the world.

The "earth" has been defined as the place of the powers to which reference is made and is limited by such reference. Accordingly, it sometimes denotes the place of the Jewish powers only, but in other instances both the Jewish and the Roman powers, as the context of the attending signs & pronouncements show. Until now the visions have surrounded Jerusalem, Judaism and the Jews, and the seals and trumpets have revealed and signaled the events that betoken the "end of the world" to them the Jewish world—the destruction of their state. This is undoubtedly the significance of the expression "end of the world" in Matthew 24:3. On this point Mark records that four of the disciples (Peter, James, John and Andrew) asked Jesus privately, "Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled" (Mark 13:3-4). In the threefold account of the same event, the end of the Jewish world, and the attending signs, Matthew, Mark and Luke join in saying the generation to whom he was speaking should not pass "till all these things be fulfilled" (Matthew 24:34); and "till all these things be done" (Mark 13:30); and "till all be fulfilled" (Luke 21:32). It is noteworthy that the three inspired narrators emphasize all the things set forth in the signs would reach their fulfillment in that generation. Matthew lends even greater force to these already unequivocal statements by his statement in chapter 23:33, "Verily, I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation." By no manner of means can such forthright language be circumvented. Men may talk and write about it but they can neither write nor talk around it. It is so with the opening of the seals and the sounding of the trumpets, the relation to the destruction of Jerusalem, the demolition of the temple, the downfall of Judaism, and the end of the Jewish state is too evident to be controverted. With the "loud voice" of the flying angel, therefore, alerting the "inhabiters of the earth," the Jewish world, to the crescendo of woes in the "other voices" of the trumpets of the three angels "yet to come"—the vision increases the forebodings of what was characterized as "men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." (Luke 21:26) In the grim contemplation of eventualities the hearts of men would fail. And of those very indescribable occurrences, in the successive events connected with the siege and desolation of Jerusalem, there is indisputable evidence to sustain their historicity.

### The eagle announces woes to come

- This is not an "angel" as in KJV
  - *Rev 8:13 WEB* I saw ... an eagle, flying ... saying with a loud voice, "Woe! Woe! Woe for those who dwell on the earth, because of the other voices of the trumpets of the three angels, who are yet to sound!"
- Readers would think of a vulture
  - *Mat 24:28 WEB* wherever the carcass is... the vultures gather ...
  - *Mat 24:28 KJV* ... there will the eagles be gathered ...
- Bad as the first four calamities were, worse is yet to come.



## *Comparing Trumpet and Bowl Judgments to 10 Egyptian Plagues*

### 7 Trumpets (Rev. 8-9)

1. Earth hit with hail, fire, and blood (8:7)
2. 1/3 of sea turned to blood and 1/3 of sea creatures die (8:8-9)
3. 1/3 of fresh waters embittered by Wormwood (8:11)
4. 1/3 of sun, moon, and stars darkened (8:12)
5. Locusts released on earth after Abyss is opened (9:1-11)
6. 200 million troops at Euphrates River released by 4 angels (9:13-16)
7. Heavenly temple opens, accompanied by lightning, earthquake, and hail (11:15, 19)

### 10 Plagues (Exod. 7-11)

6. Boils (9:8-11)
7. Hail (9:13-34)
1. Blood (7:14-21)
2. Frogs (8:2-14)
7. Hail (9:18-34)

Egyptians wail loudly because of loss of firstborn (12:30)

Survivors of plagues refuse to repent (9:20-21)

Pharaoh hardens heart (7:22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 12, 34-35; 10:20, 27; 11:10)<sup>15</sup>

### 7 Bowls (Rev. 16)

1. People with Beast's mark afflicted with sores (16:2)
2. Sea turned to blood and all sea creatures die (16:3)
3. Rivers and springs turned to blood (16:4)
4. Sun scorches people with fire (16:8-9)
5. Darkness on earth and sores break out (16:10-11)
6. Kings from east gathered to Euphrates River by 3 unclean spirits resembling frogs (16:12-13)
7. Lightning, severe earthquake, and plague of large hail (16:18-21)

People curse God because of the plagues (16:9, 21)

<sup>15</sup> Wilson, M. (2007). *Charts on the Book of Revelation: Literary, Historical, and Theological Perspectives* (p. 80). Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional.



### Revelation 9:1

*"And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven fallen unto the earth: and there was given to him the key of the pit of the abyss."*

First, this star represents an individual of some sort. Notice the keys were *"given to him"* and then in verse 2 it says *"He opened the pit."*

Commentators are divided on who this star represents. Many able scholars & commentators believe this star is representative of Satan while others contend that this is a divine messenger from heaven such as the angel depicted in Revelation 20:1 who bound Satan and cast him into the bottomless pit. There are difficulties associated with either view. The former places Satan with a key or the ability to open a door out of the bottomless pit with the ability to inflict suffering on the non-Christians in this instance. The image of Satan being pictured as a star in Revelation and in possession of a key to the bottomless pit he is ultimately going to be thrown into forever is difficult. However, Satan is pictured by Jesus as falling from heaven like lightning and in Revelation 12:7-9 Satan is said to have been cast out of heaven into the earth. Noting the text of 9:1 which reads *"fallen unto the earth"*; this star whoever it may represent is a fallen individual whose destination was the earth. It is difficult to picture Satan as a star in any form, even a fallen one in a series of visions where he is so often depicted as the devil, a serpent or the dragon.

Other commentators associate the fallen star with the angel pictured in Revelation 20:1 who descended from heaven and bound Satan & cast him into the bottomless pit. The immediate difficulty with this interpretation is that we cannot discount the fact that the star had fallen to the earth. There is not one single account anywhere in scripture that I have ever seen that visualizes one of God's favored angels, carrying out their duties in His service as having fallen from heaven to the earth. Satan having fallen to the earth is supported in scripture and as uncomfortable as I am with visualizing Satan with a key to the bottomless pit, I am forced to go where the preponderance of evidence leads.

With this said, let's look to what Satan's authority was on earth at the time and associate it with this key. In Revelation 13 we have the vision of the great beast rising up out of the sea. In verse 4 we read, "*And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast*". The dragon pictured in Revelation is always in reference to Satan so we see here that Satan was indeed given a considerable amount of power and authority & this could only come from God. Satan is depicted elsewhere in scripture as the prince of this world in John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11, the god of this world in 2 Corinthians 4:4 and of significance to this vision, Satan is described as a "*ruler of the darkness of this world*" in Ephesians 6:12. Since Satan is described as the ruler of this world and the darkness in it, he must be in possession of the ability to darken and rule it. And the source of this darkness can be none other than the bottomless pit from whence he rules. So, in this way, Satan does indeed have a key to the bottomless pit from which he can release the influences of darkness and following in verse 2 we see that what was released from the bottomless pit was smoke and darkness that covered the earth. The only thing that the key opened from the abyss was the ability to send smoke or deception forth which obscured the light and darkened the earth. The key Satan possessed had limited capability. [\[More @Chapter 20 Third Interpretation Comments\]](#)

#### Revelation 9:2

*"And he opened the pit of the abyss; and there went up a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit."*

The fallen star released smoke out of the bottomless pit. Smoke obscures the path and dims the light. And this smoke was so thick it darkened the air and the sun. This language is figurative of the evil influence and the temptation that Satan releases on the earth. Evil is always described as darkness and righteousness is always described as light. The smoke which caused the darkness would be those things which are at Satan's disposal to tempt mankind with. The darkness which overspread the sun and the sky would be then be representative of the success of Satan's temptation as the majority of mankind was led away from the light of righteousness thus allowing the darkness of sin to prevail on the earth.

It is significant to note here that the key in possession of the fallen star from heaven released only temptation from the bowels of the bottomless pit. Satan is not allowed to force mankind to sin. Mankind either chooses the light of righteousness or the darkness of sin of his own free will. God never forces man against his will, neither does He permit Satan to force man to sin against his will or to tempt man beyond what he is able to endure (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Revelation 9:3

*"And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth; and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power."*

Locusts were one of the well-known plagues of Egypt as written in Exodus 10:4-20. To God's own people He later said that if they would turn away from Him and commit sin, He would bring locusts upon them to destroy their land (Deuteronomy 28:38). Locusts were used by God as written in Joel 1-2 to bring God's wayward people back to Himself. The locusts in this vision are therefore certainly representative of a plague. 1 Kings 8:35-37 teaches us God sent natural pestilences and famine on the unrighteous in order to bring them to repentance, *"When heaven is shut up and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; if they pray toward this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou dost afflict them: then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, when thou teachest them the good way wherein they should walk; and send rain upon thy land, which thou hast given to thy people for an inheritance. If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence, if there be blasting (or) mildew, locust (or) caterpillar; if their enemy besiege them in the land of their cities; whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness there be".*

Notice that the plague came out of the smoke and not directly from the fallen star. Satan, the fallen star sends the smoky darkness of sin to cover the light and from this darkness is spawned all the ravages, ruin, sickness and destruction which afflicted the unrighteous. Retribution does not come directly from Satan, rather it comes from God as a consequence of sin.

Power was given to this plague represented by locusts similar to the power of a scorpion. A scorpion's power is in his tail to sting and to cause pain and suffering. We will see more of this power in the tail of scorpion in verse 5 and again in verse 10.

#### Revelation 9:4

*"And it was said unto them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree, but only such men as have not the seal of God on their foreheads."*

This plague represented by locusts is said to cause no harm to grass or trees or anything with vegetation. This is all the evidence we need to determine that these are not literal locusts in view here. Literal locusts destroy nothing but vegetation as they sweep across a land eating leaves off of nearly every plant in their wake. These locusts are different from literal locusts and they are told to afflict only the people who *"have not the seal of God on their foreheads"*. As seen earlier those who bear the figurative seal of God on their foreheads are identified as servants of God in Revelation 7:3, so this plague is specifically targeted at the unrighteous.

#### Revelation 9:5

*"And it was given them that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when it striketh a man."*

This plague was not completely fatal to all that were afflicted by it. The number 5 is half of 10 and represented human incompleteness or limited power, thus this plague was limited in its ability to kill. People afflicted by this plague would be able to get over it and survive.

The torment of this plague was said to be like being stung by a scorpion when it strikes. Again, we see a picture of the scorpion's tail. So, what we have here is a plague which is generally non-fatal and afflicts people for a limited period of time stretching into months and is associated with the stinging tail or the hinder parts of a scorpion.

### Revelation 9:6

*"And in those days men shall seek death, and shall in no wise find it; and they shall desire to die, and death fleeth from them."*

This plague is going to be so miserable that those who are afflicted with it are going to wish they were dead. However, death isn't going to be found. The afflicted are going to be forced to bear the pain and torment as a consequence of their sin until they get over it.

### Revelation 9:7

*"And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared for war; and upon their heads as it were crowns like unto gold, and their faces were as men's faces."*

John is giving us a description of the plague. With figurative language it is important to focus on the characteristics and not the characters. These locusts are not literal locusts, rather they are representative of a plague. The characters used to depict this plague are not any more literal than the locusts are. This plague is not a horse prepared for war. It is like a horse prepared for war. Looking into the Old Testament we see the plagues of locusts as prophesied by Joel in chapters 1 & 2. In chapter 2:4-6 we read: *"The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen so do they run. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of the mountains do they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array. At their presence the peoples are in anguish; all faces are waxed pale."* Christians familiar with Old Testament teachings are not going to associate these horses prepared for war as anything good. This plague is going to overrun the unrighteous with such force and power that it's going to be like an army of warhorses sweeping over them.

The crowns of gold are the crowns of conquest. This plague is going to conquer the unrighteous but from earlier text we know that this is not a permanent conquest and that the afflicted are going to survive. The men's faces indicate that this plague is associated with men and/or mankind in general. The face or its features is a primary means of identification for people.

When the first readers looked at the characteristics of this plague, they saw in its face the faces of men. This plague is not associated with the earth by floods, earthquakes or other natural disasters. It is associated and identified with mankind as a consequence of their own corrupt and immoral lifestyles.

Revelation 9:8

*"And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as (teeth) of lions."*

With the face of mankind and hair of women. This plague had an alluring tempting characteristic to it. It was appealing and beautiful but with all its beauty it carried with it the characteristic of lions-teeth rending and tearing. This plague was deceptive giving out an appearance of beauty but having the rending savage bite of lion's teeth hidden within. *Such it is with all sin. Satan successfully disguises sin from being the ugly dangerous thing it is, masking its true appearance in ways that are appealing to the senses. James teaches us in chapter 1 starting in verse 14; "but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is full-grown, bringeth forth death".* The plague in Revelation which came from the darkness was no different than any sin which looks good on the surface but underneath is the way of death.

Revelation 9:9

*"And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to war."*

This plague did not have literal breastplates of iron, rather this imagery illustrates the power and resistance of the plague. It's resilient, strong and hard to overcome. Again, we see similar imagery to what was written in Joel regarding the plagues God sent during that time. They were like a conquering army sweeping across the land like an army of horses would sweep across the landscape. Unstoppable, powerful, relentless & without mercy, striking down all who are unrighteous & participate in the immoral and decadent activities which were prevalent in this society.

Keeping in mind that this plague was targeted specific to the unrighteous. The righteous had nothing to fear from this plague but to the unrighteous, this plague was armor plated.

Revelation 9:10

*"And they have tails like unto scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men five months."*

This is almost a repeat of verse 5 except that in verse 5 we learned that this plague was non-lethal. In verse 5 the tail of the scorpion as the source of the torment is alluded to in vague terms, however here it is specifically mentioned in this capacity. The power of this plague is found in the tail and it torments for a limited time. As mentioned earlier, diseases brought about by a sexually prolific society were rampant throughout the Roman Empire. Their society was noted for unrestrained homosexuality, orgies associated with worship to sexual pagan Gods & widespread prostitution. The Roman soldiers carrying these various diseases and visiting houses of prostitution in each town spread them all over the empire as they traveled from city to city. History records that sexually transmitted diseases of all kinds were of epidemic proportions and caused all kinds of misery and torment for the ones afflicted.

A faithful Christian, abiding faithfully under the rule of Christ would never ever have to worry this plague. These locusts with the faces of men, hair of women, teeth of lions and tails like scorpions would have no effect on a faithful Christian. With our technology today we have things like blood transfusions which can infect the innocent, but these kinds of things were not possible in the Roman Empire. Faithful Christians living in the Roman Empire who practiced celibacy for the unmarried and monogamy for the married had nothing to fear from sexually transmitted diseases and with extremely rare exceptions this holds true today. In the first chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans, he alluded specifically to the consequences of this kind of immoral lifestyle.

It is obvious from the tone of Paul's language that this sort of thing was widespread among the Romans and in his letter he said that, "*God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves: for that they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. For this cause God gave them up unto vile passions: for their women changed the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working unseemliness, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was due.*" (Romans 1:24-27).

Revelation 9:11

*"They have over them as king the angel of the abyss: his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek (tongue) he hath the name Apollyon."*

We know who the angel of the abyss is. This is none other than Satan himself, the deceiver, the Devil, the great red dragon. Abaddon means "destroying angel", and Apollyon means a "destroyer". Jesus is recorded as seeing Satan fall from heaven like lightning, (Luke 10:18). Satan is pictured in Revelation 12:3 as the great red dragon having seven diadems with seven crowns as ruling over those who are at war with God and His purpose. Satan is the source of all that is evil and from that comes the manifestation of all the consequences of evil, both on earth and in eternity hereafter.

Revelation 9:12

*"The first Woe is past: behold, there come yet two Woes hereafter."*

This again tells us that this woe is temporary and it isn't over yet. There's more heartache in store for the first century.

Then the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw one who was once a great power in heaven but had fallen from the sky to the earth; and to him was given a key to the bottomless pit. Then he opened the abyss & darkness like the smoke of a huge furnace came out of the opening and was so great that it darkened the sun and the sky.



Then out of the darkness came forth a great plague like swarms of locusts on the earth & power was granted to it as the power the earth's scorpions have. They were told not to eat the vegetation of the earth nor any green thing nor any tree, but only to attack the people who aren't living faithfully before God. They were not permitted to kill the unrighteous, but only to torment them for a period of time. And this torment was like the pain caused by a scorpion's sting. And when this plague strikes, the afflicted will crave death but it will flee from them.

This plague in the vision was like a thundering stampede of wild horses trampling everything in its path. It was identified with the faces of men wearing golden crowns. Long beautiful women's hair make it look very appealing but the outward beauty only concealed the ravaging teeth of lions behind it. This plague is so hard to get over it seemed to be plated with armor and swiftly overtook the unrighteous like a vast number of horse-drawn chariots going to war. This plague tormented the unrighteous for months at a time and it came from within the tail of the locusts and its affliction was like the sting of scorpions. And Satan, the angel of the abyss, also known as the destroyer of righteousness rules over the plague like a king.

This plague when it is finished is not the end of things for there are two more woes yet to come upon the unrighteous enemies.

#### The Sixth Trumpet Announcement (Revelation 9:13-21)

The first five woes announced by the trumpets have passed. Before we go any further, it needs to be pointed out that these woes on the enemies of God's children did not occur in a progressive step by step fashion over the Roman World. They overlapped and ran concurrent with each other to a large degree. There were earthquakes, famines, plagues and other natural disasters that happened at random times over diverse territories. The Romans tried to conquer the Parthians to the East but weren't successful.

Part of the reason the Roman Empire could not subdue them was because of their own internal civil wars. Their internal conflicts kept them from a concerted effort to finally overtake them and destroy them.

In 53 BC, the Roman general Marcus Licinius Crassus invaded Parthia in search of desperately needed gold to fund Roman military campaigns. The Parthian armies used both their light archery and heavy armored calvaries to hand Crassus a decisive defeat at the Battle of Carrhae. After the battle, the victorious Parthians 'fed' Crassus molten gold as a symbolic gesture of his greed. In 39 BC, following a successful battle against the Parthians led by Marc Antony the Euphrates River became the border between the Roman and the Parthian Empire. As we will see in this vision, the Euphrates river plays a role in the vision of the 6th trumpet.

As we look into this vision, let's keep in mind that this is still part of the seventh seal. Each seal picturing in a graphic way a progression of scenes beginning with the coming of righteousness, followed by the coming of evil and then the forces of evil at war with righteousness and now with the seventh seal, revealing the divine retribution of God upon the enemies of the Christians. Even when God has had enough and begins doing these things, his highest priority is still the salvation of the lost. The 6th trumpet announcement is but another tool at the disposal of God with which He afflicts and chiseling away at the sinful abilities of the unrighteous powers.

Revelation 9:13

*"And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the horns of the golden altar which is before God"*

The golden alter here is likely the same one from which the angel in Revelation 8:3 offered the prayers of the saints with much incense to God.

Rev 9:14

*"one saying to the sixth angel that had one trumpet, Loose the four angels that are bound at the great river Euphrates."*

At the time of the Revelation, the Euphrates River was the contentious eastern boundary between the Roman Empire and Parthian Empire.

The Parthian Empire is a fascinating period of Persian history closely connected to Greece and Rome. Ruling from 247 B.C. to A.D. 228 in ancient Persia (Iran), the Parthians defeated Alexander the Great's Generals that succeeded him, the Seleucids, conquered most of the Middle East and southwest Asia, controlled the Silk Road and built Parthia into an Eastern superpower. The Parthian empire counter-balanced Rome's Western dominance. Although little discussed with regards to its contribution in explaining difficult passages for a modern audience it is useful to know that Parthia at one time occupied areas now in Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaidzhan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Pakistan, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine.

The Euphrates River is mentioned by name in this vision. This would certainly suggest that the actual river is in view here. Being mentioned before the horsemen in this vision appears to mean that this river is going to be the area or the direction from which the sixth plague on the empire will come. The Parthian cavalry was world renowned and dreaded for their war tactics from horseback. The Roman Empire, eager to push its borders further and the Parthians likewise desiring to conquer more territory were bitter enemies. The Euphrates River became the hotly disputed border between the two with each empire seemingly digging in their heels and refusing to retreat any further.

We see a parallel in this vision with the sixth bowl of wrath in Revelation 16:12, where the Euphrates River was effected in such a way as to prepare the way for the kings of the east. The kings of the east were the Parthians. Vassal kingdoms made up much of their territory and each one had its king and to say there was no love lost between them and the Romans is a profound understatement.

The plague announced here with the sixth trumpet appears to be the incessant attacks of the Parthian Kings across the Euphrates and into Roman territory. It was a significant drain on Roman resources to defend this border from attack and served to contribute to the erosion of Rome's power. Needless to say it severely impacted the Eastern Roman Empire especially at Asia Minor.

Rev 9:15

*"And the four angels were loosed, that had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, that they should kill the third part of men."*

The number 4 was symbolic of the world in which we live so these four angels may have represented the enemies of the Romans on a worldwide scale. The Parthians, while bitter enemies of the Roman Empire were not its only adversaries. The Romans faced a number of other great enemies besides the Parthians, such as the Germans which included the Visigoths and the Ostrogoths. It was the Visigoths who paved the way for the final downfall of the Roman Empire defeating and sacking the city of Rome in 410 A.D. It is significant to note that the Germanic tribes which invaded the Empire from the west were horsemen just like the Parthian Cavalry.

Being prepared for the precise time period stated simply means that God had them prepared beforehand to do His exact bidding at the time of His choosing. The third part of men killed does not literally mean an exact third of all mankind perished in this plague, rather it means that a lot of people perished in this judgment doubtless being represented by the slain on both sides of the conflict.

It does not say in this announcement that the saints of God are excluded from this plague. This is a picture of war and good people may die as a consequence of it. The saints of all time can take great comfort in the assurance that all the faithful who die will be counted with the victorious and will inherit the rewards and promises of those who die in Christ.

Revelation

9:16

*"And the number of the armies of the horsemen was twice ten thousand times ten thousand: I heard the number of them."*

This army of horsemen numbered 2 times ten thousand times ten thousand which is 200,000,000. If we take this number literally and give space for each man to be on a horse the area of land which this would encompass would be roughly a strip of land 1 mile wide and 200 or so miles long giving each horse and horseman an area 4 feet wide and 8 feet long.

This number is not to be taken literally. In fact, it is so fantastic a literal number that one should almost be aware of the fact of its figurative representation simply from the sheer enormity of the numbers involved. To put such a number in perspective, if each horse ate 10 pounds of grain a day that would be 2 billion pounds of feed every single day. That would be roughly 45,000 loads of feed from a full-sized modern day grain trailer pulled behind an over the road truck every single day. If each horse drank 5 gallons of water everyday we are looking at a billion gallons of water every day. It would take a good-sized river to furnish that kind of fresh water and we need to keep in mind that they are going to need to fit 200 miles of horses one mile wide along the banks of this river just to give them a chance to drink. And if this isn't enough, we still have not fed the horsemen. The number of horsemen in the vision if they were literal would have been two thirds of the total population of the United States. When dealing with numbers of this magnitude, we need to be realistic about them. There simply were not enough resources and capability in that day and time to even consider mobilizing such a force at one time. In the first century, this number was symbolic of a sufficient number to carry out God's retribution in the Roman Dominated World.

While the Parthians were the enemy behind the Euphrates River, in consideration of the fact that the Roman Empire had many more enemies than just them, being represented by the number which symbolized the world in which we live and considering the vastness of the number used to represent these horsemen, it is entirely likely this number represented the sum total of all the horsemen of all the enemies of Rome through all the centuries leading up to its downfall. The first readers would probably have been aware of that fact based on the sheer size of the number, knowing instantly that there were not even that many horsemen and horses in any one cavalry in any one kingdom at any one time in history.

Revelation

9:17

*"And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates (as) of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone: and the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceedeth fire and smoke and brimstone."*

A large factor making the Parthians such a formidable foe was their vicious and effective methods of horsemanship warfare. The Parthians had perfected horseback warfare to the degree that they were a deadly foe whether charging forward or in retreat. They were proficient horseback archers with the skills to shoot enemies with arrows even from behind them. They also originated the fully armored type of horseback soldier known as the Cataphract. These horses and riders were heavily armored and made them especially difficult to defeat, especially for the Roman foot soldiers.

The heads of lions represented great strength. The armor they wore was dependent upon the role they played. The archers were lightly armored for speed while the Cataphracts were armored both rider and horse. The single most devastating weapon that could be used at a distance was fire. The invading horsemen would burn everything in their path to the degree required to secure victory. Incendiary devices were standard weapons of war. Burning arrows were used to set flammable structures on fire. Military engineers of the day dedicated themselves to finding ways of ensuring that the fires burned long enough to catch. Liquid fire was used as early as 429 BC when the Spartans used burning charcoal saturated in pitch and sulfur to burn the walls down in the siege of Plataea. A century later Aeneas Tacticus mentions a mixture of sulphur, pitch, charcoal packed in wooden vessels, ignited and thrown onto the wooden decks of enemy ships. Arrows were dipped in flaming mixtures of liquid pitch and sulphur and then fired at the enemies, burning everything flammable in their path. This was all taking place centuries before the Parthians started invading the Roman Empire across the Euphrates River. This type of warfare had been around for a long time and the Parthians knew exactly how to wage it. It should be noted that brimstone is the ancient name for a sulphurous substance.

Revelation

9:18

*"By these three plagues was the third part of men killed, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone, which proceeded out of their mouths."*

Fire, smoke and brimstone in conjunction are always figures for divine judgment in scripture. Sodom and Gomorrah were overthrown by fire and brimstone raining down on them from heaven (Genesis 19:24). The Psalmist wrote "Upon the wicked he [God] will rain snares; fire and brimstone and burning wind shall be the portion of their cup (Psalm 11:6). In warning wayward Israel of God's forthcoming judgment Ezekiel wrote, *"And with pestilence and with blood will I enter into judgment with him; and I will rain upon him, and upon his hordes, and upon the many peoples that are with him, an overflowing shower, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone"* (Ezekiel 38:22).

Whether all this fire and brimstone was literal or not, we can look back at Old Testament scripture and plainly see that some of it was and given the ancient use of fire as a weapon, we can easily infer that it was used many centuries preceding the writing of Revelation. This terrible form of warfare took a heavy toll on the Romans. Countless millions of people obviously perished as a result. There can be little doubt as to the literalness of the terrible consequences that came about as a result of these attacks.

Revelation

9:19

*"For the power of the horses is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails are like unto serpents, and have heads; and with them they hurt."*  
Twice now it is mentioned that these terrible plagues are issuing from the mouths and tails of the horses. Fire, smoke and brimstone do not come from the literal mouths and tails of horses. But horses with riders who can shoot flaming arrows dipped in burning pitch and sulphur and who are capable of accurately firing these weapons facing either forward or backwards on their mounts are certainly going to give the impression that the fire is coming both from the mouth or tail areas of the horses.

The image here is more of terror, panic and loss of life than it is of literal fire and brimstone. While we have a plausible explanation for all three plagues, we need to focus on the results and the objective more than anything. Many people were dying because they refused to repent. God's primary purpose here was to bring people to repentance.

Revelation

9:20

*"And the rest of mankind, who were not killed with these plagues, repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and the idols of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and of stone, and of wood; which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk."*

The men who were not killed (worldly or evil men) still did not repent even though they were seeing their situational control slowly disintegrating before their eyes. The righteous are not under consideration in this vision. God wants all men to be saved but these refused to repent. The whole purpose of this judgment working to end the world as they knew it - was to bring the unrighteous repentance. God has gone to great lengths to try to get the ungodly to think about their fate, stop persecuting Christians and stop worshipping their manmade idols which were worthless, lifeless and represented nothing real.

The lifeless qualities of their manmade idols in this vision are reminiscent of language used in the Old Testament to describe them. In Jeremiah 10:1-6, Isaiah 44:9-20 and 46:5-7 we read of God's utter disdain for these things and of His warning that they are worthless and of no benefit. In Isaiah 44:20, the prophet wrote that those who follow after such things *"feedeth on ashes"*.

Revelation

9:21

*"and they repented not of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts."*

This is basically a repeat of verse 20 added for emphasis. By repeating Himself, God is making sure His readers understand what He is saying and driving it home by repeating it to them. The unrighteous who perished from the various woes inflicted upon them had their fate sealed. But those who survived had a wonderful opportunity to see the fate that awaited them if they failed to heed the warning. The unrighteous had it within their power to avoid everything evil that was happening to them and refused to change their ways.



The text of verse 20 and 21 indicate that God's judgment in these visions were aimed at the enemies of righteousness and not at the Christians. The Christians might suffer in the earthly application of these woes but they would not suffer the eternal fate of the unrighteous. This vision was given as reassurance that good shall triumph over evil and those who overcome and remain faithful unto death will be victorious in the end.

- *Church of Christ Articles, Edited*

### Foy Wallace's Interpretation of Chapter Nine From His Commentary:

Revelation 9 Verse 1 The smoke of the pit--(the fifth trumpet)--9:1-12. 1. A fallen star: I saw a star fall from heaven"--9:1. The star, as in previous instances where the symbol is used, denoted a ruler; and heaven in this connection, as also previously shown, denoted the dominion of these powers. When Jesus said in Luke 10:18, "I beheld Satan fall as lightning from heaven," he meant the complete defeat of all the personified agents of Satan. By his fall from heaven, Jesus meant that Satan would be dethroned from his exalted dominion; and his downfall would come swiftly as lightning in the shaping conflict. When the prophet said of a Babylonian ruler, in Isaiah 14:12 --"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer (brilliant star), son of the morning; how art thou cut down to the ground which didst weaken the nations"--it referred to the downfall of the ruler, personified as Lucifer. The name Lucifer in the Septuagint, is translated "Star," which was represented as falling from heaven - the wicked king's exalted place of dominion. The figure's no different in this vision. The star is personified in the persecuting ruler. He was designated "a star fallen from heaven" for the wicked character that he exemplified in the descension from his exalted place of rulership to the satanic plane of a perfidious leader of impious forces. The star falling "from heaven unto the earth" merely denoted the descent of the ruler from an exalted dominion to a degenerate place of activity among the powers of men. 2. The key to the bottomless pit: "And to him was given the key to the bottomless pit"

--9:1. The "bottomless" pit is the abyss, the infernal region, the diabolical domain of the devil. This fallen star being an agent of Satan personified, he was given the "key" to the abyss of Satan, that he might unloose the woes announced by the flying angel of chapter 8:13.

Verse 2 The smoke of the pit: "And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened.

–9:2. The pit is the infernal underworld, the dark abode of demons (Luke 8:31). Here the angel has the "key" to open it–unloose it–hence, an evil angel, in contrast with the angel with the "chain" in chapter 20, to bind. The smoke of the pit "as a furnace," similar to destruction that came upon Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:28), the smoke of a pit sending forth effects of pollution and contamination. Darkening the sun and the air: This was not the eclipse of the sun as in previous symbols, but the veiling of the sun "by reason of the smoke of the pit." Here also instead of the sun and the moon being darkened, as before, it is the sun and the air. As noted under the classification of symbols in the preview, the air is the symbol denoting the sphere of life and influence. As the blackout of the sun symbolized the dark distress that hovered over the land, the blackened air, "by reason of the smoke of the pit," signifies with the same vividness the corruption of the whole sphere of life by this figure of the complete pollution of the air by the smoke of the infernal pit.

Verse 3 Locusts upon the earth: "And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power."

–9:3. In Bible times the word locust was applied as widely and as loosely, it seems, as the word worm in our various uses. But in scripture apocalypses, both Old and New, the reference is to a large and vile insect of such multiplicity and voracity as to be a dreaded source of scourge. These insects borne by the wind in swift swarms covering hundreds of miles were known to the people of Palestine as "burners of the land," a phrase derived from the literal meaning of "locust." It was their nature to be together, flying in vast numbers, spoiling the grain, infecting the part they did not eat, and the poisoning of the very air through which they swarmed. A scourge of locusts ended with the decomposition of several millions of the vile things & resulted in pestilence that afflicted the land, with heavy death toll. (Joel 2:20) One historical example is on record as occurring 125 B.C., when the swarms were driven by strong winds into the sea, and washed back by the tide in such vast numbers as to cause a stench and a plague from which several thousand people died in the countries of Libya, Cyrene and Egypt. From the time of Moses they were the instruments of divine judgment as in Exodus 10:4-15; Deuteronomy 28:38-42; 1 Kings 8:37. The prophet Joel makes this locust the figurative instrument of fearful visitation in his vivid description of the devastating march of the Assyrian armies through the land. (Joel 2:9-11.)

It is this symbolic locust, swarming from the smoke of the abyss as a scourge "upon the earth," that is employed in the vision here, to signify the woe being pronounced by the angel of the fifth trumpet upon Jerusalem and the land of the Jews. By the same symbol Joel described the invading armies of Israel's Old Testament history (Joel 1:4-6)—a striking parallel. Unto them was given power as the scorpions of earth: The scorpion is described as a small venomous reptile (Deuteronomy 8:15) having a bladder full of poison. Its anatomical description gives it two eyes in its mid-head, and another two eyes toward its extremity; with two arms like claws, eight legs with six talons each; a long tail like a string of beads, with two stingers full of poison, which it squirts into the object of its sting. This creature is used in the scripture figuratively to denote the wicked who torment the good. (Ezekiel 2:6) Jesus used it as a figure in promising his disciples power over every evil thing or agent that Satan could employ to their hurt (Luke 10:19). In the present vision of chapter nine the locusts from the abyss were "given" the power of the scorpions of the earth - signifying the affiliation of all the evil forces of the infernal underworld to be personified in the characters of wicked rulers.

Verse 4 Hurt not grass, green thing, tree: "And it commanded them not to hurt the grass, or the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree, but only those men who have not the seal of God in their foreheads."

—9:4. In chapter 8:7 the signal of the first trumpet was in the judgment against the land, symbolized by that which was in nature of it. But this first woe of chapter 9 does not have the destruction of the physical powers as its object, but the spiritual. But only those who have not the seal: The "sealed of God" were the true disciples whom the scorpion power was commanded not to hurt; and it corresponds with Luke 21:25-28, "Look up, lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." Matthew describes in chapter 24:15- 30, the escape of the disciples; and so does Luke in chapter 21:18.

Verse 5 Should not kill: "And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion when it striketh a Prayer of Manasseh.

—9:5. The victims were not put to death – the descriptions of the siege of Jerusalem. But tormented five months: This referred to the literal period of time for the season of locusts, from spring to autumn (May through September), but here it figuratively denoted the full time, the whole period for the effects described, designating them figuratively the period of the siege. Torment as of a scorpion when he strikes man: The baneful effects of the siege on its victims had figuratively all of the sting of the scorpion's tail-sorrow, suffering, famine, pestilence, carnage, stench and putrefaction,

indescribable. Vivid description of these deadly carriers of the scourge of pestilence and putrefaction are narrated in dictionaries of antiquities and historical works, such as Josephus and Pliny.

Verse 6 Seeking death—"In those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it"—9:6. For comparison read Luke 21:26, Matthew 24:22 & Mark 13:12; Mark 13:20 - the Lord's own predictions concerning these events. There could be no fitter application of these symbols than the tragic conditions attending the siege of Jerusalem, as described in the graphic language of Matthew, Mark and Luke.

Verse 7 The horse-like locusts. "And the shapes of the locusts were like the shapes of horses prepared for battle"

—9:7. Shapes like horses: The composite appearance of the locusts—shape of horses for battle, heads as gold crowns, faces of men—shows this symbolism to be that of the rulers with their armies of destruction. The locusts were seen as horses "prepared for battle," as the horses in cavalry battalions. Heads as crowns: The heads of the locusts were seen as "crowns like gold" signifying that they were the armies of the Roman generals Vespasian and Titus, both of whom were given imperial crowns, in relation to their invasions of Judea and the siege of Jerusalem. Faces as faces of men: The faces of the locusts, as men, identifies this symbolism with those imperial armies invading "the holy land" as swarms of locusts. It is not a new form of apocalypse at all. The prophetic vision in Joel 1:1-6; Joel 2:1-4 was the description of the invasion of the land of Judea by the armies of the north (1:6; 2:20), as a baneful swarm of locusts, having both animal-like and humanlike forms—"The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen so shall they run." These visions of Joel, and of other of the pre-exile prophets, foretold the fall of the City of Jerusalem when Nebuchadnezzar, having besieged the city, shut its inhabitants within the walls, inflicting upon them all the horrors of famine, pestilence and war, eventually burning the temple and its buildings, razing the walls, and reducing the city to rubbish and ruin – all the dreadful horrors of which were depicted by both Jeremiah and Joel. As the prophet Joel's apocalypse of locust invasion concerned the Jerusalem of about B. C. 600, this vision of John's apocalypse concerned the Jerusalem of A.D. 70, when Vespasian and Titus executed the imperial orders of Nero to besiege and destroy the city, the miseries of which exceeded all of its calamitous history before and after. "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that desolation is near . . . for these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled." Luke 21:20 & 22. "For in those days shall be affliction, such as wasn't since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."

Matthew 24:22. "For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation, which God created unto this time, neither shall be."  
Mark 13:19.

The cumulative evidence is preponderant that John's visions encompass the invasion of Judea and the fall of Jerusalem described by Jesus in the records of Matthew, Mark and Luke.

Verse 8 The locust features: "And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth as the teeth of lions."

–9:8. The hair of women: The kind of insect forming this vision was that of the hairy species referred to in Jeremiah 51:27 as "rough caterpillars," or the "cankerworm" of the Revised Version, but is admittedly the variety of the devouring locust with a sort of bristling long hair. Comparison with the hair of women is because of the feature that draws attention, as the waving hair, the abundance of which is to the woman's natural glory– John 11:2; John 12:3; 1 Corinthians 11:14,15. It is used as a figure to impress the personality of the locust creatures of this vision. The teeth of lions: The same figure is used in Joel's vision of the army of locusts, which signified that "a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion." (Joel 1:6) It is a symbol of strength, as the frequent expression to put teeth in legislation, and is designed to personify the locusts of this vision.

Verse 9 The locusts of war: "And they had breast plates as it were of iron."

–9:9. Breastplates of iron: The breastplate is the armor of war. Its figurative use here is sufficiently obvious, showing the symbolic locusts to be men of war, and the whole scene descriptive of the Vespasian march on Jerusalem. The locusts were seen as haberdashed with breastplates of iron, as if it were shielded by the Roman soldier's impenetrable coat of mail, encompassing the vital portions of the body. The figure of "iron" connected with breastplate denotes the irresistible force of the armies of invasion. Sound of wings as chariots: The whirling of myriad wings of the locusts were in sound as the wheels of bustling chariots and hustling horses racing to battle. Here again John joins Joel in the imagery of war in their respective visions of the locusts. Describing the Chaldean armies as swarms of locusts in their march on Jerusalem B.C. 584, Joel said: "The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of the mountains shall they leap . . . as a strong people set in battle array."

The locust visions of Joel and John are parallel – the former describing the Old Testament war of Nebuchadnezzar on the Jews, the latter the Neroan war of A. D. 70 on Judea and Jerusalem. Joel referred to the locusts as "people set in battle array," or battle formation. John referred to the locusts as "chariots running to battle." The parallels and the applications are unmistakable.

Verse 10 The Power to hurt: "And they had tails like scorpions, and their power was to hurt men five months."

–9:10. Tails like scorpions: This is a reemphasis of verse 5 with extended detail. These were unusual locusts, showing that they were figurative, not literal. The locusts had tails like scorpions-unlike the serpent that coils and strikes with the head, the scorpion strikes with its tail. The usual length of the scorpion was about two inches, but large scorpions of the deadly species exceeded six inches. Its sting produced violent convulsions, excruciating pain and death. In this vision it symbolizes the deadly striking power of the invading army. Power to hurt five months: In verse 5 the expression is "tormented five months"; here it is "power to hurt men five months." The season of the locust was from late spring to early fall of the year, May through September in our calendar. The expression five months, being the whole season of the locust, figuratively denotes the activity of the persecuting powers through the period of tribulation without surcease.

Verse 11 The king of the pit: "They had a king over them which is the angel of the bottomless pit"

–9:11. A king, angel of bottomless pit: The king "over them" – over this ferocious locust army, was the angel-king of the abyss; he was former angel Satan personified in the persecutor. As in later chapters (12:9-12; 20:2) the dragon-beast, the old serpent, "was called the Devil, and Satan which deceiveth the whole world," the king of this army of the abyss was Satan himself, represented in the persecuting power. Undoubtedly, Paul has reference to the persecutor when in Romans 16:20 he said, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." In early chapters reference was made to the "synagogue of Satan" (2:9); "Satan's seat" (2:13); and the "depths of Satan" (2:24). The epithet itself means adversary, enemy, accuser. It comports fully with the symbolism of these visions that Satan, angel-king of the abyss, should be personified by the persecutors in this vision. Abaddon, Apollyon: The Hebrew word Abaddon means "destroyer." The Greek word Apollyon means the same. The word Satan means "adversary," but in this vision the adversary was given power to destroy. Verse 9 above tells us that the power was "given." Jesus said to Pilate: "Thou couldst have no power at all against me except it were given thee from above." (John 20:11)

By reason of this power of destruction personified, the angel-king Destroyer (Abaddon/Apollyon) was so designated. It was most apropos to so entitle the impious leader of such a monstrous army of horrid creatures of the abyss, to thus liken the literal emperor of the Roman world to the figurative king of the underworld. The depths of Satan is the boldest delineation, the personification of whom code language alone could allow, as in a later chapter it was again done in the name and number of the beast. And to so label this monarch of oppression a despot; the destroyer in both of the two spoken languages-Abaddon & Apollyon, the Hebrew and Greek – was a challenge to boldness which must have excited courage and inspired fortitude in all the suffering saints.

Verse 12 The woes: "One woe is past, behold there come two woes more hereafter."

–9:12. In 8:13 the flying angel announced three woes to enhance solemnity. Now, it was John speaking, not the angel, not the eagle, not one of the elders, nor one of the creatures, but John. As if to mark by count the three woes announced by the angel in Revelation 8:13, in recording tones John said: "One woe is past: and, behold there come two woes more hereafter." A retrospective comment is in order here on the meaning of the expression "third part" in the beginning of fifth trumpet–verses 7, 8, 10, & 12 – finds explanation in the three woes, each announcement of the angel representing a third part of the whole realm of the woes.

Verse 13-14 The loosing of four angels–(sixth trumpet).

– 9:13-21. The symbolism of the sixth trumpet like that of the fifth, is a parallelism of imagery with Joel's vision of horsemen with their chariots surging in battle. The symbolism is the same because the events envisioned are of the same character, the one pertaining to the war of the Chaldeans against the Jerusalem of Joel's era, the other to the war of the Romans against the Jerusalem of John's era. The visions carry the same import & hence present the close similarity in the figures of horses, heads, tails, and of armor and chariots and embattled armies. The four angels: "A voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God . . . saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, saying, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates."

–9:13-14. A voice from four horns: The voice here is that same voice of authority "in the midst" of the throne of Revelation 6:6. Not the voice of any one of the angels, creatures or beings of the scene, but the voice from within, "in the midst" of them all. It emphasizes the source of all divine revelation, from within the throne itself. Here, in the sixth trumpet vision, the voice came from the four horns of the altar-four horns, but one voice proceeding from them.

There were four angels, in chapter 7:1, "holding the four winds of the earth." The same four angels were in this scene of chapter 9, and there were four horns on the altar – a horn to convey a divine message, an order, to each of the four angels; but the one voice from the four horns signified one message – the same for all. The horns were of the altar "which was before God," so the voice from the horns was the voice of direct authority from God. The voice was not personified, as of an angel, or any representative, but was simply designated a voice of direct command from the altar "before God" to the angel of the sixth trumpet. Loose the four angels: As the voice from the altar of this scene is the same voice from within "the midst" in chapter 6, so the four angels here are the same four angels "holding the four-winds of the earth" in chapter 7. The four angels there, as explained, were the imperial angels or agents holding the winds that they should not blow: that is, hindering the messengers of the gospel, preventing the spread of Christianity. A heavenly angel, referred to as another angel, countermanded the orders of the imperial angels, restraining them from performance of their mission "to hurt the earth" by holding back the four winds – the messengers of Christ – and the four imperial angels were commanded by this angel to "hurt not the earth." Now, the voice from the altar "before God" commanded the angel of the sixth trumpet to "loose the four angels." The suspension period designated as time to "seal" or to preserve "the holy seed," the true Israel, the symbolic number of one hundred forty-four thousand, had been accomplished, and it was time for the four angels to proceed. Again, the scene was comparable to the promise to the faithful disciples of time to escape the siege of Jerusalem, and the flight from the city was described in all three records of Matthew, Mark and Luke. Josephus records that after the siege had begun for some unknown reason Vespasian withdrew his armies to such distance and for such time for the flight of the disciples from the city to the mountains to be accomplished. It is a remarkable parallel to this scene of Revelation 7:1-17, where the angels of destruction were ordered to wait "till we have sealed the servants of our God," and a suspension was signified in this vision as that recorded in the accounts of Matthew 24:1-51, Mark 13:1-37 and Luke 21:1-38, the fulfillment of which according to F. Josephus is historical. The command to "loose" these angels of destruction was in contrast with the command of chapter 7:2 which restrained, or bound them. That these four angels were bound is further evidence that they were evil angels, the angels or agents of destruction "standing on the four corners of the earth," poised to blast Jerusalem with destructive horror, and in consequence blight the earth by "holding the four winds," preventing the promulgation of the gospel to its four corners. Bound in the great river Euphrates: The Euphrates river is named in Genesis 2:13-14 as a fork of the river of Eden. Moses called it "the great river" in Genesis 15:18 and Deuteronomy 1:7. It was designated by the Lord to Moses as the eastern boundary of the Promised Land in Deuteronomy 11:24.



It was restated as a part of the land promise to Joshua after the death of Moses (Joshua 1:4). It was the border by which David established his dominion (1 Chronicles 18:3), when he went in conquest to recover that part of Canaan lost to the savage neighbors of enemy nations. (2 Samuel 8:3) In Psalms 137:1-3 the Psalmist said that by the river Euphrates the Israelites in captivity wept. In no less than two dozen scripture passages it is called "the river," indicating geographical, historical, and biblical importance. From the regions of this river the Assyrian and Chaldean armies had in the past swept over the land of Israel like an overwhelming flood. (Isaiah 7:20; Isaiah 8:7-8; Jeremiah 46:10; Habakkuk 1:6-11) The symbolical allusion to "the great river" in this sixth trumpet scene has a two-fold significance. First, the four angels were said by the voice to be bound at the river Euphrates. To be bound means to be held at the border of the land. The Euphrates being the border, the four angels of destruction had been countermanded for the time; hence, bound "in the great river Euphrates" at the port of entry to the land doomed to their destruction. Second, the ruler of the Euphrates region was symbolically called the "rod" of wrath and anger, and the "staff" of indignation sent against "an hypocritical nation." (Isaiah 10:5-6) The sixth angel was therefore commanded to "loose the four angels which were bound at the great river Euphrates," as the symbolic allusion to the indignation & destruction poised at the borders to sweep the land overwhelming its inhabitants. To literalize it serves only to destroy the imagery, and in so doing the apocalypse itself, as is so usually done when literal constructions are placed on symbolical things.

Verse 15-16 The cavalry legion: "The four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, a day, a month, a year, to slay the third part of men. And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them."

–9:15-16. The four angels loosed: The voice in verse 14 commanded the angel of the sixth trumpet to loose the four angels. In verse 15 the sixth angel obeyed the voice, "and the four angels were loosed" to go unrestrained to execute the mission suspended in chapter 7:3. Prepared, hour, day, month, year: It is noted that "an" hour is the article "the"—it is the hour, used with hour only, not with day, month and year. Hence, "the hour and day and month and year" denoted the suspension time, the period of intervention, during which these four agents of evil were "prepared"—their armies massed for attack, waiting for the time of chapter 7:3 to be over, and for the directive, in military parlance, to unleash the armies, the dogs of war. To slay the third part of men: The sounding of trumpets accompanied announcement of three woes.

With the fifth trumpet, John interposed that "one woe is past, and behold there come two woes hereafter." (Verse 12) In chapter 11, verse 14, John interrupts the vision again to say "the second woe is past, and behold the third woe cometh quickly." In chapter 9 the apocalypse envisioned the armies of the Euphrates under the imagery of swarms of locusts numbering twice ten thousand times ten thousand. It was a figure of overwhelming military might that descended on Judea & Palestine. The apocalypse presented a two-fold catastrophe: 1. the tormenting locusts which brought the demonic plagues; 2. the armies of the Euphrates which brought the demonic wars. The swarms of locusts were said to hurt men; while the armies of the Euphrates were said to kill men. The two-fold vision of destruction symbolized famine and sword. The first part of the vision to hurt men was accomplished in the ravages of pestilence by famine; the second part of the vision to kill men was left executed in the devastations of war by the sword. The terrible atrocities of the armies of Titus, Cestius Gallus and Vespasian, were recorded in the historical annals of eyewitnesses, who saw the armies overrun Judea & who witnessed fall of Jerusalem, such as Josephus and Pliny; and in the works of the near-contemporary historians, Tacitus and others. Since the judgments contained in the trumpets are divided into three woes, each directive is accordingly applied to "a third part" of the mission, which expression is repeated with each extension of the sixth scene. In chapter 6, verse 8, where the judgments were symbolized in the opening of the seals, the division was called "the fourth part of the earth" in contrast with "the third part of men," in chapter 9, verse 15. **The division of the parts is made proportionate with the pronouncements of judgments or woes.** The scene consisted of a series of four judgements in chapter 6 and of three woes in chapter 9; hence, "the fourth part of the earth" and "the third part of men" proportionately. Two hundred thousand thousand: At this point the vision transforms "the four angels standing on the four corners of the earth . . . to whom it was given to hurt the earth" into the immense army of two hundred thousand thousand or twice ten thousand times ten thousand, which counted literally would compute the figure of two hundred million. This was not a numerical count of the conscripts composing this army, but merely symbolic description of immensity so overwhelming as to make human resistance impossible. And I heard the number of them: The number of this mighty army was proclaimed to John, not in visionary form, but as being audible—"I heard the number." It was another interposed statement, as of verse 12, containing the overtones of an overpowering onslaught.

Verse 17 The apocalyptic horses: "And thus I saw the horses in the vision, having breastplates of fire, jacinth, brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone."

--9:17. Thus I saw . . . in the vision: In the manner of the narrative John "thus" saw these things--that is, not in physical life, not actual or real, but "in the vision"--therefore, it was not a description of fleshly animals, material armor or human riders, but symbolic of the woes to befall the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the land of the Jews. Breastplates of fire, jacinth, brimstone: In verse 9 the army of locusts had breastplates of iron, to signify an impervious shield. Here "them that sat" on the horses, the horsemen, and "breastplates of fire, jacinth and brimstone" denoted the glittering colors of the bedecked armor. Jacinth, known also as hyacinth, resembling amethyst (Exodus 28:19; Exodus 39:12) an opaque stone consisting of crystallized quartz, a gem of dark blue-violet /purple-like color; the oriental amethyst belonging to a variety of sapphire mentioned frequently in the Old Testament; an ancient gem of brilliance and beauty, next to the diamond in lustre and hardness. Brimstone was a sulphuric mineral substance of inflammable potency and yellowish hue, the fumes of which were odious and suffocating. It is figuratively employed in Job 18:15; Isaiah 36:9; and in Revelation to symbolize a terrible condition of suffering & punishment, temporally or spiritually, pertaining to both the present and the future state. Fire, aside from its natural uses, was variously used in both Old and New Testaments as a metaphor of divine presence, as a purifier of intense emotion either of love, anger or hate, of the execution of penal judgment on men & nations and of the future eternal punishment of the wicked, all of which uses are figurative and carry the full intensity of the word in all of connotations & applications. The "fire, jacinth and brimstone," of verse 17, were used to figuratively describe the iridescent glitter of the horsemen's armor, in the glowing red of fire, blue-purple hue of the hyacinth, and the smoky yellow of brimstone. The blending colors signified also the mingled sufferings to be inflicted with an awful intensity of fire & brimstone indicated by the corresponding expression in the same verse, that "fire, smoke and brimstone" proceeded from the mouths of the horses. The vision of two hundred million horsemen bedecked in armor of fire, jacinth and brimstone, riding horses with heads "as the heads of lions," with mouths issuing "fire and smoke and brimstone," presents a monstrous picture of the approaching speedy execution of judgment on Jerusalem. The figurative use of these terms as metaphors of misery and woe is unquestionable when compared with the context of the several other passages in which the phrase "fire and brimstone," and similar expressions occur. In an imprecatory psalm against his enemies David said, "upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone . . . this shall be the portion of their cup." (Psalms 11:6) Prophecying God's judgments upon Gog, Ezekiel said: "I will rain upon him . . . and upon the many people that are with him . . . an overflowing rain . . . hailstones, fire and brimstone." (Ezekiel 38:22) Describing similar judgments on wicked nations and their rulers, Isaiah said: "The Lord will come with fire . . . to render his anger with fury and his rebukes with flames of fire . . . for their worm dieth not, neither shall their fire be quenched." (Isaiah 66:24)

The allusion here is to that accumulation of filth and putrefaction in the valley of Hinnom, near Jerusalem, always alive with worms, and its everburning fires day and night, to consume these sources of pestilence. From "Hinnom" was compounded the word Gehenna, which the Lord used to denote the word "hell." In the application of the figure to the torments of hell Jesus said: "Where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched"—Mark 9:44; Mark 9:46; Mark 9:48. The use Jesus made of these words cannot be applied literally to the torments of souls in hell any more than the language of David, Ezekiel and Isaiah could be applied literally to the rulers of the nations against whom they were inveighing. As a metaphor of eternal banishment from the presence of God, Jesus used the expression "outer darkness," like "outer space," a darkness beyond the physical darkness of this world. In reference to the misery of such banishment he used the phrase, "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth." An amateur in exegesis should recognize the figurative character of these expressions. So, it is in the use of the word "fire" to indicate the intensity of suffering beyond degree: "Where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched"—remorse is the worm and anguish is the fire—where remorse of conscience will never end and anguish of soul will never cease. In an almost identical association of metaphorical phrases employed in the Psalms of David, in the visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel and in the discourses of Jesus on Jerusalem, the visions of John employ the expressions "fire and smoke and brimstone" to describe the plagues of the four angels turned loose; and the atrocities which attended the invasions of their monstrous army were as smoke ascending from the fire of hell.

Verse 18-19 The deadly plagues: "By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouth and in their tails."

—9:18-19. By these three: The three symbols of three atrocious plagues, fire, smoke and brimstone were a three-fold description of catastrophe and destruction in the terrors of the four angels loosed to hurt the land—"by these three was the third part of men killed." Power in mouth and tails: A symbol of spreading destruction before them, "issued out of their mouths," leaving only devastation behind them, "for their tails were like serpents," and as the horses had heads like the heads of lions, their tails were not only like serpents, but their tails had heads like serpent heads. "And with them they do hurt"—that is, using their tails to do harm, with devastation from the rear as well as destruction that issued from their mouths. It is the description of the deadly scourge in the path of the invasion before this army and in its wake behind, sweeping everything before, leaving nothing behind; as a scorched earth and burnt land.

It is an extension of the appalling picture of the complete desolation mentioned by Jesus, in Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14; Luke 21:20, which followed the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. The same description is given by Joel of the invasion of Judea by the Chaldeans in the sixth century B.C. "A fire devoureth before them, and behind them a flame burneth; the land is as the garden of Eden before them and behind them a desolate wilderness." (Joel 2:2) Of this same invasion of Old Testament history, Jeremiah said: "And I will send . . . the king of Babylon . . . and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants . . . and will utterly destroy them . . . and make them an hissing and perpetual desolations . . . and this whole land shall be a desolation; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years." (Jeremiah 25:9-11) Numerous other examples could be cited but these are sufficient to show that when comparison is made between these historical visions concerning Jerusalem of the era of six hundred BC with the visions of John about Jerusalem of A.D. 70, their application is not only obvious but unavoidable.

Verse 20-21 The demon worshiper: "The rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues, repented not of the works of their hands—neither repented they of their murders, fornication, sorceries, nor their thefts."

–9:20-21. The rest of the men: This referred to the residual number specified to be survivors of this second woe, pronounced on "the third part of men." They are described as being guilty of the "worship of devils," which covered all the idolatrous objects immediately mentioned – "which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk," classified as "idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood" – all of which declared to be "the works of their hands." To include all these categories of idolatry under the blanket indictment of "the worship of devils" was in keeping with the law of the Jews, which proscribed all idol worship as homage "unto devils," and was branded as religious whoredom in the Mosaic law. "They shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils, after whom they have gone a whoring. This shall be a statute forever unto them throughout their generations." (Leviticus 17:7) Again, in the song of Moses it is said: "They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not." (Deuteronomy 32:17) The apostle Paul upholds the Mosaic statute on that point, having himself lived under it as a Jew: "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God, and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils." (1 Corinthians 10:20) Those survivors here designated as "the rest of the men" were evidently a residue of Jewish people who were classed as adherents of Jezebel, and as holding the doctrine of Balaam in the letters to the seven churches (chapter 2:14; 2:20)—the apostate Israelites "of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie." (Chapter 3:9)

Reference to the comments on these verses in chapters two and three will spare further discussion of the symbolic names of Jezebel and Balaam here. Because of her determination to exterminate the prophets of Israel and to sabotage the nation of Israel by idolatrous worship, her name stood for infamy among the people of Israel, and was used in the apocalypse of Revelation to symbolize the Judaizers in the churches. The name Balaam carried a similar symbolic connotation, because of that mongrel prophet's seductive schemes to destroy the people of Israel by means of heathen practices. Thus, the figurative phrases "the doctrine of Balaam" and "that woman Jezebel" originated, as representative of that element in the churches "which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie." In the present context the phrase "the rest of the men" apparently referred to that residue classed as adherents of Jezebel, and further identified with "the doctrine of Balaam"—chapter 2:14—"who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and commit fornication." The language of this vision describing those Jew-Israelites as practitioners of these prohibited things was largely an adaptation of the language of Isaiah in forecasting an extolling allegiance to the Holy One of Israel amid the idolatries of the nations: "At that day shall a man look to his maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel. And he shall not look to the altars, the works of his hands, neither shall respect that which his fingers have made, either the groves or the images. In that day shall his strong cities be as a forsaken bough, and an uppermost branch, which they left because of the children of Israel: and there shall be desolation. Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation." (Isaiah 17:7-10) These "men" who avoided the plagues of the second woe were those Jews who were affiliated with those things defined in verse 20, and the parallel passages cited, and "repented not" of these "works of their hands"; but their escape from the tribulations of the woe did not secure immunity from the condemnation of disloyalty to the God who recompensed to all men their evil. Neither repented . . . murders, sorceries, fornication, thefts: The category of evil things were the flagrant crimes of Jezebel, recorded in 1 Kings 21:14-15 and 2 Kings 9:22, and again connects "the rest of the men" of these verses with the Jezebel apostates. While the idolatries of verse 20 and the crimes of verse 21 were all in violation of both tables of the decalogue, they were not to be applied literally in this vision—their idolatries, murders, sorceries and thefts belonged to the spiritual category for which those sensual things stood. Abandoning Christianity for the praise of princes was as idolatry; deserting Christ to escape malediction was murder of his Cause; turning from the principles of the faith to the arts of magic was a broad definition of sorcery (Acts 13:6; Acts 19:13), of which there seemed to be a rather numerous party. (Colossians 2:18-23) And theft does not consist only in the violation of the eighth commandment—seducing men was spiritual theft. (John 10:8-10; Matthew 15:9; Jeremiah 23:30; 1 Timothy 1:10)

That fornication has a figurative as well as physical meaning goes without saying. (Revelation 2:21; Revelation 19:2; 2 Chronicles 21:11; Revelation 17:5) Apostasy is spiritual fornication. Thus "the rest of the men" is a phrase designating apostate Israelites, guilty of the entire category of spiritual crimes, of which they "repented not."

– verse 20; "neither repented" – verse 21. This dual emphasis on the impenitence of these apostates was for the four things representative of apostasy both under the decalogue of Moses and the gospel of Christ. First, murder: This crime exists in fact in the malicious act of taking human life (2 Samuel 13:28; 1 Kings 21:19; Mark 15:7; Exodus 22:2-3; Deuteronomy 18:9; Numbers 35:27-31) It exists in principle in seeds of wrath, hate, retaliation, oppression, and all of its evil consequences. (James 4:2; James 5:6; Romans 1:29; 1 John 3:15) It exists in effect seen by vicarious sufferings, reproaches, and afflictions. (Psalms 44:22; Romans 8:36; 1 Corinthians 15:30-32; 2 Corinthians 6:9; John 8:44; Job 5:2; Job 24:14) It was flagrant, odious & abominable a crime. For intentional murder there was no legal pardon or ceremonial remission. (Deuteronomy 19:13, 21:9; Exodus 21:14; Exodus 21:28-29; Numbers 35:30-34) Figuratively, it represented a spiritual degeneracy of the emotions of love and loyalty which leads to betrayal and destruction of righteous causes and men. It is a fitting characterization here. Second, sorceries or magic: This was a professional part of divination, described in Exodus 7:11; Deuteronomy 18:10; Acts 8:9; and Acts 13:6. It was a system of pseudo-divinity belonging to the dark demon world mentioned in Acts 16:16-18. It was an essential element in false religions & was held in opposition to the true religion of the Jews, as in Leviticus 20:27; Deuteronomy 18:9ff; Jeremiah 14:14. It was prevalent among Jews, many of whom believed in it and resorted to it, as stated in Samuel 28:3-20. In whatever form it was regarded or practiced it was reproachful to the Mosaic religion and to Christianity, and was reprobated in both the law and the gospel. The writings of the prophets are full of invectives against Israelites who consulted diviners and of the false prophets seducing the people by means of it, examples of which are Jeremiah 14:14, and Ezekiel 13:6-7. Again, here was a fitting characterization of the Jewish apostasies. Third, fornication: This is a term of frequent occurrence in all the sacred writings to denote acts of lewdness and of incontinency. It is used for the sin of impurity in 1 Corinthians 6:13, 7:2; and Jude chapter 7. It is used for the sin of adultery in Matthew 5:28-32 and 1 Thessalonians 4:3. It is used for the sin of incest in 1 Corinthians 5:1. It is used for spiritual and religious infidelity, apostasy from truth and right in 2nd Chronicles 21:11 and in Revelation 19:2. In the spiritual sense it denotes the unfaithfulness of the Israelites because the union between God and Israel was set forth as marriage. (Jeremiah 3:9; Ezekiel 23:37; Isaiah 23:17) Jesus upbraided a faithless God-denying and Christ-rejecting age as "an adulterous generation" in Matthew 12:39.

The mingling of error & evil with that which was true and pure in teaching, worship and practice was spiritual adultery. It applied to participation in heathenism or in affiliation with any false system or practice. (James 4:4) It was truly an apt use in this present scene. Fourth, theft: The term here referred to the deceptions of any form of stealing. It was applied physically to the unlawful taking of anything that belongs to another, as in Exodus 20:15; Job 30:5 and Luke 10:30. It was applied morally, or ethically, to fraudulence, as in Matthew 21:13. It was applied doctrinally and spiritually to seduction, to seducers of doctrine, as in Jeremiah 7:9; Jeremiah 23:30, Ezekiel 13:10; 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 3:13; 1 John 2:26 and Mark 13:22. In this 6th trumpet scene these words are employed figuratively, not literally. It was spiritual murder, in the sense of traitors to the Jewish cause, and betrayers of their brethren. It was spiritual sorcery in the magical influence exercised over the Jewish population. It was spiritual fornication in adulterous affiliation with the false systems of deism, pantheism and paganism. It was spiritual theft in the stealing of the truth from men's hearts and God's way from their lives. The correctness of the characterization of the "rest of the men which were not killed by the plagues," and who "repented not" of the category of figurative crimes, as the residual number of the Jewish people, is to be supported by the corresponding Jewish history of the same period. The sins listed in the category of verses 20 and 21 were typical of all Jewish apostasies from the law of Moses promulgated from Mt. Sinai and which was preached in all the synagogues. "Thou camest down upon Mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments and true laws, good statutes and commandments . . . by the hand of Moses thy servant." (Nehemiah 9:13-14) "For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day." (Acts 15:21) But the residue of this nation were those to whom John the Baptist said, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come," (Matthew 3:7); and whom Jesus called an "offspring of vipers" (Matthew 23:28-33). These were condemnations of which hypocrisy and iniquity made them deserving. Among them arose a legion of false prophets and seducers to lead them astray, particularly true in the very period of the calamities portrayed in the vision of these trumpet visions and of corresponding description in the records of Matthew, Mark and Luke on the destruction of Jerusalem. "And there shall arise false prophets and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." (Matthew 24:24) "And they shall show signs and wonders to seduce." (Mark 13:22) "And ye shall be betrayed . . . and some of you shall they cause to be put to death." (Luke 21:16) Later, before these things came to pass that were thus foretold to mark the latter part of that period ending with the city fall of Jerusalem, inspired apostles were issuing warnings against all such seducers and their doctrines, with all the resulting wickedness.

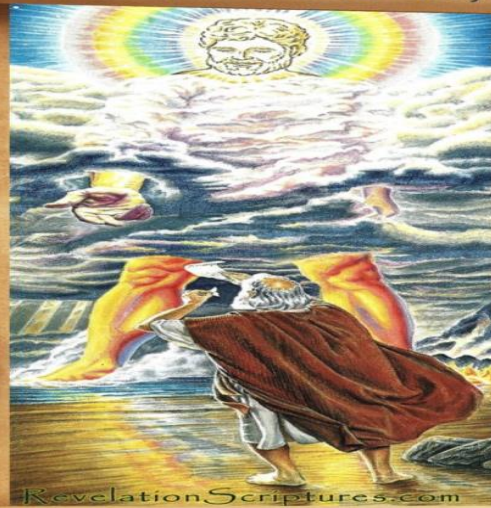


"Now the spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." (2 Timothy 4:1) "This know also that in the last days perilous times shall come." (2 Timothy 3:1) These apostolic admonitions correspond with the warnings of the Lord in the discourse on Jerusalem, and are descriptive of the same Jewish apostasies of the residual number in the closing scene of the sixth trumpet vision. The drawing of these parallels was in full accord with the teaching of the passages cited in reference to the times, with the history of that period, and with the purpose of the apocalypse. The voice from the four horns of the altar commanded the angel of the sixth trumpet to "loose" the four agents which were "bound" in or at "the great river Euphrates" (verse 14) was the ominous announcement of encompassing desolation. It is a geographical fact that the Euphrates river formed the boundary of the Roman empire at the time of the Jewish-Roman war & their army installations and concentrations were there where the legions of this vision were said to be "bound." It was therefore in harmony with all the facts, scriptural & historical that the mighty cavalry of the Euphrates portrayed in this trumpet was the immense Roman army which marched against Jerusalem and initiated the terrible siege resulting in the desolation foretold by Daniel and depicted by the Lord in pointing up the fulfillment. Matthew's account reads . . . "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, (whoso readeth let him understand), then let them which be in Judea flee."— Matthew 24:15-16. Luke's record reads: "And when ye shall see Jerusalem encompassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Jerusalem flee to the mountains."— Luke 21:20-21. Here Daniel's vision, in chapters 9 and 12 of his prophecy, were merged with the signs of the Lord's Jerusalem discourse and with the like symbols of John's apocalypse. To search the distant future for a fulfillment of these symbolic descriptions, not only reduces both the text and the context of Revelation to confusion, but renders meaningless all of the passages which apply with such clarity and so full of force to that period. The interpretations which remove these events of the symbolic history from the Neroan period of the apostolic century, and assign them to centuries later and yet to come are rank anachronisms. Any attempt to explain these visions by the rise and fall of the successive monarchies, through the centuries from them till now and on to the end of time, would necessarily continue the existence of the armies symbolized in this vision for periods ranging from five to twenty centuries, which not only destroys all practical applications of symbolic descriptions to the people to whom they were addressed, rendering them impossible to understand, but it furthermore declares an open season for the maneuvering, manipulation and juggling of events of history to fit a manufactured theory. But viewed in the light of the application of the symbols of Revelation to the period of time in which the people lived to whom the visions were addressed, all such anachronisms disappear.

In this second interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets, we will see four main things in John's vision:

1. The unutterable thunders, Revelation 10:1-7
2. The little book, Revelation 10:8-11
3. The measuring of the Temple, Revelation 11:1-2
4. The two witnesses, Revelation 11:3-13

Revelation 10:8-11, 6<sup>th</sup> Trumpet - 2<sup>nd</sup> Woe



Revelation 10:8-11  
8 Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, "Go, take the Scroll that is open in the hand of the Angel who is standing on the sea & on the land."  
9 So I went to the Angel and told him to give me the Little Scroll. And he said to me, "Take & Eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey."  
10 & I took the Little Scroll from the hand of the Angel & Ate it. It was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter.  
11 And I was told, "You must AGAIN prophesy about many peoples & Nations & Languages & Kings."

Comes from Ezekiel Chapters 1-3!

**6<sup>th</sup> Trumpet & 2<sup>nd</sup> Woe**

**"SEAL UP 7 THUNDERS"**      **"EAT SCROLL"**  
**"PHOPHESY AGAIN"**

Revelation 10:1-7      Revelation 10:8-11



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### Revelation 10:1

*"And I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, arrayed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire"*

This word [cloud](#) or clouds occurs in the New Testament twenty seven times in the KJV. In all but a few usages, it is used in some relation to deity or of a divine appearance, often in judgment. Being arrayed in a cloud means this messenger is coming on a divine mission relating to judgment. This angel shares some of the attributes given to Jesus with his face as the sun and feet as pillars of fire. This angel being thus described is indicative of strength and the importance of his mission. Clouds and fire are symbols of judgment and the sun is the symbol of light which represents righteousness. This angel is of a similar rank as the angel seen earlier in Revelation 5:2 where we read of the strong angel asking who was worthy to open the book and loose the seven seals. Inspiration does not tell us whether this is the same angel seen earlier or by what name he is identified. All we know is that he is strong enough to make the declaration that is forthcoming.

The [rainbow](#) is symbolic of God's everlasting covenant taken from the rainbow seen in the clouds after the great flood. The bearer of this message from heaven is wearing God's covenant with mankind upon his head, meaning that it is at the head or forefront of all messengers from the throne. What is getting ready to come when the seventh trumpet sounds is terrible indeed but the righteous see that God's covenant is there in a prominent place where it can be seen by all.

### Revelation 10:2

*"and he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left upon the earth."*

In this part of the vision, the strong angel was holding a "little book" in his hand. The Greek word for these two words is "*biblaridion*", a diminutive of "*biblion*". This word could be translated as the single word "*booklet*" and be perfectly accurate.

Books have been established in this series of visions as the figurative means which God used to express Himself. Certainly, we know that these are not literal books with binding, paper and ink. In the first century this would likely have been a scroll. This little book or scroll is figurative for a message and with the book being open, it is obviously a message which was intended to be revealed to John. This is a continuation of the vision where Jesus Christ unsealed the scroll containing the ultimate fate of the enemies of Christianity. This little book is a part of the message already unsealed by the Son of God.

This angel with his right foot upon the sea and his left foot upon the earth simply means the whole earth. The message contained within the little book is therefore directed at the inhabitants of the all the earth.

Revelation 10:3

*"and he cried with a great voice, as a lion roareth: and when he cried, the seven thunders uttered their voices."*

[Lions](#) represents great strength, boldness and bravery. The voice of this angel was powerful, bold and was accompanied by the voices of the seven thunders. The number [seven](#) represents the totality and/or completeness associated with God's authority on the earth. Thunder signifies authority, power & volume & often is associated with message from the divine. This voice thundering with the voice of the angel can only mean men receiving a direct response from the throne of God. All messages to man originate from the throne but this one is given special notice in order to signify the authority and importance of it.

Revelation 10:4

*"And when the seven thunders uttered (their voices), I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying, Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not."*

John heard what the voices of thunder revealed but was commanded to refrain from recording this message. Scripture teaches that there comes a time when sinners are given over to suffer the consequences for their actions...

Hymanaeus and Alexander were disfellowshipped by Paul in order that they repent. Paul instructed the Christians in Corinth to do the same with the man who was engaging in sexually perverse sin. The objective in both cases was so that they would repent. They were given over to their sin in order to suffer the full consequences of it in their lives. There aren't any more warnings, there are no more exhortations. The sinners were simply withdrawn from and left to face the ravages of sin alone.

When God gives up on an individual, talking is over, the last opportunity to repent is at hand and they better avail themselves of it. The wrath of our God is far worse and much longer lasting the wrath of an earthly father. The judgment is final and the punishment is eternal!

John knew what the thunders revealed but was commanded to keep it to himself. The utterances of the thunders were carried unwritten to John's grave. We will never know this side of heaven exactly what those seven thunders said, but we can be assured it was serious. The implication of receiving no more warnings from God is serious enough in and of itself to speak volumes to anyone left who might listen. Sometimes it's the things not said that speak the loudest.

Revelation 10:5

*"And the angel that I saw standing upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his right hand to heaven,"*

It is one's right hand that mankind today raises to swear oaths such as to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in a court of law.

Revelation 10:6

*"and sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created the heaven and the things that are therein, and the earth and the things that are therein, and the sea and the things that are therein, that there shall be delay no longer."*

The angel seen standing on the earth with his right hand lifted in a solemn display swears an oath by Jesus Christ, the one who lives for ever and ever (Hebrews 7:24-25), who created the heaven and the things therein, and the earth & the things that are therein, and the sea and the things therein.

(Ephesians 3:9, Colossians 1:16). The swearing of oaths was a big thing in Old Testament times. The swearing of an oath was the invoking of a curse upon one's self if one has not spoken the truth (Matthew 26:74), or if one fails to keep a promise (1 Samuel 19:6; 20:17; 2 Samuel 15:21; 19:23). It played a very important part, not only in lawsuits (Exodus 22:11; Leviticus 6:3,5) and state affairs, but also in the dealings of everyday life (Genesis 24:37; 50:5; Judges 21:5; 1st Kings 18:10; Ezra 10:5). In New Testament times, the swearing of oaths by man is prohibited by divine commandment, "*Again, ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: but I say unto you, swear not at all; neither by the heaven, for it is the throne of God nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of his feet; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, for thou canst not make one hair white or black*" (Matthew 5:33-36). A literal angel did not stand on the earth with one foot in the seas and one foot on land and lift his right hand and swear and oath on the name of Jesus Christ. The image here is to illustrate the solemn seriousness of the next phrase.

*"that there shall be delay no longer"*

Time was up. Judgment which had been partial and scattered over the different periods of time was now going to be total.

Revelation 10:7

*"but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets."*

The seventh angel with the trumpet has not yet sounded but when he does, the mystery of God will be finished. The workings of God in opposition to the unrighteousness of the Jewish Religious State was a complete mystery to them because they refused to repent and turn to righteousness. The Christians knew what was going on. They had the good news of the gospel given to them.

The mystery of God was the plan of redemption and the promise of eternal life for the faithful (Colossians 1:26-27), once delivered to his apostles & servants (Jude 3), now is almost finished and will be completed when the seventh angel sounds. This reference to the good tidings being completed is linked to the Book sealed with the seven perfect seals, the book that contained the coming of righteousness, followed by the sinful influence of Satan and the steps progressing up to the rise of the great persecution and now with the little book at the end, we see the final chapter about to close on this greatest earthly enemy the Christians had ever known.

The good tidings in the view of the oppressed Christians is of course the victory they will achieve from their perseverance in Christ. This was good tidings indeed for them, especially in view of what is about to come in chapter eleven. The oppressed Christians are going to need all possible reassurance they can get because the persecution was yet to get so bad that the enemies of righteousness thought they had successfully stamped out Christianity forever. The battle is almost over but the worst was yet to come.

#### Revelation 10:8

*"And the voice which I heard from heaven, (I heard it) again speaking with me, and saying, Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel that standeth upon the sea and upon the earth."*

The final chapter in the mystery of the good tidings is laying open in the hands of the angel. John is instructed to go take that book.

#### Revelation 10:9

*"And I went unto the angel, saying unto him that he should give me the little book. And he saith unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but in thy mouth it shall be sweet as honey."*

This is the second time John was instructed to take the book. It was not handed to him even after he asked for it. The meaning here is that God's will is never forced on anyone. We must reach out and take it of our own free choice through a conscious act on our part.

The imagery of eating the book is taken directly from Ezekiel's prophetic vision where he was similarly instructed to take the open roll of a book and eat it (Ezekiel 2:8-3:3). John was to take the message contained within this book and ingest it into his being. He was to take this message into his bowels and make it a part of his life. This message of the hope of the victorious will be sweet as honey in his mouth but the message of the fate of the enemies of righteousness will be bitter and hard to deal with. The Psalmist wrote, "*Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law*" (Psalms 119:53). The good tidings of this final message for the righteous was honey in his mouth but the horrors it contained for the unrighteous was bitter and would make him sick.

The application for us today is that while the good news of the gospel message is wondrous for us, it contains a very different message for the unrighteous. The horrors that will be the eternal fate of the enemies of the cross should make us sick to our souls. God was willing to sacrifice the life of His only Son in order to give people an opportunity to escape this horrible fate.

Revelation 10:10

*"And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and when I had eaten it, my belly was made bitter."*

John took the book and did as instructed which resulted in the bittersweet taste promised him. The reception and comprehension of God's word is indeed sweet to the ears of the saints but fraught with bitterness of spirit in its condemnation of sinners and declaration of the consequences awaiting the disobedient.

Revelation 10:11

*"And they say unto me, Thou must prophesy again over many peoples and nations and tongues and kings."*

While the fate of the enemies of Christianity is impending, John's job is not yet complete. He is going to prophecy much more and over many nations and people of the earth.



Being only half way thru the Revelation it is easy to see what is being said here. Following the seventh trumpet announcement, John immediately starts over with the radiant woman which was the nation of Israel bringing forth the Messiah. The whole saga we are now nearing the conclusion of, repeats itself, but with different visions with much more detail. In Homer Hailey's commentary, it is stated that the rest of the Book of Revelation from chapters 11 thru 20 is the message within the little book.

### Foy Wallace's Interpretation of Chapter Ten From His Commentary:

Verse 1 The seven thunders—10:1-6. This angel from heaven here designated as another mighty angel is a reversion to chapter 5:2 where the first strong angel made the loud proclamation concerning the sealed book, asking "who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" Here in the hand of this second mighty angel is the open book, no longer sealed, or closed, the seven seals of it had also been opened & proclaimed – Revelation 5:5. 1. Clothed with a cloud: This angel was wearing a cloud as apparel, or a garment, and was arrayed and encompassed with the phenomenal majesty of a heavenly messenger. He was invested with the credentials of divine authority, which his vestures symbolized. (Exodus 16:10; Exodus 33:9; Numbers 11:25; Psalms 18:11; Matthew 17:5; Luke 21:27; Revelation 1:7) This display was not for the execution of judgment, but rather to be clothed and attired with the glory befitting his portfolio and comparable to his commission. Compare the similar symbols of official robes in Exodus 40:34-38 and Leviticus 16:2, and the "woman arrayed with the sun" in Revelation 12:1 of the next scene. 2. A rainbow upon his head: The rainbow is the symbol of divine covenant. (Genesis 9:12-17) It represented assurance against judgment, promise of help, a pledge of divine presence. (Ezekiel 1:28; Revelation 4:3; Revelation 10:7) It was a sign that this angel was a messenger of mercy, not of judgment, bringing good tidings, not evil forebodings. 3. His face as the sun: The sun is the light of the universe and is the source of all physical radiance. Seeking a term of grandeur and splendor to portray the One to come, the prophet Malachi selected the flaming orb of the day, and likened the Redeemer to the "sun of righteousness." (Malachi 4:2) What the sun is to the solar system, Jesus Christ is to the soul.

The rise of this sun of righteousness presaged a new day. With its appearance the darkness vanished and turned to day, the tomb itself yielded to his power and surrendering to his orders, released its seal. One mighty to save had come, who was the Redeemer of men, who brought to nought the power of death and of the devil to deliver all who through the fear of death were subject to bondage. (Hebrews 2:14-15) This angel clothed with a cloud, with a face as the sun, was the herald of the "Sun of righteousness" who would turn the night of persecution into the day of victory. (2 Corinthians 4:6) 4. His feet as pillars of fire: The feet are symbolic of the messenger. "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things." (Romans 10:15) "I turned my feet unto thy testimonies." (Psalms 119:59) "And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." (Ephesians 6:15) The feet of this strong angel were as "pillars of fire"—like the pillar that led Israel (Exodus 13:21-22) out of Egypt, and was always the symbol of the presence and the guidance of the angels of God. (Exodus 14:19; Exodus 23:20; Exodus 32:34) Describing the feet of this angel as "pillars of fire" denoted that his feet were illuminated with divine guidance to give light to them that sat in darkness and in the shadow of death. (Luke 1:79) The identity of the mighty angel—10:1; 11:3; 12:7; 14:1, 14; 19:11. 1. The open book of 10:8-11 is the sealed book of 5:1. The Lamb took that book from the One who sat on the throne—5:7. After the opening of the seals, the book was given to John, thus identifying the angel of chapter 10 with the Lamb of chapter 5. 2. The description of the angel of chapter 10 corresponds to the Son of man in chapter one. 3. He appears as Lord in chapter 11:3, exercising a power and authority not ascribed to created beings. 4. The representation of Christ under various figures & forms interspersed in the apocalypse agrees with presentation as an angel rather than arguing against it. He is the Son in chapter one. He is the strong Angel, in chapter 5: 1-2. He is the Lion in verse 5. He is the Lamb in verse 6. In chapter 6:2, He is the Rider; in 14: 1, He is the Lamb on Mount Zion; in verse 14, He is the Son on the cloud; and in 19:11, He is the Rider of white horse again. In these premises, arguments that the Christ could not be symbolized by an angel appear to be without foundation. 5. It is consistent with the purpose of the interlude that he should appear not as a judge, or king enthroned, but as sun-countenanced, rainbow-crowned angel of the covenanted people.

Verse 2 – 5. In his hand a little book opened: This book in chapter 5:7 was "sealed and no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth was able to open it." (Chapter 5:2) But the "Lion of the tribe of Judah" - - the Lamb in the midst of the throne—"hath prevailed to open the book and to loose the seals thereof." (Chapter 5:5) It was therefore no longer sealed, no longer a mystery, but now an open book.

When it was sealed it seemed large. Unknown things are greater in seeming proportion than the things that are known. They become simplified and minimized in proportion to the knowledge of them. When the seals within the book were loosed, or revealed, it became an open book & it was a little book compared with knowing and not knowing its contents. 6. Right foot upon the sea . . . left foot upon the land: The land and the sea were the territories of their persecutors. Later the Jewish persecutors of Palestine were described as "the beast of the land" and the Roman persecutor was designated "the beast of the sea." The sea beast was said to exercise authority over the land beast, based on the universal sway of Rome's power. But the mighty angel stood with one foot on the land, the other on the sea, declaring his power over both as Lord of the land and of the sea.

Verse 3 – 7. A great voice as a lion roareth: The Lamb in the midst of the throne, once slain, who was the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who had conquered to open the book and loose its seals, now came as the "mighty angel" to announce the near end of the things in the book; and when his "loud voice" heralded the angel's proclamation, seven thunders uttered their voices, as signs of revolutionary events that would presage the end. Thunder was regarded as the voice of God. (Job 37:2; Psalms 18:13; Psalms 81:7; Isaiah 30:3132) Thunder attended the inauguration of the law. (Exodus 19:16) When the people heard God's voice, they said it thundered. (John 12:29) It was a symbol of divine power in the executions of vengeance on evil-doers. (2 Samuel 2:10; 2 Samuel 22:14; Isaiah 29:6) And that was its significance here.

Verse 4 – 8. Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered & write them not: The book of seven seals was opened, and its seals were loosed; the trumpets of the seven angels were sounded; but the seven thunders were sealed up and John was commanded to write them not. The things which the seven thunders uttered and which John was ready to transcribe, related to the things of the future not disclosed in the seals nor proclaimed in the trumpets, neither contained in the vials yet to be poured. They were things outside the realm of revelation, beyond human knowledge or finite information. The sealing up of the thunders signified that there is a category of the infinite in God's dealings with men and nations which can never be revealed. Much therefore, after all the seals were loosed and all the trumpets had sounded and all the woes were pronounced and all the vials poured, must remain enfolded and unrevealed.

There are in the nature of things of the infinite and the hereafter not within the scope of God's revelation to man. It is in keeping with the principle revealed to Moses, that "the secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." (Deuteronomy 29:29) There are things connected with the counsels & purposes of God, and the reasons for his dispensations with reference to them, which are hidden in his own bosom, not to be pried into by any man or order of men. What the voices of the seven thunders uttered cannot be known, and for any man to undertake to explain what John was forbidden to write, would be presumption. The voices of the thunders evidently belonged to that region of "visions and revelations of the Lord" to which Paul referred as "unspeakable words not lawful for a man to utter." (2 Corinthians 12:1-21 :1-4) The command of the voice from heaven to seal up and write not, with no conditions, restrictions or limitations of time has in it a finality that prohibits the explanation that makes the voices of the thunders the mystic symbols of imperial edicts and papal bulls of the medieval centuries, and the continuous revelation of the history of Christianity to the end of the world.

Verse 5-6 – 9. That there should be time no longer: The words of finality spoken by the angel required that they be sealed with the binding force of an oath. In the Old Testament God is said to have sworn by himself. (Genesis 22:16; Isaiah 45:23; Psalms 110:4; Psalms 89:35; Psalms 132:11) In the New Testament Peter refers to God having "sworn with an oath" to David. (Acts 2:30) & Paul declares in Hebrews 6:18 that Almighty God "confirmed by an oath" his immutable counsel, in which it was "impossible for God to lie." So, if the voice from heaven was Christ himself, or "another mighty angel" there was nothing inconceivable or incompatible that he should swear by the eternal Creator of heaven itself, and the earth and the sea, "and the things that therein are." Standing on the sea and the earth, as if to survey the full sweep of all human powers, Roman and Jewish, the angel proclaimed that there should be time no longer. The time for the seventh angel to sound the 7th trumpet was near, and the culminating events would be no longer delayed. This angelic proclamation did not refer to the end of all time, but rather to the end of the events signified in the vision. The word time here means delay, the time, or delay, of these events was about to end. In chapter 6:9-10 the souls under the altar cried "how long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" In the response to this prayer, in verse 11, "it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season"—that is, wait for a time, until the vision "should be fulfilled."

That "little season" was about to end with the approaching proclamation of the seventh angel, the time should be no longer. The prayer of the martyrs for avenging judgment was about to be answered and would speedily come with no more delay. In chapter 8:3 the prayers of all the saints are seen superadded to the cry of martyrs. The visions of the seven seals and the seven trumpets, with their intermissions, have been unfolded, and the vision having reached "the days of the seventh angel" there should be no more delay.

### Verse 7 - The days of the seventh angel

-10:7. 1. Days of the voice: This was a reference to the end of the Jewish state (Matthew 24:3), which was politically the end of the old Jewish dispensation, the days when the last trumpet was about to sound the note of doom—when he shall begin to sound—hence, in the days of the last events fulfilling these visions. They were fulfilled in that generation as foretold by the words of Jesus to his disciples. (Matthew 23:36 & Matthew 24:34) 2. The mystery of God finished: This mystery of God is that divine plan of Ephesians 1:9-10, which was to reach its fulfillment "in the dispensation of the fulness of times," and here the reference is to the "finish" of all events connected with its success. (Matthew 24:14) And it was accomplished for Jesus said, "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world as a witness unto all nations and then shall the end come." In verse 31, of this discourse of Matthew 24:1-51, the Lord said that after these events of the destruction of the City of Jerusalem he would "send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet" to "gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." These statements in Matthew and Revelation are parallel in meaning and alike had reference to the universal expansion of the kingdom of Christ, the fall of Judaism and the end of the Jewish state. The destruction of Jerusalem, the demolition of the temple, the downfall of Judaism, and the end of Jewish state, which politically and practically ended the Jewish dispensation, were all a part of the divine mystery. The Mosaic law had been "nailed to the cross," "abolished" and "taken away"; but the Jewish state continued, and in that sense the Jewish dispensation functioned, until "the days of the voice of the seventh angel" which sounded the final doom. This was all in & part of "the mystery of God," the divine scheme of things, which was "finished" in the culmination of these events. 3. As declared to the prophets: These things were all declared to the Old Testament prophets and witness borne in the prophecies to their fulfillment. (Romans 16:25-26; 1 Peter 1:10-12) These were the things "manifested in last times"—the end of the Jewish world. (1 Peter 1:20)

The old prophets contemplated all of the things pertaining to the kingdom of Christ, both of its inauguration and its expansion. (Genesis 49:1; Isaiah 2:2-5; Micah 4:1-4; Daniel 2:42-45; Daniel 10:14; Zechariah 14:1-21) The revelations made known to the prophets were a declaration in advance of the things to come—a witness to them—and found fulfillment in the events herein disclosed.

### Verses 8-10 The eating of the little book

—10:8-10. 1. The voice from heaven: The voice again is the voice of verse 4; and from heaven identifies it with the voice from midst the throne, chapter 9:13. It was the voice of direct authority from God, not through any agents, angels, creatures, elders or mediaries of the visions—but from God himself. 2. In the mouth sweet - in the belly bitter. The symbol of eating a book is found in the apocalypses of Ezekiel, with the same effects as described in this vision. (Ezekiel 2:9; Ezekiel 3:7; Ezekiel 3:14). The eating of this little book was in the mouth sweet as honey, as the precious flavor ascribed to the words of God. (Psalms 19:10; Jeremiah 15:16) The effects of eating the book were both sweet and bitter. John said: In my mouth sweet—in my belly bitter. The assurances and promises of victory and of reward were "sweet as honey." The contemplation of such triumphs produced the sweetness of joy and rejoicing; but the realization of the awful pronouncements fraught with fearful woes, turned the sweetness to bitterness in the belly, by reason of further contemplation on the tragic sufferings and sorrow, trials and tribulation they all would be called upon to endure in faithfulness, even in martyrdom, to receive the promised crown.

### Verse 11 The commission to evangelize

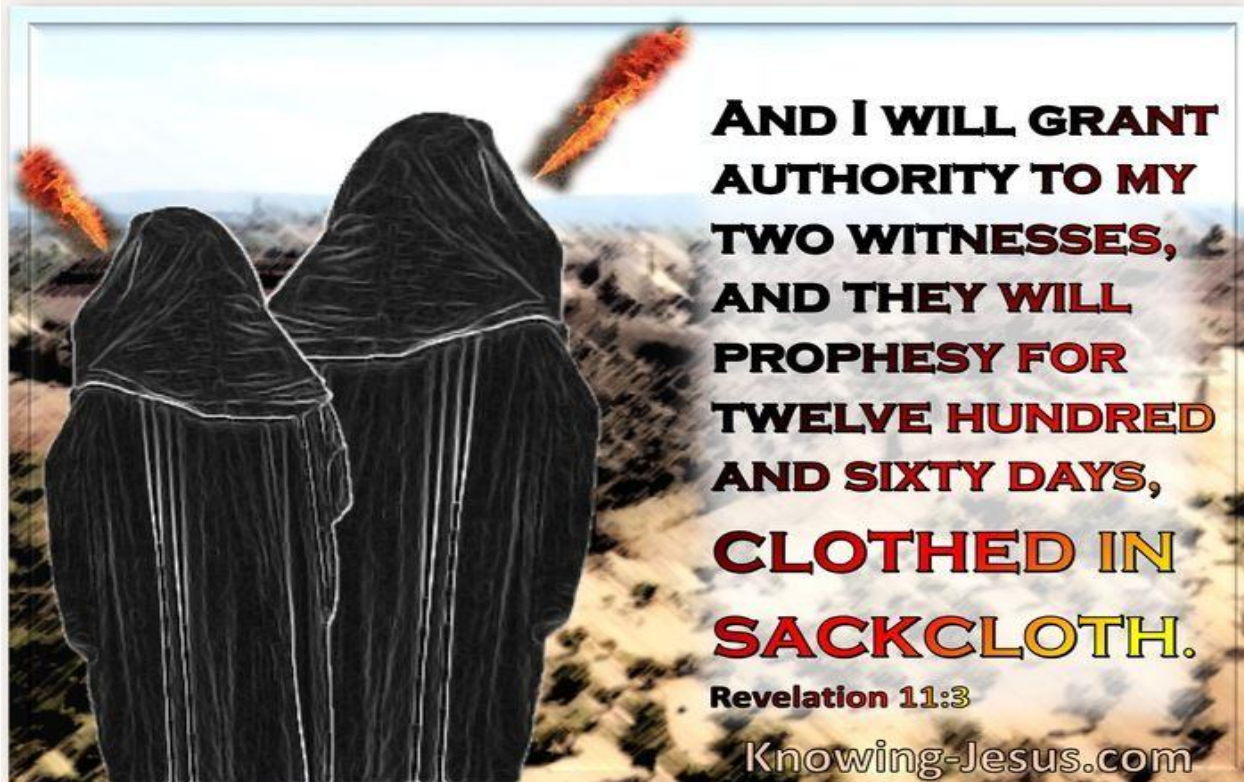
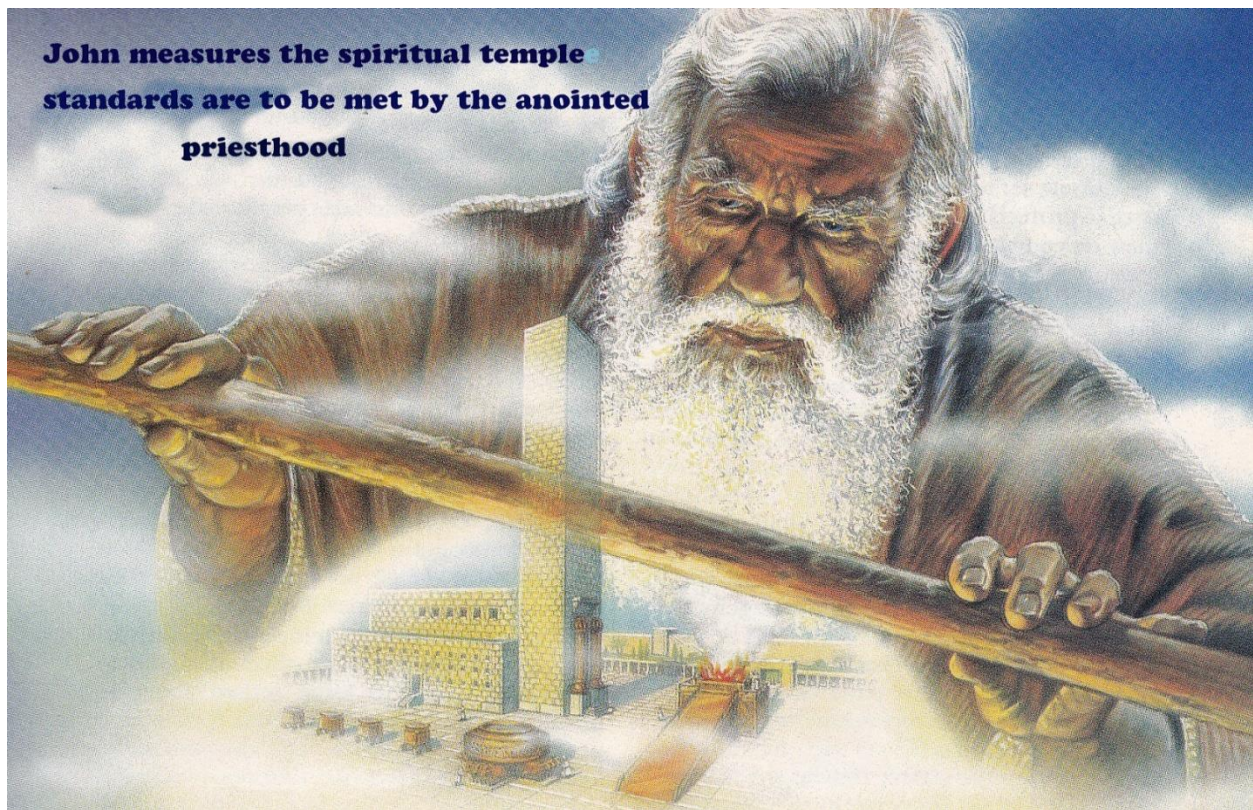
—10:11. 1. Thou must prophesy again: Here is the clear indication that John survived the Patmos Revelation. He survived the catastrophe of Jerusalem, to go among the nations, peoples, tongues, kings, proclaiming the passing away of the old things of Judaism and the end of the old system, preaching again the word that concerns the people of all nations. He would himself fulfill Matthew 24:31. 2. Before peoples, nations, tongues and kings: To apply the expression prophesy again to the further things in the Revelation does not fit the language used by the angel, before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings." The statement is comparable to the words of Jesus to Saul on the Damascus road in that commission to be executed by Paul, the apostle, recorded in Acts 9:15 : "But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." The passage indicates that John left the scene of these visions and became active in many countries, among many peoples and tongues

*Thematic Parallels Between the Beast of Revelation & Daniel*

Description	Revelation	Daniel
Comes up from the Abyss/sea	11:7; 13:1; 17:8	7:3
Makes war, conquers and kills the saints	11:7; 13:7, 10, 15	7:8 (LXX), 21, 25
Has ten horns	13:1; cf. 12:3	7:7, 20
Resembles a leopard	13:2	7:6
Resembles a bear	13:2	7:5
Resembles a lion	13:2	7:4
Given power and authority by Dragon	13:2, 4, 5, 7	7:6
Wounded fatally	13:3, 12, 14	7:11
Speaks great things with mouth	13:5	7:8, 20
Blasphemes God	13:5, 6	7:25; cf. 11:36
Rules for 42 months (time, times, and half a time)	13:5; cf. 12:14	7:25
Ten horns are ten kings	17:3, 7, 12, 16	7:24
Goes to destruction	17:8, 11	7:11, 26
Thrown into fire	19:20; 20:10	7:11 <sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Wilson, M. (2007). *Charts on the Book of Revelation: Literary, Historical, and Theological Perspectives* (p. 87). Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional.

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THEN

THE SEVENTH ANGEL SOUNDED:  
And there were loud voices in heaven,

saying,

“THE KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD  
*have become* THE KINGDOMS  
OF OUR LORD & OF HIS CHRIST,

AND HE SHALL REIGN

*forever and ever!*

REVELATION 11 FIFTEEN

Revelation 11: 19 ( KJV)

And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail



### Revelation 11:1

*"And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and one said, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein."*

Earlier when asked who would be able to stand against the judgment of God, we learned that God's divine retribution would be held back until all His faithful servants had been sealed in their foreheads (Revelation 7). The time is approaching for the sounding of the seventh trumpet and John is told to measure the temple of God. The temple of God here is representative of the church which is the collection of the redeemed, illustrated here by "*them that worship therein*". The altar is the one that is beneath where the souls of the slain cried out for justice in Revelation 6:9-10. The entire sum of the saved is in view here and John has been told to measure them. He isn't measuring objects, rather he is taking the measure of the people represented by the objects in the vision. With this final judgment in sight, John has been instructed to see for himself how many of the souls had been sealed.

### Revelation 11:2

*"And the court which is without the temple leave without, and measure it not; for it hath been given unto the nations: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months."*

The temple in verse one was representative of the church, therefore those who are not within the temple are not in the church and they are not to be included with the number of the redeemed in any way. The church is referred to in the NT epistles as the "temple of God" (1 Corinthians 3:16). There is a contrast drawn here between those who are saved in the temple and those who are not saved being outside the temple.

The area outside the temple is populated by the nations of the earth who persecuted the church and treaded it under foot for forty-two months. This period of time is 3 1/2 years as is also the '*thousand two hundred and threescore days*' in the following verse. The number 3 1/2 is half of 7 which symbolizes the perfection of God on earth. The number 3 1/2 symbolizes that which is incomplete therefore the nations of the earth were not allowed to trample the church underfoot until it was destroyed.

### Revelation 11:3

*"And I will give unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth."*

Keeping in mind who the good characters are & what they are doing we can know that these two witnesses represent the church which is prophesying for the period of time allowed for the nations of the earth to trample them underfoot. These two witnesses compared with the ones sent out by Jesus in pairs (Luke 10:1) are the living saints on earth of the group of those represented as the "*temple of God*". While the saints on earth are being persecuted, they are teaching, preaching and trying to reach the lost. They were trying to save the very ones that were trying to kill them.

### Revelation 11:4

*"These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks, standing before the Lord of the earth."*

This is an explanation of who the two witnesses were...

The number [two](#) represented strength and confirmation in the minds of the 1st century Christians. The two witnesses in verse 11 are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks. Their characteristics were the bearers of food and of the light of righteousness standing before the Lord of the earth. These are the living saints of God on earth carrying out the duties of carrying the gospel message to the lost.

The Lord of the earth they are standing before is interesting. Is this the evil influences of Satan they are pictured as, standing in opposition to face to face? Or is this God they are standing before, pictured here standing together in opposition to the influences of evil? There's evidence enough to build a case in support of either view. Of importance is that the people represented in this vision are standing for good and standing in opposition to evil. In that there is no doubt.

### Revelation 11:5

*"And if any man desireth to hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth and devoureth their enemies; and if any man shall desire to hurt them, in this manner must he be killed."*

The saints on earth are in view in this vision. Obviously literal fire does not come from the mouth of Christians. This figure draws its meaning from the words spoken by God to Jeremiah in 5:14, "*Wherefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them.*" The image here is of power which is for the protection of the saints and the conquest of their enemies. The fire coming out of the mouths of the witnesses is the condemnation of sin and the judgment of God on the unrighteous. we also see here the fate of those who would oppress the saints.

### Revelation 11:6

*"These have the power to shut the heaven, that it rain not during the days of their prophecy: and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they shall desire."*

Again we see the imagery of the power of the saints being drawn from old testament figures. Elijah prayed for a drought that lasted "*three years and six months*" (Luke 4:25, James 5:17), and Moses turned the water in Egypt to blood (Exodus 7:20). **It is very interesting that the drought of Elijah lasted the exact same period of time that the holy city would be trodden underfoot and period of time that the two witnesses would prophecy.** All of these figures of divine retribution were seen in the Old Testament and refer to God's judgment on the Roman Empire. The Jewish Christians familiar with the ancient prophets would associate these things with the plagues they inflicted on their oppressors by the power of God. God was answering their prayers and they knew the difficulties that were befalling their persecutors were a direct result of God answering their prayers - intervening on their behalf.

### Revelation 11:7

*"And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that cometh up out of the abyss shall make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them."*

And here starts some of the grimmest prophecy of John's vision so far. The Christians, represented as the two witnesses, who were trying to bring those who were their bitterest mortal enemies to Christ were going to suffer heavy casualties. We will see more of this beast that cometh up out of the abyss later on, but for now it is obvious this is the enemy of the Christians who is making war against them. And sadly, the suffering Christians are being told that they will be overcome and suffer greatly.

### Revelation 11:8

*"And their dead bodies (lie) in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified."*

Scholars are divided on whether this is a reference to Jerusalem or not. The words "*great city*" occur in Revelation 10 times in the King James version. The only mention of Jerusalem in Revelation is in reference to the new Jerusalem. Certainly, Jesus was crucified in Jerusalem. History records that no Christians were killed in Jerusalem when it was destroyed by the Roman Empire. The destruction of the City of Jerusalem by the Roman Legions was initiated in response against a Jewish revolt, not in action against the Christians. **[Although after the burning of Rome Titus had hopes of destroying the center of the early Christian church - the Jews being those first evangelized - which was also located in Jerusalem.]**

Of significance here is the fact that regardless of when Jerusalem was destroyed in relation to the writing of Revelation, some of the things which must 'shortly come to pass' certainly did have to occur after Jerusalem was destroyed.

### Revelation 11:9

*"And from among the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations do (men) look upon their dead bodies three days and a half, and suffer not their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb."*

The slain Christians did not even get so much as a decent burial. They were left to serve as public displays for all who would see and know of their fate and why. It's almost like a demonstration of what awaits those who refuse to bow down and worship the emperor. This went on for the same amount of time that the church represented as the "two witnesses" testified of Jesus to the lost.

Revelation 11:10

*"And they that dwell on the earth rejoice over them, and make merry; and they shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth."*

The oppressors of the Christians who tried to utterly destroy them from the face of the earth were quite happy with themselves. They celebrated among themselves over their apparent victory over the Christians who tormented them with warnings of God's judgment upon their evil actions. They got tired of hearing about it. Those Christians were doing their jobs. They were warning the lost, they were letting them know what was in store for them despite the obvious danger to themselves for doing it.

It is heart wrenching to consider that these valiant Christians were so persecuted that their enemies actually thought they had finally overcome them once and for all. It must have been horrendous for the saints of God in those days. They were being persecuted to the death and their persecutors were celebrating it.

Revelation 11:11

*"And after the three days and a half the breath of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them that beheld them."*

The two witnesses which represent the saints on earth which collectively make up the church appeared for a time to have been destroyed. Where the church may have been stamped out in one area of the empire, it rose up in another, or back in the same place it was before. The church, which is simply a collection of God's people, could not be destroyed completely and those who thought so were greatly distressed when they saw it rise up again.

The individual saints were not resurrected. The dead martyrs remained dead. God's collective people are in view in this vision. The Christians who received John's letter would know that many of them would die but they were reassured that the church would live on. This is important information for the oppressed Christians indeed. Think about how concerned they must have been for their children. To die the death of a martyr is horrible in and of itself, but the greatest agony of all to a parent who is martyred is to leave their children both unprotected and without family support. Yes, there are many of them who are going to die, but take comfort because Satan is not going to win, the church will go on and your children will not be left without hope.

#### Revelation 11:12

*"And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they went up into heaven in the cloud; and their enemies beheld them."*

Here is the reward of the faithful Christians who die in the persecution. They will not remain dead, rather they will ascend into heaven in the end, glorified in the sight of their enemies. What a comfort this must have been to the oppressed saints. Keeping in mind that Revelation is written to them specifically and not to their enemies, this is a picture of their final destiny. They are being reassured that they will ascend into heaven to be with God the Father forever.

#### Revelation 11:13

*"And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell; and there were killed in the earthquake seven thousand persons: and the rest were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven."*

Earthquakes and other natural calamities have been set up to represent God's judgment on the enemies of righteousness earlier in the book. This earthquake which destroyed part of the city is meant only as a partial judgment. The enemies of righteousness were not going to be utterly obliterated. The seven thousand persons killed would be the total destruction of God's enemies in the part of the city that fell.



The survivors started to recognize the power of God and of truth. Paganism was unable to defeat the Christians and was starting to lose its grip as people were scared and starting to see the power of the God of the Christians. This does not mean a wholesale repentance and conversion to God, rather a weakening of paganism as many realized their manmade gods were useless and incapable of helping them. The Christians had been persecuted to the point that they all but disappeared from sight, yet the plagues went on, the earthquakes continued, the problems tearing them down bit by bit continued.

This is evidence that at the core, the enemies of Christianity really knew they were at fault. They see the Christians loving their enemies, doing good to all, proclaiming righteousness everywhere they went and going to their deaths for what they believed in. How can that many people die for their beliefs and not leave an impression on their enemies? Killing them did not defeat them, they came back, oppressing them did not work, they simply tried to love everyone to the truth. The enemies of the Christians do not have to know God in order to recognize that He exists & is behind them. Most people know when they are doing evil regardless of what the masses of humanity around them might be doing. People take comfort and security in numbers and those who persecuted the Christians were no different. But way down deep inside, they knew they were wrong and this is why they hated the Christians so much.

Revelation 11:14

*"The second Woe is past: behold, the third Woe cometh quickly."*

Before the fifth angel sounded his trumpet we have the pronouncement of three woes upon the inhabitants of the earth, each one associated with the sounding of a trumpet (Revelation 8:13). The first of the three woes which was heralded by the fifth trumpet was the plagues of disease which accompany the kind of decadent lifestyles the Romans were living which struck them from within the empire (Revelation 9:1-11). Then following in verse 12 of chapter nine we read, *"One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter"*. The second woe which was heralded by the sixth trumpet was the nation enemies of the Roman Empire which

struck them from without Revelation 9:13-21. And then from Revelation 10:1 to now is a buildup to what is about to happen, "*but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets*" (Revelation 10:7). We see God's swift retribution during this period, the bittersweet message that John took into his bowels and the instruction that he still had more to prophecy before all the earth.

And then in chapter 11 we see the power of the saints over their enemies, the death of many of the saints and the appearance of the victory of evil over the Christians for a short period of time in various places. we need to keep in mind that this is not a linear step by step progression, rather it is indicative of what was going on across the entire empire over a period of time. Then in the days when the seventh trumpet begins to sound the mystery of God is now apparent to the saints as given to the prophets. The good tidings are the gospel, the good news, the way of redemption from sin and the ultimate victory of the righteous over the unrighteous.

It is significant to the understanding of the following elements of John's vision to take note of the text. The third woe comes quickly on the heels of the second woe. There's no long period of time in view in this vision. The final woe which occurs concurrently with the sounding of the seventh trumpet is upon them.

### Revelation 11:15

*"And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, The kingdom of the world is become (the kingdom) of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever."*

At long last, the seventh angel sounds. This was a way of John illustrating to the first readers, the final and ultimate defeat of their enemies and the everlasting reign of the champion of the righteous.

### Revelation 11:16

*"And the four and twenty elders, who sit before God on their thrones, fell upon their faces and worshipped God,"*

These are the same 24 elders that we saw in the beginning of this vision. They fall on their faces and worship God when they see His great plan come to its final stage and the kingdom of the earth who oppressed their brothers and sisters in Christ have finally been overthrown.

### Revelation 11:17

*"saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who art and who wast; because thou hast taken thy great power, and didst reign."*

The thanks they give is gratitude expressed for all that God had done for them. The redemption plan upon which their hopes rested, deliverance of them to eternal life despite the efforts of their enemies and the final triumph of God over the evil forces of Satan. So many saints had died in the great persecution, but they were victorious anyway. So much blood had been spilled but the rewards for those who overcome are eternal. And the 24 elders thanked God for coming through and doing what He promised.

### Revelation 11:18

*"And the nations were wroth, and thy wrath came, and the time of the dead to be judged, and (the time) to give their reward to thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear thy name, the small and the great; and to destroy them that destroy the earth."*

The nations of the world were angry with the Christians & tried to destroy them all, but God's wrath came & the dead were all rewarded according to their deeds. Notice this is being described in the past tense. This signifies that the sounding of the seventh trumpet is so sure that it is depicted by inspiration as having already occurred.

It is significant here to note that God placed the blame for the destruction of the earth upon the unrighteous. As we learned earlier God's retribution on the empire was handed out in the form of destructive natural disasters upon the earth. The blame for this is placed squarely on the heads of the enemies of God. All of the earthquakes, storms, famines, floods and other plagues which afflicted their world were their own fault and those who brought this destruction upon the earth are going to be destroyed.

When we hear of a horrendous natural disaster where hundreds of thousands of people die and we hear people cry out in mental anguish over the devastation and death, and we see the suffering of those who survived and we hear people question the existence and mercy of an all-powerful God, we can take what we learn from Revelation and give people those answers. And the remedy today is the same as it was in the first, second and third centuries. Repent and turn to God!

Revelation 11:19

*"And there was opened the temple of God that is in heaven; and there was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant; and there followed lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail."*

This vision started with the throne room of God opened for view and it ends the same way. The City of Jerusalem is gone but God's throne room is still standing, still visible in the vision and still open. The ark of the covenant in the tabernacle and in Solomon's temple was where the tables containing God's covenant with His people was kept. The image of the ark in this vision assured the readers that God's covenant remains close to Him and He would honor it.

The lightnings, thunders, voices and other things that accompanied the throne scene are the same as they were in Revelation 4:5. This is in representation of the power of God on His throne. John was told he still had more prophecy to write down in Revelation 10:11. The throne is still open, the voices are still coming forth, there is more yet to come. In the vision following this, we will see the same good characters and the same evil ones, the same conflict with the same results but with more details and more information.

This is evidence that the events represented by the seven trumpets were not occurring in a linear timeline but were happening concurrent with one another across the empire. Chapter 11 closes with the kingdom of earth being overthrown and God and His faithful emerging triumphant but the scenes are going to be revisited in the chapters to come. **This repeating imagery is an application we can draw to our circumstances today. The events we have studied in this vision can be compared to historical events that have occurred throughout the Christian age. Even today, we who are righteous can study these visions and read our history and see them being re-enacted over and over again. How many nations will be overthrown before mankind as a whole finally wakes up and sees that their own evil lifestyle is what perpetuated all the misery?**

Then seventh angel sounded & it was announced in heaven that 'Babylon' had fallen and was no longer in the possession of the enemies of Christ. Then the twenty-four elders which sat before God on His throne fell prostrate on their faces saying, "Thank you Lord God almighty, who lives forever, because you have taken your great power and have reigned as our King. The nations were angry with us and persecuted us greatly but now your wrath has at last come and your enemies judged and your children who are your saints and fear your name both small and great are being rewarded. And now you shall destroy those who are really responsible for the destruction that has plagued the earth."

**And the throne room of God was opened in heaven, and God had with Him the promises of His covenant with His children and He spoke with great power of more things which will be. . . [Edited Content @Church of Christ Articles]**

## Foy Wallace's Interpretation of Chapter Eleven From His Commentary:

(CHAPTERS 10-11) Lastly, the culmination of all the events of the first apocalypse was depicted when the seventh angel sounded the seventh trumpet, and the great voices in heaven in grand unison proclaimed: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." The Rider of the white horse had conquered. Judaism, the arch enemy of Christ had fallen; the stars of Jewish rulership had been plucked from their orbits of dominion; the Jewish state was ended; the temple was no longer standing. The New Jerusalem and the spiritual temple of New Israel had prevailed. From the apocalypse of the Conquering Christ, the visions turned in chapter 12, to his tortured but triumphant church.

### Verse 1 The measuring of the temple

-11:1-2. The contents of the eleventh chapter are a continuation of the scenes of the interlude, or intermediate visions, between the sixth and seventh trumpet announcements. The things narrated belong to the days of the voice of the seventh angel—the end of the Jewish state or political dispensation. The siege and fall of Jerusalem was at hand. The pronouncement of chapter 10 that there should be time no longer had been made. The eleventh chapter presents intervening scenes of measuring the temple, for the preservation of the "holy seed," the "true Israel," the "one hundred forty-four thousand," the "innumerable host," the "remnant according to the election of grace," and the "sealed number"-representative of all spiritual Israel, the whole faithful church, and the true spiritual temple in contrast with the old temple which though still standing, was measured for destruction. The old Jerusalem, the apostate city, was marked for its downfall. 1. A reed like a rod:

The indication is that this reed was given to John in the same manner and, hence, by the same One by whom the book was given to him in chapter 10:9. And the angel that commanded him to measure the temple is the same angel that commanded him to eat the book. The use of the article the angel, rather than an angel, or another angel, designates the angel as Christ himself, as shown in the notes on the preceding chapter. The reed was like a rod. The measuring reed was six cubits, about three yards in length. This measuring reed was like a rod, signifying the authority of its giver, the angel. In the psalm prophecy of Christ, David said: "I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion . . . I will declare the decree . . . thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee . . . I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron." (Psalms 2:6-9)

Again, the psalmist said: "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion." (Psalms 110:1-2) Both of these psalms are applied in the New Testament to the rule and authority of Christ. In that same sense it is used in chapter 2:27, "He shall rule them with a rod of iron"—the rule of irresistible authority. The rod was also the symbol of affliction, as signified in the phrase "passing under the rod" of Ezekiel 20:37, and "take his rod away from me," of Job 9:34. This measuring reed given to John symbolized the authority of this "mighty angel" (10:1), and his power to protect and preserve the true believers. 2. Measure, temple, altar, worship: At the start of the interval between the sixth and seventh seals, the angel announced the purpose of the interlude (chapter 7:3) as time to seal the servants of God; and in verse 4 he described and defined the number of them which were sealed as being symbolically of all the tribes of the children of Israel. In the same imagery here, in the interval between the sixth and seventh trumpets, the command of the angel to measure the temple, the altar and them that worship is symbolic of the true Israel of God. They were measured for preservation, the holy seed of Israel, spiritual Israel, that should not perish. The measured number here in chapter 11 is the same company of believers as the sealed number of chapter 7. They are the symbolic one hundred forty-four thousand of all the tribes of Israel—of chapter 7:4—computed on the basis of twelve times twelve for the twelve tribes, and in the numeral thousand for a symbol of the aggregated whole, complete, total body of true believers, of the spiritual tribes of Israel. (Acts 26:7) The symbolism of the measuring of the temple is exactly the same, the sealed servants of chapter 7 and the measured worshipers of chapter 11 are the same company, symbolic of the same thing, sealed and measured for the same purpose.

Verse 2 - 3. The court which is without the temple—measure it not: As the measured portion of the temple symbolized the true Israel, the court without, that outside the measured part, signified unbelieving Israel. "The court without—leave out"—it was not to be measured for preservation. They were not the sealed servants of God—they were not included in the twelve times twelve thousand of the spiritual tribes. They were given unto the Gentiles, and along with the old temple and Jewish state they were destined for destruction. As unbelieving Israel they should be cut off (Romans 11:22). Paul said cut off; John said leave out. The whole symbol is that the measured portion was the preserved spiritual Israel & the unmeasured part was the unbelieving fleshly Jewish nation "given to the Gentiles" to be destroyed by the Romans, which was done in the siege of Jerusalem, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the end of the Jewish world. 4. The holy city shall they tread under foot. Jerusalem was the once holy city: but was no longer that. It was here called holy because of its history.

It was called holy here because of its past association with the covenanted and the sainted ancestors. "How is the faithful city become harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers." (Isaiah 1:21) "O Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee . . . Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." (Matthew 23:37-38) By divine decree Jerusalem was to be desolated and "trodden down of the Gentiles." (Luke 21:24) The judgment had already been passed, and John was commanded to leave Jerusalem out & "measure it not," as that which had been cast away. 5. A thousand two hundred and threescore days. The mathematical calculation of this figure was twelve hundred and sixty days, the same period of time assigned for the flight of the woman into the wilderness. (Chapter 12:6) The interpretation of scriptural numerals in relation to days and months should not be made on the basis of the literal number unless an over-riding reason for the exact mathematical application exists. Such a reason does exist in this calculation of the forty and two months, or the twelve hundred and sixty days of Revelation, mentioned in 11:2-3, 12:6 and 13:5. From the imperial order and the beginning of the siege to its end & completion it was forty-two months, or a thousand two hundred and threescore days, or the oft-mentioned twelve hundred and sixty days – that was the exact period of time, as a matter of historical record, which covered the events of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem. An example of such necessary mathematical application is in the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the end of the ten tribes, chapter 7:1-9. Because of the importance of this Isaiahan prophecy, and its bearing on the exact mathematical application of the forty-two months period of Revelation, the entire section of the Old Testament prophecy is here inserted: "1. And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jothan, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it. 2. And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind. 3. Then said the Lord unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shearjashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field; 4. And say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be fainthearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin & Syria & of the son of Remaliah. 5. Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying, 6. Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal: 7. Thus saith the Lord God, it shall not stand neither shall it come to pass. 8. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of



Damascus is Rezin; and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people. 9. And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established."

This prophecy of Isaiah was to the effect that the conspiracy against Judah could not be executed, and that in threescore and five years the ten tribes (Ephraim) would cease to be a people, and it is the history of it that in exactly sixty-five years, from the date of Isaiah's prophecy, the ten tribes came to end—and that prophecy was literally fulfilled. And it was the history of it, in connection with the point of discussion, that it was exactly forty-two months (twelve hundred and sixty days, or a thousand two hundred and threescore days) from the imperial command to besiege and destroy Jerusalem to the accomplishment of the commission— and this apocalypse was thus literally fulfilled also. For the historical evidence, Vespasian received his commission from Nero, and declared war on Jerusalem February, A.D. 67. The siege ended with the fall of Jerusalem, the burning of the city and temple, in August, A.D. 70. This computation of dates yields the forty-two months for Jerusalem to be "trodden under foot" as in the vision of Revelation 11:2. The historical authority for these dates is Lardner's Jewish Testimonies, Vol. 8, and Josephus, in Wars Of The Jews, Vol. 7. The continuous historical theory of the dark ages period and to the end of time lacks historical evidence and factual support and must be rejected. In chapter 13:5 the same exact number was used to designate the period of the beast's authority, and for the two witnesses to testify, as mentioned in verse 3, here in chapter 11. It was the same period as the "times of the Gentiles" in Luke 21:24, and it meant the time of judgment on Jerusalem by the Romans—therefore, the city was trodden down until the times connected with these events were fulfilled; that is, the period in which the Gentiles were engaged in the treading down of Jerusalem was thus designated, and only that period was envisioned in the mathematical phrases of the forty and two months and the thousand two hundred and threescore days. The period designated as "the times of the Gentiles" in the Lord's discourse on Olivet, as recorded by Luke, (21:24) does not refer to the time of salvation for the Gentiles, but to the period for the infliction of judgment on Jerusalem which was accomplished by the Gentiles (the Romans). The preposition until connected with the phrase the times of the Gentiles carries no indication of anything after the times mentioned. In Galatians 3:19 the apostle declared that the law was added until Christ should come— and that was its point of termination. In Hebrews 10:9 the apostle further said that the Mosaic ordinances were imposed until the time of the new covenant—and there the old ordinances ended.

So, the declaration that Jerusalem was trodden down until the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled had reference to the siege & destruction of the city—that was the point of termination and Jerusalem and all for which it had stood in the system of Judaism, theocratically and politically, according to all prophecies and apocalypses concerning it, came to its inglorious end.

### Verse 3 The testimony of the two witnesses

--11:3-14. 1. Power unto my two witnesses: The statement I will give in reference to my two witnesses reveals that the speaker here is Christ, the angel of verse 1, the only One who could assume such rank and authority. The assurance I will give power is based on a promise of the Lord to the apostles in Matthew 10:18-20, that when they should be arraigned "for testimony" they should "take no thought how or what" to speak; and as in Mark 13:11, "take no thought beforehand, neither do ye premeditate" & as in Luke 12:12, "the Holy Spirit shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say." This is the power here given to the witnesses. The witnesses are representative of the prophets and apostles whose testimony was "this gospel of the kingdom" which should be "preached in all the world for a witness" before the end should come— Matthew 24:14. The dual testimony is based on the requirement of the law in Deuteronomy 19:15 that "at the mouth of two witnesses shall the matter be established," and repeated by Jesus in John 8:17, "it is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true"; the allusion to which is made also in Hebrews 10:28, "he that despised Moses' law died . . . under two or three witnesses." These are the witnesses of Matthew 23:31-37, of whom the Lord said: "Ye are the children of them which killed the prophets . . . behold I send unto you prophets . . . and some of them ye shall kill . . . crucify . . . scourge . . . and persecute . . . O Jerusalem. . . that killest the prophets and stonest them sent unto thee." They are representative of those mentioned further by Stephen in Acts 7:52, "which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?" By the prophets of the old dispensation and the apostles of the new covenant, the testimony, divine revelation, was completed and by "the two witnesses" thereby established. 2. Prophecy . . . clothed in sackcloth: The word sackcloth was of Hebrew origin and was interfused into every language as a symbol of ill-fortune. It was the suit of mourning in death, the garb of humility & penitence under judgment, and the clothing of suffering in calamities & persecutions—as so mentioned in Job 16:15; Psalms 30:11; Jeremiah 4:8; Isaiah 29:2; Zechariah 13:4. The speaker in this vision told John that his two witnesses should prophesy clothed in sackcloth, as a sign of great affliction & as a token of the extreme suffering that their testimony should cause to come on them, portraying retrospectively the altar scenes of 6:9-11,

and prospectively all of the tribulations yet to be unfolded, of which the two witnesses were representatives. 3. A thousand two hundred three-score: The forty-two months equal twelve hundred sixty days, computed mathematically ( $42 \times 30 = 1260$ ), which is in the text declared to be "a thousand two hundred and three score days." The reader is requested to turn back to the comments on verse 2 and compare again the parallel between Isaiah 7:1-25 : 1-9 and the forty-two months of Revelation for an example of exact mathematical application. It designated the period of time for the Gentiles to tread Jerusalem, the holy city, under foot, which was accomplished and fulfilled in the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans. It is also the appointed time for the two witnesses "clothed in sackcloth" to prophesy, in the appropriate garb of the prophets during the time of these woes. That is what the angel told John these representative witnesses should do and it agrees with what the Lord also said should be done in the parallel passages previously cited in Matthew 24:14; Mark 13:10; Luke 21:12-15-24. It is evident that the period of the treading down of Jerusalem was the time of the testimony of the witnesses also.

Verse 4 - The two olive trees and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth: Here the two witnesses are said to be two candlesticks and two olive trees. As already noted the number two stood for the established testimony of a complete revelation, being the number of witnesses required for a testimony to be legally established. The candlesticks signified light, the dispensing of light, which was its general significance always. The olive tree was then the source of the oil for the lamps, the light the two olive trees, standing in relation to two candlesticks, should dispense. Actually, our word candlestick is not exact, a sort of misnomer, since that light-dispenser held lamps only, supplied with the purest olive oil when used in the tabernacle or temple service of God. In chapters 1:20; 2:1 the candlestick was made an emblem of the church, which is not itself the light, but holds forth the light from Christ, who is Himself the light. The two witnesses were thus given an extended significance as representative of the prophets and the apostles, holding the lamp of light, burning the oil of the divine testimony of the two covenants, the Old and New Testaments. As Zerubbabel and Joshua in the same symbolism of Zechariah 4:1-14, were said to be "the two anointed ones, standing before the Lord of the whole earth," so were the two witnesses of this vision standing before the God of the earth as the representatives of the whole body of believers, the collective "witness of Jesus" and "the word of God" by "the testimony which they held." (Chapter 2:9; 20:4)

Verse 5-6 In verses 5-6 the two witnesses were set forth in this temple vision as both the light of the world and the protectors of the temple. "If any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth . . . he must in this manner be killed."

No power would be able to prevail against the two witnesses until their work was done. "These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will." The figurative phrase to shut heaven that it rain not signifies the restraining of the civil powers to prevent and destroy the work of the witnesses. The power of the witnesses over the waters to turn them to blood and to smite the earth with all plagues were figurative descriptions of the calamities that would follow testimony of the witnesses to the ultimate destruction of their persecutors. The days of the prophesying of the two witnesses defined the same period as the days of the voice of the seventh angel. (Chapter 10:7) In one the mystery should be finished, in the other they finished their testimony. During this period no power could prevail over them. It was that interval in which the angel of chapter 7 gave command to "hurt not . . . till we have sealed the servants of God." If any man willed to hurt them, initiated action against them, he must in this manner be killed—he would be destroyed in the manner that verse 5 describes, by the "fire" proceeding "out of their mouths" which "devoureth their enemies." These were the symbols of divine judgment against the persecutors of witnesses and the opponents of their testimony (v. 7), and it followed the same figures of speech of the threatened judgments of Christ to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3.

Verse 7 In verses 7-8, when the two witnesses had "finished their testimony," and the "days" of their prophesying were completed, the "beast" from abyss would "make war against them" and "overcome them" and "kill them." This agrees with the description of the "end" after the "gospel of the kingdom" had been preached "in all the world for a witness unto all nations." Neither earthly nor hadaan power could prevail against them until their testimony was finished, but when this was accomplished, the beast of the abyss would overcome them. This introduces the beast which will be described in the following chapters, personified 'in the persecuting emperor, or power, which though as yet had not appeared in the form of the beast, was symbolized in "the angel" of the abyss of chapter 9:11. The "king" leader of chapter 9:11 was "the angel of the bottomless pit," and from that the bottomless pit this beast ascended also. He was the "Destroyer," the persecutor, they were identical.

The beast should overcome and kill the two witnesses. He was where they were and where they became the representatives of the persecuted church, and the martyrs, described in the following chapters. The beast could have been no other than the Roman power, for even when the Jews by their own law had demanded the death punishment, it was necessarily executed by Roman authority. The unbelieving Jews were themselves the instigators of these persecutions but the Roman emperor was the executing power, and was the beast which made war, overcame, and killed the witnesses— the cause they represented. But it was for a time only, for the witnesses should rise up and live again.

Verse 8 In verse 8, the specter of their dead bodies was seen lying in the street of the great city; it was an open spectacle of shame upon "the faithful city become an harlot." (Isaiah 1:21) The once glorious city was figuratively called "Sodom and Egypt," a designation known to the Jews as symbols of wickedness. Jerusalem had become a spiritual Sodom and Egypt. (Jeremiah 23:14; Ezekiel 16:46-52; Isaiah 1:10) The great city is identified in the text as Jerusalem by the description where also our Lord was crucified, of which, and in reference to himself, Jesus said, "for it can't be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." (Luke 13:33; Matthew 23:34-37) It was consistent with all aspects of the scene to designate Jerusalem as Sodom and Egypt. The two names in biblical history were seen as synonymous with abominable wickedness, oppression and persecution. Both designations – the holy city, and Sodom and Egypt—were adaptable to the checkered history of Jerusalem.

Verse 9-10 In verse 9, it is stated that the people and kindred and tongues & nations, such as were represented in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, should see the dead bodies of the two witnesses. The word see indicated that the people would come to know the testimony of the witnesses, and wouldn't allow them to be put in the grave—that is, the cause of the two witnesses survived. 5. The three and one-half days here were one-half of the symbolic seven, a shortened period of calamity, corresponding to the Lord's description of these tribulations in Matthew 24:22 and Mark 13:20: "And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days" - - the cause only shortly defeated. A comparison of this application of the phrase three and one-half days is found also in the message that Jesus sent to Herod, recorded in Luke 13:31-33 : "The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out and depart hence: for Herod will kill thee. And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless, I must walk today, and tomorrow,

and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." This was an effort of the Pharisees to scare Jesus; he was lingering too long in Galilee to please his adversaries; and he was adding followers & new adherents to his teaching, as his reputation increased. The province of Galilee was a safe retreat from the dangers that would surround Jesus in Jerusalem & the Pharisees knowingly attempted to reverse the Lord's favorable surroundings. It was an alleged Herodian threat, which if true, and Jesus had yielded to the intimidation, it would have involved him in an ignoble flight from the scene of his ministry; if not true, it was the strategy of the Pharisees under friendly mien and confidential guise to divert his course from Galilee into the more perilous regions of Jerusalem. The pretension was that despite their differences the Pharisees were concerned with the Lord's safety; but there was no evidence that Herod Antipas had any designs of killing Jesus, as ascribed by these Pharisees. He had already enough blood on his hands by the execution of John in which he had been entangled and entrapped unawares (Matthew 14:2); and thinking that Jesus was John raised to life (Luke 9:7-9), he wouldn't have been so foolish as to kill him again; beside this, is the fact that Herod did not want to kill Jesus, as shown by his sending him back to Pilate rather than to sentence Jesus in his own court. (Luke 23:6) The Herodian report was a Pharisaical invention, a fiction of their own to rid Galilee of Jesus, rather than a collusion with or an actual threat from Herod. The Lord answered the Pharisees: Behold, I cast out devils, and do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. The proper analysis of the passage is: As in the past, so in the present (today); I shall continue without interruption (tomorrow); and in the future also (third day), I shall pursue this course until my ministry shall have reached completion in the finished work (perfected). There had been a predetermined time for the Lord's earthly ministry; instead of fleeing he would accomplish his work this day and tomorrow, and when the third or last day came, he should then have been perfected - his ministry fulfilled and his work finished.

On another occasion (John 11:9) when the disciples warned Jesus that the Jews had plotted to stone him, Jesus answered: "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" Here again a figurative expression was employed to indicate a fixed and appointed time for the ministry of Christ to be accomplished. In the same figure of speech employed by Jesus on the two occasions mentioned, John represents the two witnesses as having been dead in the street the three and one-half days. Here it denoted that fixed and appointed time for the people to see their testimony, as a result of martyrdom, during the period of suffering. But the fixed time was here designated as three and one-half days because that figure is one-half the seven days

period – as the number seven represented the full time; and one-half of seven, the three & one-half days, represented the shortening of the period of tribulation through which they were passing. This application of the time figure blends into a complete harmony with the Lord's own predictive narrations of the tribulation period, as though woven by one hand into one apocalyptic garment: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." (Matthew 24:21-22) The three and one-half days of the two witnesses were the pictorial fulfillment of the Lord's own prophetic descriptions. The pronouncement of verse 9 that they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations . . . shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves indicated that the defeat of their cause was of short duration – it would survive death, as life returning before decomposition. All of the combined powers of persecution could not prevent the survival of the testimony of the two witnesses. But—they that dwell on earth rejoiced—the enemies of the cause showed great jubilation over the death and public exposure of the witnesses, rejoicing in the victory they thought was gained - but their celebrations were premature. In their exchanges of praise and self-congratulation they would send gifts one to another with mutual admiration in the part each of them played in the prosecution of the cause of the two witnesses gloating in victory because the two prophets tormented them dwelling on the earth. The earth signified the place of the powers, the sphere of authority. They were tormented by the presence & testimony of the two witnesses as the gospel torments the disobedient. (Acts 7:54); and as the effect of truth on evil spirits (1 John 4:18; Matthew 8:29; Mark 5:7; Luke 8:28).

Verse 11 - The finale to the scene of the two witnesses was signified in verse 11: After three days and a half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet: The resurrection of the cause for which the two witnesses died was here envisioned. **It compares with Isaiah's vision of the figurative resurrection of Israel from Babylonian exile (Isaiah 26:13-19); and with Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones (Ezekiel 37:1-14), in which the prophets described the resurrection of Israel from the grave of their captivity. The Ezekiel and Revelation passages contain several parallel expressions—the first, bearing on the return of the captive people of Israel from exile and the latter applying to overcoming of the heathen persecutions; the victory of the church over the persecutors; and the emergence from that period of tribulation and trial. Concerning Israel in captivity, Ezekiel said: "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live . . . and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet."**

After the same manner of language in Revelation 11:1-19, John said: "The Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet." The Ezekiel passage was a prophetic picture of the return of Israel from captivity; and the Revelation passage was an apocalyptic portrayal of the emergence of the church from the period of persecution. The effect of seeing the two witnesses stand upon their feet was described in these words: Great fear upon them which saw them: Reverence came over the by-standers – not the enemies themselves as yet - but the resuscitation of the witnesses, as of life out of death, brought reverence for the testimony of the witnesses.

Verse 12 - Having been revived the two witnesses heard a voice saying: Come up hither (verse 12), and they ascended in a cloud. The triumph of the cause of the apostles and prophets over all foes was thus signified, and they were glorified for their testimony. It is on this principle that the souls of the slain lived and reigned with Christ in Revelation 20:4; and that true Christians now reign with Him, as affirmed by the apostle in Romans 8:17, 1 Corinthians 4:8 and 2 Timothy 2:11. In the vision their enemies beheld them ascend to heaven. The witnesses heard the voice, and the enemies beheld them ascend—it is the scene of victory; it is the apocalyptic picture of the triumph of the cause of the apostles and prophets—the two-fold source of inspired testimony.

Verse 13 & 14 The awesome aftermath of these fearful occurrences was described in verse 13: In the same hour there was a great earthquake. The "same hour" meant in the midst of these events—the period of the triumph of the cause & the testimony of the two witnesses—in the hour of the interlude between sixth & seventh trumpets. The earthquake signified the revolutionary storms, uprisings & upheavals in human affairs, in governments, and among both Jewish and Roman authorities, as it became evident to all, even the most desperate that the Jewish state and Jerusalem, their city, were doomed. The statement that a tenth part of the city fell may seem obscure in meaning and application, but it has both religious and historical significance. In the previous chapters the like figurative phrases were used in the pronouncements of woes, saying a third part of the earth was smitten. The division of parts described the devastations accompanying the siege and destruction of Jerusalem and the blight of the whole land of Palestine that resulted. The woes symbolized this devastation as a series of occurrences, executed in succession. Each calamity was therefore symbolized as a fractional but a component part, in the order of the woes that were being pronounced.



After the same apocalyptic manner, the saying that there was a great earthquake and the tenth part of the city fell, meant that the city and state and commonwealth of the Jews had come to an end. There were ten provinces of the Roman empire, and in this apocalypse the commonwealth of Palestine was represented as a tenth part.

The fall of Jerusalem, the capital city, brought the same disaster upon the entire Jewish commonwealth and, as a synecdoche, the part was put for the whole with Jerusalem representing Palestine, the tenth part of the empire, and when as a tenth part, the city fell, so a tenth part of Rome fell. It was as a result of the earthquake that the tenth part fell, and the great earthquake was symbolic of the great political upheavals that took place all over the empire in connection with these catastrophes. The siege and destruction of Jerusalem had become the signal for revolutions in various other Roman provinces, the historical fact and details of which Josephus and Pliny relate, corroborate and verify. It was therefore reasonable and appropriate apocalyptically to put Jerusalem for the whole commonwealth, and with the downfall of the city, the tenth part fell. This view is further supported by the fact there is no historical record of such a mathematically fractional part of Jerusalem falling during the siege. The contextual surroundings of the phrase were descriptions of universal impact of the downfall of the Jewish state and theocracy on the whole empire, a 10<sup>th</sup> part of which fell with the siege and destruction of Jerusalem and the demolition of the temple which symbolized the theocratic state; and the downfall of the perverted system of Judaism; and the end of the existence of the whole Jewish state. It is no marvel that these catastrophic events should be envisioned as a great earthquake, shaking the whole empire; and it's no wonder the City of Jerusalem was envisioned as a tenth part in the great downfall. In further emphasis upon the colossal effect of such a stupendous event upon the whole Roman world, the huge imagery continues with the following declaration: And in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand. From the beginning of time seven was the number of days in a week, and the number seven has been used in scripture, prophecy and apocalypse as a symbol of the perfect & complete. The employment of this symbolic number in that statement, "in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand," denoted that the destruction of the Jewish commonwealth was complete in the judgment that was passed on the city. Then, in contrast with the downfall of the enemies of the cause represented by the two witnesses it was said that the remnant were affrighted—that is, the calamities were so great the rest of the populace, those not waging the persecutions, abandoned their leaders and rulers in the midst of the awe of the fearful occurrences.

As the Roman centurion executioner stood in awe at the crucifixion of Christ (Matthew 27:54), saying, "truly this was the Son of God," so beholding the things transpiring "the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven." This was the apocalyptic gleam of light piercing the gathering clouds of darkness – the omen of the success of the gospel and of the ultimate deliverance from the persecution awaiting all who would be true to the faith. With this assurance, verse 14 declared that the second woe is past; and, behold, the third cometh quickly. The preceding scenes of the two witnesses had predicted the second woe; now, the final blow was at hand—the end. The sounding of the seventh trumpet was immediate – cometh quickly—and that was the last woe.

### Verse 15 – The seventh trumpet

–11:15. 1. The seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven. The interlude was over. The seventh trumpet sounded the finish – the end of the tribulation period. It was the completion of the "mystery of God" which was "according to the good tidings" of the prophets, fulfilled in the fall of Judaism, the triumph of Christianity, the success of gospel, the victory of the church, and the expansion of the kingdom of Christ. The "great voices in heaven" were the combined voices of the vision united as one to proclaim the announcement of the seventh trumpet. Before this it had been an angel or a voice but now it was all of the voices together in one great voice to announce the end of all events of the vision. The work, which had begun with the prophets (1 Peter 1:1-25) and completed by the apostles, had triumphed over the powers of men, and the kingdoms of this world had become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. The dominion of earthly rule in the kingdoms of men could no longer overpower Christianity – through their citizens they had become the kingdoms of our Lord (God), and of his Christ. This declaration depicted the conversion of the empire's citizens—the worldwide expansion of Christianity. It was the fulfillment of the words of Christ in Matthew 24:31 to send his angels with a great sound of trumpet, after the destruction of Jerusalem to gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heaven to the other. With the fall of Jerusalem came the shaking down of all Jewish opposition to gospel. Christianity was liberated from the fetters of Judaism and entered upon a worldwide career of leavening the civilizations of world by bringing them under the influence of Christ. Thus, the kingdoms or dominions of men became the kingdoms of our Lord (God) and of his Christ.

In Ephesians 5:5 the apostle designated it the kingdom of God and Christ, and declared in Colossians 1:13-14 that it was then present. But in the apocalypse, the trumpets, thunders and earthquakes were envisioned as shaking down opposition of all human dominion to give way to the "kingdom which cannot be shaken."

(Hebrews 12:18-28) From the apostle's vantage point could be viewed the sites of Babylonia, Persia, Grecia and Rome, all of which were shaken, upon the ruins of which was to be firmly planted and forever established the kingdom that remains.

2. "And he shall reign forever and ever." The seventh trumpet sounded the full sway of kingdom of Christ over all opposing forces-Jewish and Roman. From henceforth his elect were to be gathered "from the four winds, from one end of the heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:31) and the earth made full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14) It was the joining of prophecy and apocalypse in the delineation of the sway of the kingdom of Christ, fulfilled in the universal sweep of the gospel. And he shall reign forever and ever. In the "kingdom of our Lord and of Christ" God shall reign forever-his dominion over all earthly kingdoms was established in the events resulting in triumph of the cause of his Christ. This reign refers to the everlasting dominion of God, which no human authority, governments or powers can ever dethrone.

## Verse 16 The song of triumph

-11:16-19. Verse 16 reverts to the worship of the twenty-four elders of chapter 4, in the beginning of vision. They were the enthroned representatives of the Old Testament and the New Testament - of Israel and the church. The visions began and end with them, in the symbols of the complete church of God, which was here seen rejoicing in victory.

Verse 17 - - Verse 17 proclaims the success of the kingdom in a singing throng, opposite to the mourning tribes of chapter 1:7 and Matthew 24:30. It was the answer to the souls under the altar of chapter 6:9-11. God had taken to thee thy great power, exercised in the events of the visions-and hast reigned. He had ruled and overruled, as absolute monarch of the world, governing and disposing of all things in heaven and in earth, as affirmed by prophets of, old. (2 Samuel 5:4-5; Psalms 93:1)

Verse 18 - - Verse 18 declares that the nations were angry in fulfillment of Psalms 2:2; Psalms 2:5 and Acts 4:24-30. It represented the attitude of the heathen world toward the gospel of Christ. The day of God's wrath had come on the persecuting powers, as depicted in chapter 6:17.

The time of the dead that they should be judged had come – they were dead as persecutors and as lords of dominion over the servants of Christ, as in Isaiah 26:13; Isaiah 26:19 in reference to Israel. The time of avenging judgment had come, for the witnesses of chapter 11:7-8; for the martyrs of chapter 6:9-11; and for "all righteous blood shed upon the earth" of Matthew 23:35. The time had come to give victory's reward unto his servants the prophets; to the saints; and them that fear thy name. The imagery delineates the ruin of the enemies and the reward of the servants and saints of God & Christ—summed up in the phrase small & great, the full aggregation of them that fear thy name. These all, in the aggregate, were included in song of glorified elders. The Jewish rulers, aided by Roman rulers, who together contrived to destroy the earth in their opposition to the kingdom of God, by the persecutions waged were themselves destroyed. In Matthew 21:33-46, Jesus specifically pictured this end of the Jewish rulers and their state.

Verse 19: Verse 19 presents the closing scene—the temple of God opened in heaven. It was the new temple, the vision of that which was measured for preservation in chapter 11:1. It was the "true tabernacle" of Hebrews 8:2; Hebrews 9:13; Hebrews 10:9. It was only re-introduced here, without further description, to become a part of second series of visions. In this new temple was disclosed the ark of his testament. In the Jewish temple of John's time, yet standing, there was no ark of covenant "within the veil." It had long been lost. But in the vision of the restored temple—the true spiritual temple (Hebrews 8:2), which supersedes the temple made with hands, there reappears the holiest and most sacred of all the treasures of the old tabernacle—the ark of the covenant. It symbolized that what was lost in the old is restored in the new – and the apostate Jewish state yielded its place to the complete restoration and perfection in the New Testament church of Christ. The curtains fall in the last words of this first vision: And there were lightnings, voices, thunderings, earthquake, and great hail. These things followed all that had gone before in the vision. When the seventh trumpet sounded, the vision ended with lightnings, voices, thunders, an earthquake, and hail, which all at once came, as the sign to John that the revelation had not ended with the first vision. The great crisis just passed was to be followed by more of the same symbolism – and the heaven of this vision was therefore still open with the close of chapter 11. But the beast that was, and was not, of chapter 13:8, yet is – he would again be active. Thus chapter 11 ends the first sequence of events.

Wallace Jr., Foy E. The Book of Revelation (pp. 119-256). Kindle Edition.

## II. Playing the Numbers Game to Identify the Beast

The original readers of the Book of Revelation were challenged to undertake two sets of calculations to identify this imperial person referred to as ‘the beast’. One, it asserted, was within the competence of all to make (17:10), but only those who possessed ‘wisdom’ would be able to undertake the second (13:18).

### *(i) The Number of Roman Emperors*

The clue for the Christians was ‘there are also seven kings’ (βασιλεῖς ἑπτὰ), five of whom are fallen, ‘the one is’ (ὁ εἷς ἔστιν), the other has not yet come, and ‘when he does come he must remain only a little while’ (17:10). How were emperors numbered in this era? The dating of this official innovation hinges primarily on how the numbers of emperors were calculated, including the present holder of the office.

The following evidence records the Roman emperors that were referred to as ‘kings’ in Revelation. Although Augustus (27 B.C.–A.D. 14) was not an immediate blood relative of Julius Caesar, his mother, Atia, was Caesar’s sister; hence he was his nephew and in fact his closest living relative. In an official letter to Mylasa, Augustus declares himself ‘Imperator Caesar, son of the divine Julius’, and in others ‘Imperator Caesar Augustus, son of a god, the ruler of land and all sea, her own saviour and benefactor’ and ‘Imperator Caesar Augustus son of a god’, the latter being Julius Caesar.

His successor, Tiberius (A.D. 14–37), was cited in an inscription from Lepcis as ‘Tiberius Caesar Augustus, son of divine Augustus, grandson of divine Julius’. He was formally addressed as ‘Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus, grandson of the divine Julius, and Drusus Caesar, son of Tiberius Augustus, grandson of the divine Augustus, great-grandson of divine Julius’ in an inscription from Philippi c. A.D. 37.

On a milestone on the *Via Augusta*, Cordoba, Gaius (A.D. 37–41), the successor of Tiberius, was declared to be ‘Gaius Caesar Germanicus Augustus, son of Germanicus Caesar, grandson of Tiberius Augustus, great-grandson of the divine Augustus, great-great-grandson of the divine Julius’.

An official document from Alexandria that Lucius Aemilius, the Roman prefect of Egypt, put on public display on 10 November, A.D. 41, for all the inhabitants to read, commences with the accolade he used of Claudius—‘the greatness of our god Caesar’ (τὴν τε μεγαλιότητα τοῦ θεοῦ Καίσαρος). It contains a copy of the letter of Claudius in which he addressed the Alexandrians using his own official name & title

—‘Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, *pontifex maximus*.’ Claudius is also cited on official Alexandrian coins as ‘Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus Imperator. Year 1’ (ΤΙ. ΚΛΑΥΔΙ. ΚΑΙΣ. ΣΕΒΑ. ΓΕΡΜΑΝΙ. ΑΥΤΟΚΡ. ΛΑ). A search of official inscriptions published to date, including the major database, has failed to find any references to his predecessors, not least of all Gaius, who had been ‘dispatched’, thus resulting in Claudius’ succession. This may go some way to explaining the different convention he adopted with respect to official imperial titles.<sup>13</sup>

By contrast, Nero gave great emphasis to the divine origin of all his predecessors. This confirmed his own legitimacy as Claudius’ successor, hence his imperial divinity. It could be, given the poisoning of his younger step-brother, Britannicus, the natural-born son of Claudius, soon after Nero was declared the successor of his adopted father, that he needed all the more to assert the legitimacy of his rule in terms of descent. (See p. 67.) There are a number of official extant inscriptions in which he traces such imperial and divine origins back to Augustus. ‘Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, son of the divine Claudius (*divi Claudi f.*, θεοῦ Κλαυδίου υἱός), grandson of Germanicus Caesar, great-grandson of Tiberius Caesar Augustus, great-great-grandson of the divine Augustus (*divi Augusti*, θεοῦ Σεβαστοῦ).

The Neronean inscription was not the sole arbiter in identifying the number of kings. Revelation 17:10 records seven kings, five of whom have died; ‘the one is’ (ὁ ἔτις ἔστιν) Nero, ‘the other is not yet come and when he comes he must continue a little while’—Galba would reign for only three months. Also, slightly later and important literary sources, *Jewish Antiquities* and *Jewish War*, written by Josephus (c. A.D. 37–110), actually list the Julio-Claudian and earlier Flavian names of emperors, even recording the years, months and days they held office.

Josephus writes that Augustus refers to ‘my father, Caesar the emperor’, though he was by birth his uncle. Importantly, unlike Nero’s list of his predecessors in the epigraphic evidence, Josephus thus understood that Augustus was not the first but the second. He ruled for ‘57 years, 6 months and 2 days,’ and the third emperor, Tiberius, ruled ‘22 years, 5 months and 3 days’.<sup>17</sup> Gaius succeeded him as ‘the fourth emperor.... he had reigned four years within four months’, and his nephew, Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, ruled ‘thirteen years, eight months and twenty-four days’ and therefore was the fifth. Hence the sixth is Nero, who succeeded him at the age of sixteen years and nine months on 13 October, A.D. 54, and reigned until 11 June, A.D. 68. ‘Nero was dead, after he had reigned thirteen years and eight months’. The latter’s successor, Galba, ‘was slain ... after he reigned seven months and as many days’, and his successor, Otho, ‘slew himself ... after he had managed the public affairs three months and two days’, while Vitellius subsequently ‘retained the government eight months and five days’.<sup>20</sup>

Josephus specifically named Gaius as ‘the fourth emperor’; therefore, on this reckoning Nero had to be the sixth ‘king’, and the one described as ‘the one who is’ (17:10), i.e., now ruling. Nero’s successor is described as ‘and when he comes he must remain a little while’ (καὶ ὅταν ἔλθῃ ὀλίγον αὐτὸν δεῖ μείναι) (17:10). This refers to Galba. Josephus’ evidence agrees with the epigraphic evidence cited earlier and confirms that Nero is the one referred to, as does the number of his name as the subsequent discussion shows.

### *(ii) The Number of the Emperor’s Name*

A greater challenge was issued that would test the skills of his readership to undertake a more complicated form of numerical calculation—‘this calls for wisdom’, literally ‘here is the wisdom’ (ὧδε ἡ σοφία), a term used in Greek for ‘skill’ in various disciplines of learning including music, poetry, medicine and divination, and here the author of the letter uses it of *gematria*. He further defines the person possessing this skill as ‘the one having knowledge’ (ὁ ἔχων νοῦς). The clue is in the use of an imperative when he writes that ‘he must calculate the number of the beast’ (ψηφισάτω τὸν ἀριθμὸν τοῦ φηρίου), and then explains, ‘for the number of the beast is a man and his number is 666’ (13:18). The actual text does not have the Greek letter for six (Σ) repeated three times but ΧΞΣ, i.e., 600, 60 and 6. This followed the Greek convention of spelling each of the letters that were represented numerically—‘six hundred’ (ἑξακόσιου), ‘sixty’ (ἑξήκοντα) and ‘six’ (ἕξ) (13:18).

What is the numerical value of the Greek letters for ‘beast’ (φηρίον)? It totals 247 (θ = 9, η = 8, ρ = 100, ι = 10, ο = 70, ν = 50). So he is not referring to a calculation in Greek of letters of this term. However, ‘the same numerical technique was used in the Hebrew alphabet, and “beast” in the Hebrew alphabet is 666 (ת = 400, ר = 200, י = 10, ו = 6, ל = 50)’.

The number of the beast is explicitly said to coincide with another number. The writer explains, ‘[F]or it is the number of a man’ (ἀριθμὸς γὰρ ἀνθρώπου ἐστίν) and then discloses that number is ‘666’ (Rev. 13:18). So the total number for ‘beast’ and that for ‘man’ are the same. There is official external evidence of the numerical value of the name of Nero in a Hebrew-Aramaic script on an official deed of debt in A.D. 55 declared to be the second year of ‘Nero’. The numerical value of the letters of his name is recorded in Hebrew (נ = 50, ר = 200, ו = 6, נ = 50, ק = 100, ס = 60, ר = 200) and totals 666.

An alternative proposal with respect to ‘the name of a man’ in Revelation 13:18 has been to opt for a textual variant of ‘616’ as the possible reading. Nero’s name and title ‘Nero Caesar’ in Greek is Νέρων Καῖσαρ; Ν = 50, Ε = 5, Ρ = 100, Ω = 800, Ν = 50, Κ = 20, Α = 1, Ι = 10, Σ = 200, Α = 1, Ρ = 100 totals 1337.

However, the Greek numerical value of the word ‘beast’ (θηρίον), Θ = 9, Η = 8, Ρ = 100, Ι = 10, Ο = 70, Ν = 50 is 247 and not 616, but in Hebrew, the final ‘n’ in his name was omitted, the numerical value being ‘616’. The words in the title ‘Caesar God’ (καῖσαρ θεός) when rendered alphabetically in Greek (Κ = 20, Α = 1, Ι = 10, Σ = 200, Α = 1, Ρ = 100, Θ = 9, Ε = 5, Ο = 70, Σ = 200) total 616.

Was this use of what was known as *gematria* widespread in the East in Nero’s time? At the beginning of his reign he issued an imperial decree citing the official use of *gematria* for a long-recognized group of Greeks within a particular city. He twice used their name, ‘six thousand, four hundred and seventy-five’. They were descendants of early Greek settlers comprising part of the city of Ptolemais Euergetis in Egypt. This was Nero’s official response to imperial divine honours that the delegation indicated they intended for him as the new emperor.

But of the two remaining offers, I decline that of a temple because this honour is rightly assigned by men to the gods alone; and as for the gold crown that you sent, I shall gratefully remit it, for at the beginning of my Principate I do not wish to burden you ... of all that together with the 6475 (ἑξακισχίλιος τετρακοσῖος ἑβδομήκοντα πέντε), you received from the emperor before me ... of all of you in common and of each individually, and to preserve you from injury and molestation, as also my deified father desired. Since you bear witness to all that he provided both for the city and the 6475 (τῇ τε πόλι καὶ ἑξακισχίλιος τετρακοσῖος ἑβδομήκοντα πέντε), I praise and command you. The ambassadors [were] Aeacides, son of Ptolemaeus, Antenor, son of —, Nibyatas, son of Nibyatas, Polycrates, son of Didymus, —, Themison —.

In the first occurrence of the numerals in this imperial document, Nero identified the city as ‘of all that, together with the 6475’ and later to ‘both for the city and the 6475’. He noted that Claudius granted them former privileges by way of an imperial favour. This city and the group named within it were early Greek settlers of the Arsinoite nome in Egypt who were Hellenes possessing special privileges and officially known by the number 6475, as Montevicchi noted. In the delegation that came to Rome there are clearly Greek names.<sup>29</sup>

In Rome and Italy *gematria* was not only used in official circles, but we have examples of its popular use for romantic purposes and sometimes in a derogatory way politically. In Pompeii it was used as a means of communicating love for another. ‘I love her whose name is *phi mu epsilon*’ (545) (φιλω ἧς ἀριθμὸς πμῆ) Π = 500, Μ = 40 and Ε = 5. Although this was a Roman colony in Italy, the initials of her name were rendered in Greek ‘numerals’ ΠΜΕ.



In the same city another piece of romantic graffiti was found on a wall written in Greek. ‘Amerimnus thought upon his lady Harmonia for good. The number 45 (or) 1035 is her honourable name (τοῦ καλοῦ ὀνόματος). In both instances the number of the name is encrypted, as in the latter case the number of her name was 541.

Suetonius in his *Nero*, written in Latin, recorded its use politically for derogatory purposes. He notes Nero’s unpopularity before his suicide.

[H]e [Nero] bore nothing with more patience than the curses and abuses of the people and was patiently lenient towards those who assailed him with gibes and lampoons. Of these many were posted or circulated both in Greek and Latin (*Multa Graece Latineque proscripta aut vulgata sunt*) ... Nero his own mother slew (Νεοψηφον Νερων ἰδιαν μητερα απεκτεινε).

What was ‘a calculation new’? This reference is to Nero’s instigation of the murder of his mother, Agrippina II (popularly referred to as ‘1005’) in A.D. 59. The Loeb edition of Suetonius notes, ‘The numerical value of the Greek letters of Nero’s name (1005) [N = 50, ε = 5. ρ = 100 ω = 800, ν = 50] is the same as that of the rest of the sentence; hence we have the equation, ‘Nero’ = ‘the slayer of his mother’.

This example of the use of *gematria* in one language cited in another is helpful in resolving the enigma in Revelation 13:18, as only in Hebrew are ‘the number of the beast’ and ‘the number of a name’ a way of identifying the usurping of the throne of God, alluded to prophetically in Daniel 7, with Nero. Furthermore, the issues are somewhat comparable in that both were evaluating and passing negative judgements on him.

If it required a bilingual person to interpret the ‘new calculation’ to cite Suetonius’ note, so too the task set by the writer of Revelation was for someone skilled in *gematria* to break the encoded message using Hebrew and not Greek numerals but without giving him the key. It is recorded that Jewish converts from Paul’s mission in Asia also lived in this province (Acts 19:17).

Later in Revelation 17:10 there is a reference to the sixth king as the present emperor, ‘the one is’ (ὁ ἕτις ἔστιν). This would have provided a clue for any person, not necessarily a ‘wise’ one. It would, however, have required someone with a working knowledge of Hebrew to decode the numerals as the solution for ‘the number of the beast’ and ‘the number of a man’, both of which added up to 666. The sixth king is Nero both by reason of the number of kings and *gematria*.

### III. The Second Beast and Imperial Cultic Innovations

It is important to seek to identify this ‘second beast and the possible reason for his unprecedented provincial innovation in imperial honours as a further clue in seeking to establish more securely this *Sitz im Leben*, i.e., the promotion of the further divine honours for and to the Caesars.

#### *(i) Identifying the ‘Second Beast’*

It is said of the second beast that he ‘exercises all the authority of the first beast’ (Rev. 13:12). While it has been suggested that this refers to the rôle of Caesar as the high priest of the empire, there was another person who fulfilled this office with respect to the imperial cult in the province. His remit was certainly not to exercise ‘all the authority’ of the emperor. The appointment of the provincial high priest was confirmed by the Roman Senate and was not seen as comparable to the emperor’s rôle as *pontifex maximus*. The provincial imperial high priest’s rôle was a liturgical one, to be exercised on special days so designated for presiding over major cultic events in the imperial calendar.

Rather, it was the function of governors to exercise the *imperium* of the reigning Caesar especially in relation to Roman criminal cases. The New Testament itself bears witness to this. Pontius Pilate presided at the trial of Jesus, and Gallio the proconsul, Felix the governor and Festus ruled in the criminal proceedings instituted against Paul in Corinth and Caesarea Maritima (Luke 23:1-25; Acts 18:12-17; 24:1-22; 25:13-26:32). The second beast caused those who did not worship the statue in the temple to be given the death sentence. As this penalty was alone within the jurisdiction of provincial governors (13:15), this beast has to be the governor.

Is it possible to identify the actual holder of this office in the province of Asia? An extant record reveals that C. Fonteius Agrippa, who earlier had been the suffect consul of Rome in May to June A.D. 58, succeeded Aponius Saturninus as commander of the Roman province of Asia with proconsular power in A.D. 68-69. Tacitus recorded—

Fonteius Agrippa was transferred from Asia, where as proconsul, he had governed for a year, and put in charge of Moesia [a Roman province on the south bank of the River Danube] where he was given additional troops from the army of Vitellius, which it was wise from the point of view of both policy and peace to distribute in the provinces and to involve in war with a foreign foe.

His political inclination and imperial loyalty may also be reflected subsequently in a prosecution that he initiated with three others against Libo Drusus ‘accused of revolutionary schemes.... Besides Trio and Catus, Fonteius Agrippa and Gaius Vibius had associated themselves with the prosecution, and it was disputed which of the four

should have the right of stating the case against the defendant'. Clearly Fonteius Agrippa wanted to be to the fore as the accuser in the treason trial of Libo Drusus. The description of the second beast would best fit the proconsul.

### *(ii) New Divine Honours for Caesar in the East*

Three-quarters of a century before the reign of Nero, the province of Asia had seen the innovation of divine honours with the official date marking the commencement of each new year to coincide with the birthday of 'the most divine Caesar' (τοῦ θειοτάτου Καίσαρος) Augustus. This was the result of a competition instituted by a Roman governor of the province, Lucius Volcacijs Tullus, but not awarded in his time. Paullus Fabius Maximus, a subsequent governor from 10 to 8 B.C., revived it some twenty years later, and surprisingly he himself won it and thus was awarded a golden crown. (See p. 29.)

It has been demonstrated that provinces and individual cities traditionally sent embassies to new emperors on their accession. They also hoped to return with reciprocal imperial favours or concessions for the giving of innovative divine honours to Caesar. It was an established custom. (See pp. 55-60.) This is important, as it goes some way in understanding the motivation and intention of the proconsul named 'the second beast' in the same province governed by Paullus Fabius Maximus at the end of the previous century. The latest unique honour bestowed on Nero by those bearing on their person the mark of his name was something never recorded up to this point in the history of the empire.

What was behind this proconsul's edict is somewhat enigmatic. It could have been that a recent event may have motivated this Roman proconsul of Asia to take these extraordinary steps that were to have such consequences for all under his jurisdiction. It went beyond the conventional remit of governors of provinces of seeing that temples did not fall into disrepair, but it did not extend to the death penalty for those refusing to worship imperial cult statues (13:15-17).

Three pieces of extant evidence record the importance of Nero's visit to Greece during Paul's era. Here he actually competed in the famous traditional games, i.e., the Isthmian, Olympic, Nemea, Argive, Delphi and Actia, where he won all his events. He was also lauded when he returned to Rome in his third official triumphal entry to the city in late A.D. 67 at the age of thirty. The reason for this entry was unprecedented because it celebrated not a victory in battle but his victories in the games.

At the same time Alexandria, the capital of Egypt, issued coins in A.D. 66-67 likewise celebrating Nero's success in Greece. On the reverse the presiding deities of the five great festivals, Poseidon, Olympian Zeus, Nemean Zeus, Hera Argeia, Pythian Apollo and Actian Apollo were portrayed.

Earlier, in A.D. 62–63, the words on an Alexandrian coin declared Nero to be ‘the saviour of the world’ (ὁ σωτὴρ τῆς οἰκουμένης). In close proximity to Isthmia, where one of the games was traditionally held, the Roman colony of Corinth, the capital of Achaëa also celebrated his successful participation in its events by issuing a coin.<sup>42</sup>

Corinth and all other cities in the province of Achaëa had far more reason to respond because Nero exempted all those living there from the Roman provincial taxes. On 28 November, A.D. 67, at a specially called assembly in Corinth, Nero had announced this exemption, especially stressing, not so indirectly, the incredible generosity of his imperial benefaction.

It is an unexpected gift, Hellenes—though there is nothing that may not be hoped for from my magnanimity—which I grant you, one so great that you were incapable of requesting it. All Hellenes who inhabit Achaëa and the land until now called the Peloponnesus receive liberty and exemption from tribute ... to bestow so great a benefaction; for to cities other rulers too have granted freedom, but Nero alone to an entire province.

His dramatic conclusion intentionally drew attention to this unprecedented imperial gift—‘Nero only to the entire province’ (Νέρων δὲ μόνος καὶ ἐπαρχείαν), thus stressing its parameter.

In response to this incredible gift, Epaminondas, the successor of Spartiacus (p. 200) made this official proclamation in his capacity as ‘the high priest for life of Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus’ of the provincial imperial cult of Achaia. It followed the traditional genre of official proclamations, laying out the reason—in this case two major reasons—for the resolution and more importantly the appropriate honours bestowed on Nero as a token of their enormous appreciation of his reciprocal benefits to them.

The first accolade was addressing Nero as ‘the Lord of all the world’ (ὁ τοῦ παντὸς κόσμου κύριος), ‘the new sun that has shone on the Greeks’ who had bestowed benefactions on Greece and shown piety towards ‘our gods who have stood by him everywhere for his care and safety’.

The second cause for their gratitude ‘to the one and only, greatest imperator’ was the unparalleled honour he had bestowed—

the one and only greatest imperator of our times, lover of Greeks (εἷς καὶ μόνος τῶν ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ αὐτοκράτωρ μέγιστος φιλέλληνα γενόμενος) Nero, Zeus the Liberator, bestowed the eternal indigenous native freedom that was formerly taken from the Greeks, he has shown his favour, has brought back the autonomy and freedom from the past and to this great and unexpected gift he has added immunity from taxation, quite complete, which none of the previous Augusti gave us.

Nero's action naturally prompted this reciprocal honour. 'For all these reasons it has been decided by the magistrates and councillors and the people to worship him at the existing altar dedicated to Zeus the Saviour forever (εἰς αἰῶνα)', giving the assurance to Nero that he would be venerated as a perpetual divinity, adding 'Nero Zeus, the Liberator' (Νέρωνος Διὸς Ἐλευθερίου), and his wife as 'the goddess, Augusta Messalina'. This occurred 'in the temple of Ptoian Apollo to be shared with our ancestral gods'.

The stated reason for doing this was 'in order that ... our city may be seen to have poured every honour and piety upon the house of the Lord Augustus Nero' (ἡ ἡγετέρα πόλις φαίνεται πᾶσαν τειμὴν καὶ εὐσέβειαν ἐκτεπληρωκυῖα εἰς τὸν τοῦ κυρίου Σεβαστοῦ [Νέρωνος οἶκον]). The resolution closes by indicating that Nero's benefactions would be visible and therefore always on display. Thus 'it has also been decided to inscribe the decree on a column set beside Zeus the Saviour in the agora and in the temple of Ptoian Apollo'. The latter was the god to whom Augustus attributed his decisive victory against Mark Anthony when Zeus appeared to him at Actium and therefore always remained his favourite and divine patron.<sup>50</sup>

Nero acknowledged that another delegation was suggesting innovative imperial honours in an official response. 'I heartily commend the firmness of your goodwill towards me and your constant concern to add some new invention [to my honour]. If [only] your ambition for us might be without expense to you who have already made it clear in so many cases.'

If Greece awarded honours, accolades and citations as official sources and imperial correspondence confirmed, Nero could publicly boast about these on his return to Rome in his official triumphal entry. These imperial honours implemented across the Aegean Sea by the governor of the province of Asia would not be without precedence. He added 'some new invention' of imperial honours.

What effect did this have on the Eastern provinces outside of Achaëa? It is possible that the divine honours outlined in Revelation 13:15-17 were yet another provincial innovation aimed at securing an imperial benefit for the province. Certainly, possible tax exemption for the province of Asia could have been the motivation behind the unique innovation of the mark of the beast as a sign of loyalty to the emperor. However, there is no extant evidence that actually discloses the governor's motivation.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Winter, B. W. (2015). *Divine Honours for the Caesars: The First Christians' Responses* (pp. 289-303). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

