

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.

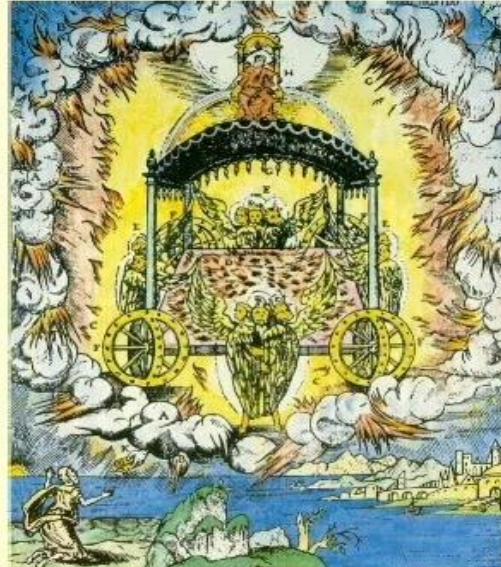
The rent veil proclaims the desecrated temple.

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.

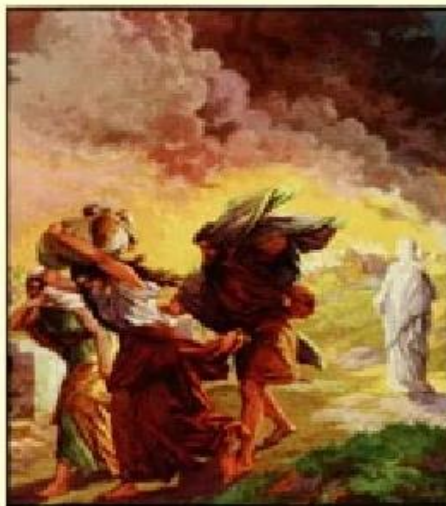
That conception, that the death of Christ Jesus was the de-consecration - if I may coin a word - of the Temple, and the end of all its special sanctity, and that thenceforward the Presence had departed from it, is distinctly enough taught us by Himself in words which move in the same circle of ideas 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.¹

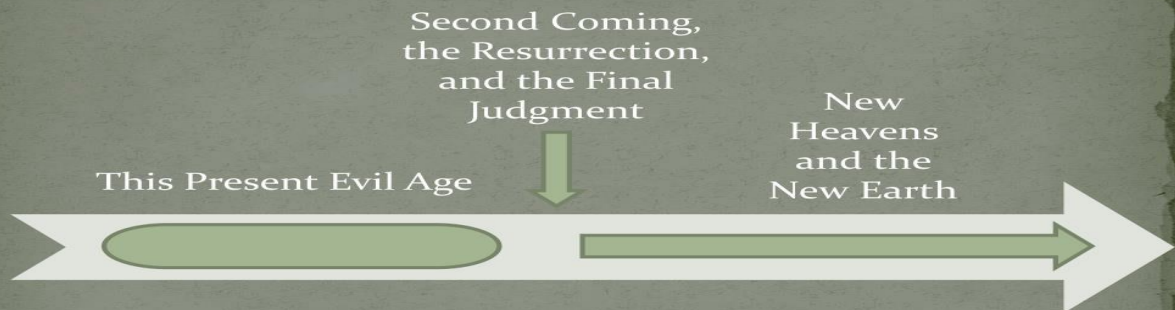
¹ DeMar, G., & Gumerlock, F. X. (2006). [*The Early Church and the End of the World*](#) (pp. 157–163). Powder Springs, GA: American Vision.

INDIVIDUAL INTERPRET MATRIX

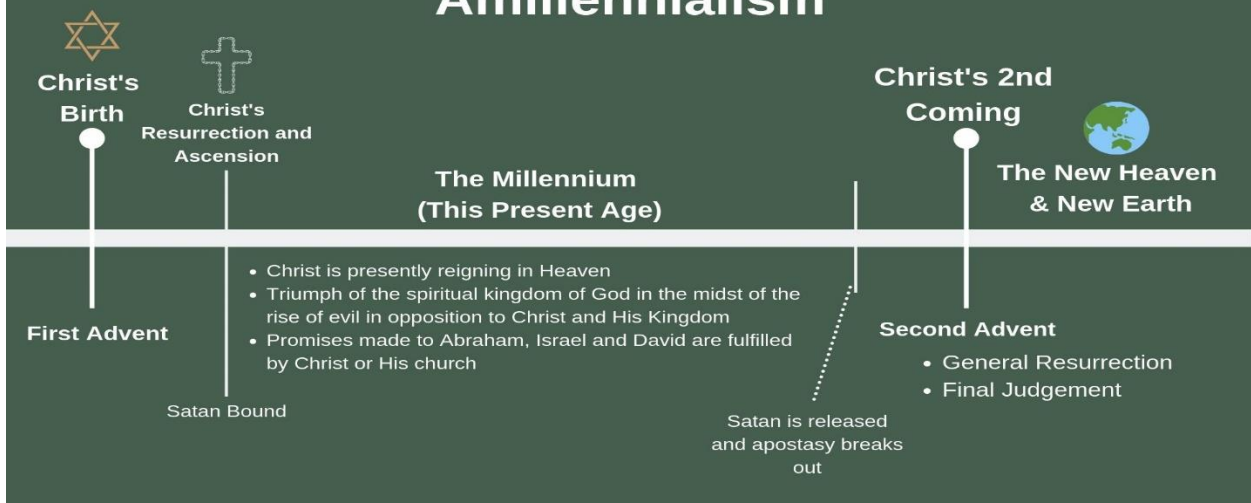
STORYLINE	Figure History	Figure Future
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UNFOLDING TIMELINE

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.²

² 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).³

³ 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

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

⁴ 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 ⁵

⁵ 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 2nd 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"> 1. An Angel from the Throne of God with a book in his hand, holds universal sway (10:1-5). 2. There would be time no longer (10:6). 3. The mystery of God, by the prophets, to be finished; accomplished, completed, fulfilled (10:7). 4. The Temple is then measured (11:1,2). 5. The area outside the Temple and the Holy City is to be trodden down by the Gentiles (11:2). 6. The City of Jerusalem is identified as the city (11:8). 7. The Prophets who testified were fulfilled (10:7;11:3-12). 	<p>cf. Matt.24; Mk.13; Lk.21:5-36</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Gospel of the kingdom would be preached in all the world (cf.Matt.24:14; Lk.21:13). 2. Then comes the end (Lk.21:9,20; cf.Matt.24:6,13,14). 3. All things which are written may be fulfilled, completed, accomplished, or finished (Lk.21:22). 4. The Temple is surveyed and its destruction foretold (21:5,6; cf.Matt. 24:1,2). 5. Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles (Lk.21:24). 6. Jerusalem is specifically identified (Lk.21:20,24). 7. All things written fulfilled (Lk.21:22).
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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:

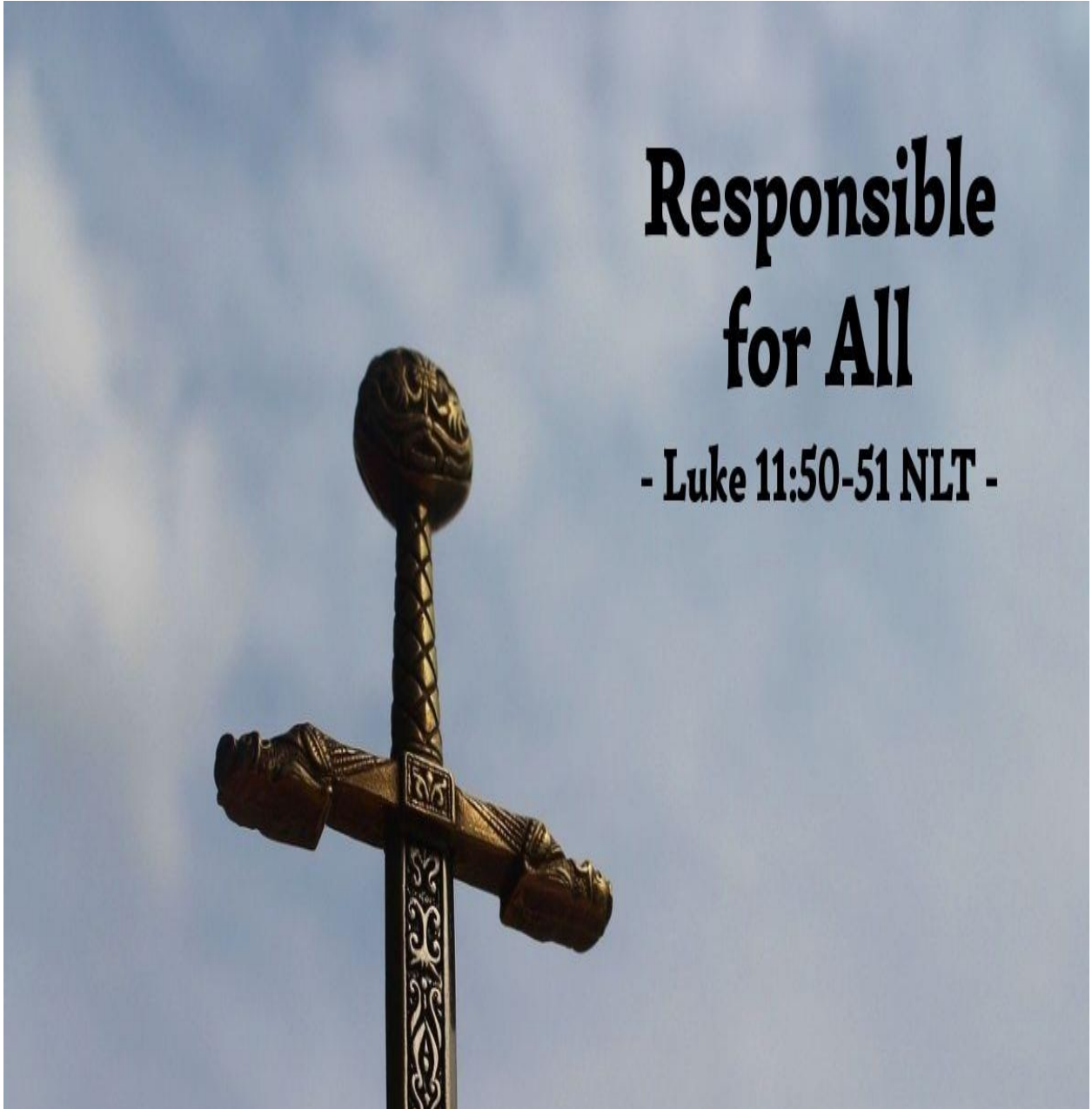
"And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth" (18:24).

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.

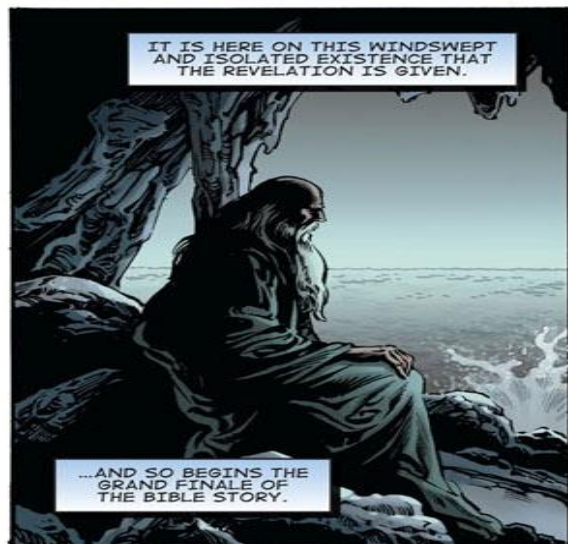
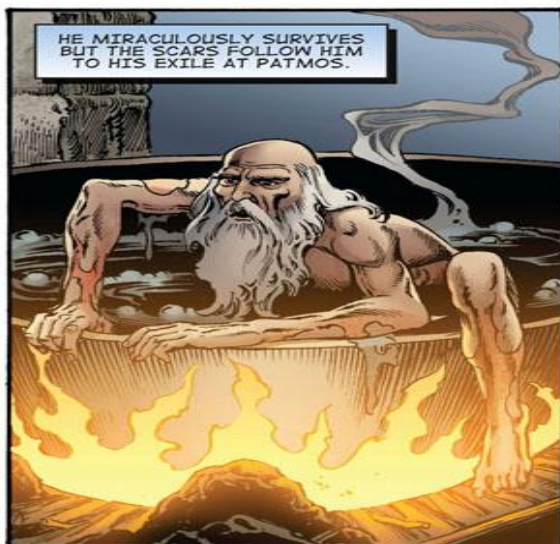
Conclusion:

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”

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

⁶ 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: ἃ δεῖ 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.)

Parenthesis, 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 Τάδε λέγει (“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) ⁷

⁷ 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 ⁸

⁸ 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) ⁹

⁹ 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) ¹⁰

¹⁰ 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'.

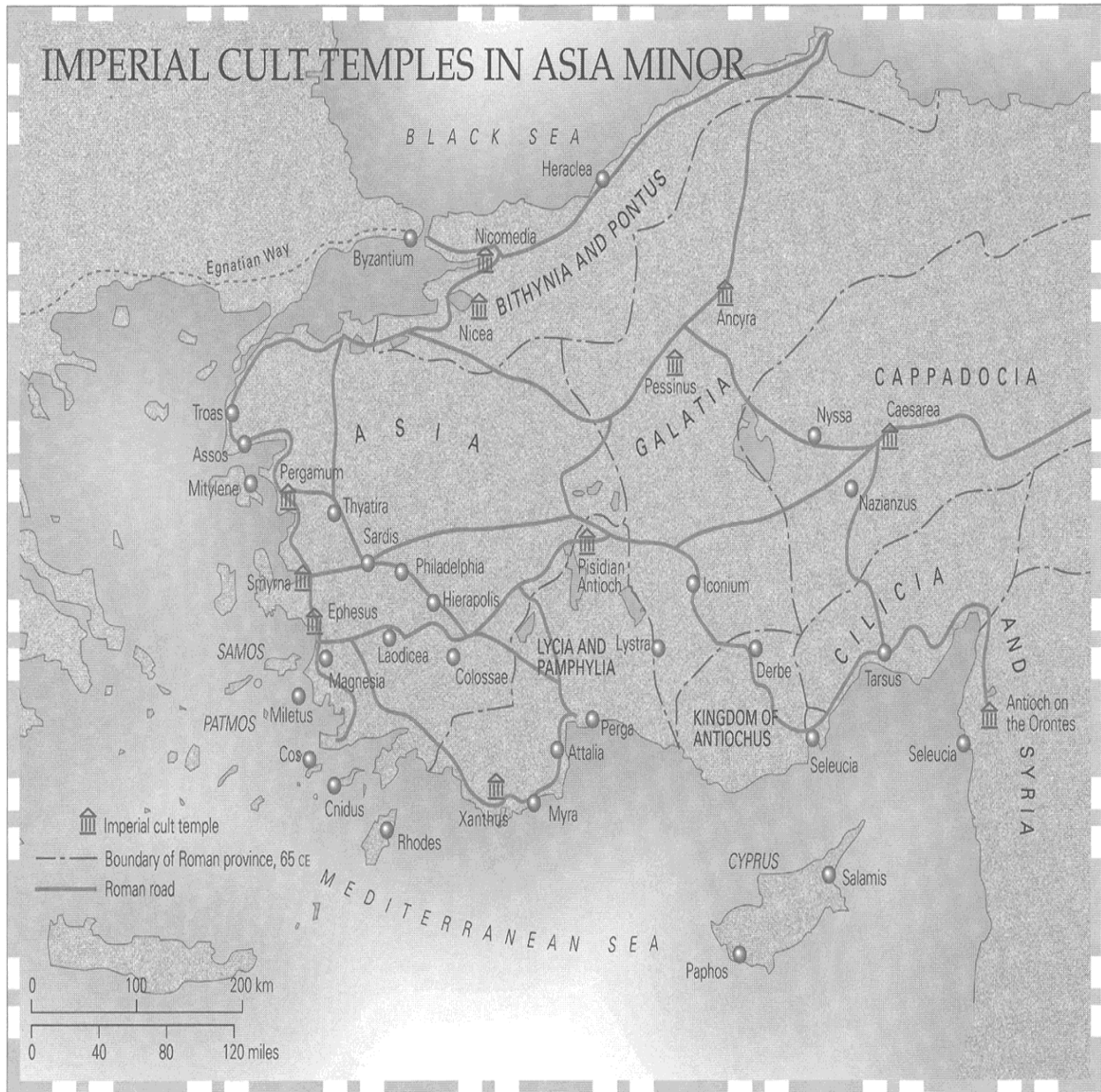
The final section (22:6) circles back to the first three chapters.

- 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.¹⁵⁶ **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.¹⁶⁰ 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.¹¹**

¹¹ 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)¹²

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

Section III Chapters - 12 - 13 - 14 - 15 - 16 - 17 - 18 - 19 - 20

Four Divisions of the Book

1 st Chapters 1-3	2 nd Chapters 4-11	3 rd Chapters 12-20	4 th 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 EARTHLY APOCALYPSE Chapters 12 - 20

<p>12:1-17</p> <p>The Underlying Conflict Between Christ & Satan Over Sin Is Developed</p>	<p>The Foes In This Conflict Introduced</p>		<p>14:14 -16</p> <p>THE REAPING OF THE GOOD HARVEST</p> <p>14:17 -20</p> <p>THE REAPING OF THE VINE OF EARTH</p>	<p>The 7 Last Plagues or Bowls of Wrath Upon Babylon</p> <p>15:1-8</p> <p>Victorious saints rejoice as the seven angels with the seven bowls of wrath are sent from God</p> <p>1st 16:1-2 Earth 2nd 16:3 Sea 3rd 16:4-7 Rivers 4th 16:8-9 Sun 5th 16:10-11 Rome 6th 16:12-16 Euphrates 7th 16:17-21 Air</p>
	<p>13:1-18</p> <p>SATAN'S HELPERS INTRODUCED</p> <p>THE ROMAN EMPIRE & PAGAN RELIGIONS THAT SERVED THE EMPIRE</p>	<p>14:1-13</p> <p>The LAMB WITH 144,000 INTRODUCED CHRISTIANITY'S THREE MESSAGES:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>The Gospel</i> 2. <i>The Fall of Babylon</i> 3. <i>Warning Against Worshipping the Emnire</i> 		

First Century Christians Routinely Experienced Roman Hubris

(ii) Christian Infringement of Roman Law

Was there a legal charge for which Christians could be indicted? In an early constitution, *Lex coloniae Genetiae Juliae* (45 B.C.), Section CVI records, ‘No colonist of the colony [Roman] Genetiva, established by order of G. Caesar the dictator, shall (get together) any assemblage or meeting or conspiracy’. According to Hardy who was its editor, ‘These would come under the category of *majestas*’, i.e., ‘treason’. All the Julio-Claudian emperors saw associations as hotbeds for fomenting political dissents and therefore a thorn in their side.²⁴

Robinson in *The Criminal Law of Ancient Rome* discusses ‘Offenses against the State’, i.e., ‘treason’, ‘sedition’ and the official repressing of *collegia* (associations). Augustus’ legislation on associations meant that Christians could not legally meet weekly, although Jews had been specifically exempted in the same legislation and could do so. For all others, ‘regular meetings were to be no more than monthly’. Robinson also notes the consequences—‘This is one reason why Christians could hardly have formed legal *collegia*, since they need to meet weekly for worship.’

In the eyes of the emperors of the first century, and sometimes governors and ruling authorities in cities of the empire, *collegia* ‘represented a threat to Roman order rather than a standing offence, but they could be repressed severely; accusations were made before the Prefect of the City’. In *Lex Irnitana* there was a specific provision ‘concerning illegal gatherings, societies and colleges (*collegia*)’.

No one is to take part in an illegal gathering (*coetum facito*) in that *municipium* (self-governing town) or to hold a meeting of a society or college for that purpose or to conspire that it be held or to act in such a way that any of these things occur. Anyone who acts contrary to these rules is to be condemned to pay 10,000 sesterces to the *municipes* of the *Municipium Flavium Irnitatum* and the right of action, suit and claim of that money and concerning that money is to belong to any *municipes* of that *municipium*.

González, the editor of this bronze inscription, draws this significant conclusion—‘It is important to observe that the only thing actually banned is a *coetus*’, i.e., an ‘assembly’.

One legal prohibition in Roman law applied to Christian gatherings for weekly worship. This may well explain the significant exhortation ‘not neglecting the meeting together (ἐπισυναγωγή) as is the habit of some (καθώς ἔθος τισίν)’ (10:25). Hedged around this exhortation is the prelude ‘to hold fast the confession of our hope that it does not waver’ (v. 23), also the call to ‘love and good works’ (v. 24) along with the subsequent warning not to sin willfully because there were no more sacrifices for sin, and there was an alarming fate for disloyal Christians (vv. 26–30). The reason for absenting oneself was not specified but, given the evidence in Hebrews, a good case can be made for some realizing that attendance on a weekly basis was in breach of Roman law, for only the Jews were permitted to do this.

Pliny the Younger later noted that all associations in Pontus were prohibited because of their suspected anti-Roman stance. ‘When people gather together for a common purpose, whatever name we may give them and whatever function we may assign them, they soon become political.’ In the same letter he reported to the emperor, Trajan, following the interrogation of Christians—‘They affirmed, however, the whole of their guilt or their error was that they were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang a hymn to Christ, as to a god.’ They were in breach of Roman law by meeting as they did on ‘a certain fixed day.’¹³

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¹³ Winter, B. W. (2015). *Divine Honours for the Caesars: The First Christians’ Responses* (pp. 275–277). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

UNIVERSAL & EXISTENTIAL: THE SPIRITUALLY EXTINCT IN PHYSICAL ELIMINATION

INTRO TO THE EARTHLY APOCALYPSE

In *The Heavenly Apocalypse* (chapters 4-11) we observed the events that were *shortly to come to pass* as ordered and directed by the throne of God. In the section now before us, we see these same events as they develop from the standpoint of the earth. We see forces at work in the world from the beginning that contribute heavily to the conflict under consideration. Our understanding of this underlying current is essential to a full comprehension of the overall picture of God's Word and this Apocalypse.

The *Earthly Apocalypse* goes beyond the limits of the preceding one. It gets to the root of the problem. Once the end of Israel and Jerusalem is clearly set forth, this Apocalypse portrays the expanded conflict that develops in the years following, even giving a brief summation of events to transpire unto the end of time . . .

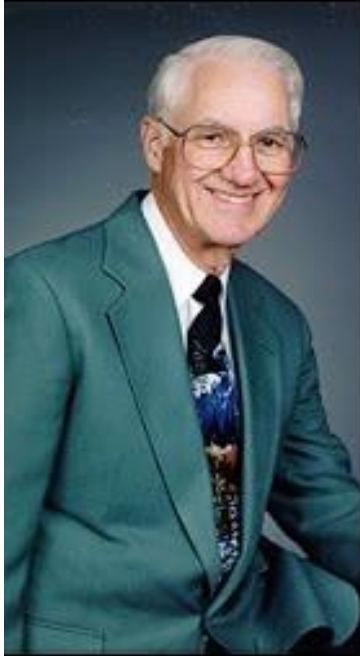
The development of events foretold in this Apocalypse follow this order: **The underlying conflict** (12:1-17). In this scene, the conflict between good and evil, righteousness and sin, Christ and Satan is viewed as the real problem. We are permitted to visualize the conflict developing before our eyes into its full fury...

The emerging of Satan's Helpers in the conflict (13:1-18). Satan employs powerful means in an effort to defeat the Savior and the Saved. **The beginning and spread of Christianity** (14:1-3), and **The reaping of the harvests** (14:14-20)... In these two sections, Christianity is surveyed to the time of the destruction of the City of Jerusalem. **The seven last plagues, or bowls of wrath** (15:1 - 16:21). Like the seven trumpeting angels, the seven last plagues carry us through various stages in the development of the conflict resulting in the destruction of Jerusalem. The city is here viewed as destroyed by the wrath of God (Chapter 14), and this section follows with the development of the events which precede it...

The judgement upon the great whore (17:1 - 18:24). The events described in this section had already taken place in the Earthly Apocalypse, but here we are permitted to take a closer look...

The victorious Christ conquers all foes and reigns supremely to the end (19:1 - 20:15). Once the **great harlot** is punished and the heavens rejoice, we are permitted to see the continuing conflict that develops in chapters 12 and 13. Satan and his helpers battle against the Savior and His followers. Christ and His armies are victorious over Satan. Satan's helpers are conquered & destroyed.

- Arthur Ogden, *The Avenging of the Apostles & Prophets*, Page 263ff



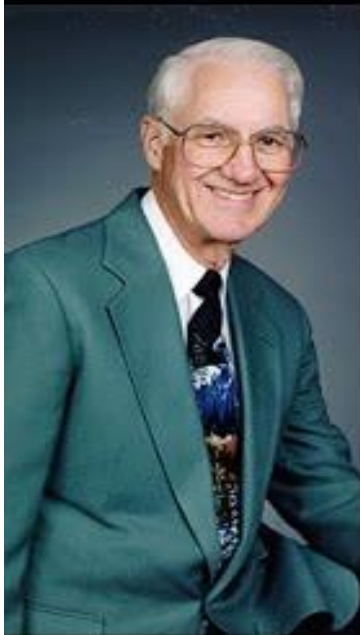
REVELATION

Taught by Art Ogden

7th Class

May 15, 1987

Revelation 12 - 15



REVELATION

Taught by Art Ogden

8th Class

May 15, 1987

Revelation 16 - 19



War in Heaven: the Struggle of the Ages

It appears that this story of struggle is actually told twice in chapter 12: first in verses 1-6, then again in verses 7-17. As follows the methodology noted earlier, the second telling is an elaboration of the first, occasioned by a “great voice in heaven” (vs. 10) that explains the outcome and eternal consequences of the battle.

Why are saints suffering? The persecution of first century disciples is explained to them against the backdrop of history. It is not really unique to their generation, although the intensity of their suffering will reach a fevered pitch before it ceases. Years earlier, Peter had written, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened unto you: but inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings, rejoice; that at the revelation of his glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy” (1 Pet. 4:12-13).

As the story begins, we see the majestic woman clothed in light. The faithful remnant of Israel has moved throughout history under the tutelage of a providential God, and she appears here in the glory and beauty of righteousness. Through the centuries Jehovah has led her toward the fulfillment of His great promise to Abraham, “In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). As one commentator stated, Israel is “God’s nation of destiny” (LaHaye 217). But being ever-vigilant, the Devil stands “before the woman that is about to be delivered, that ... he may devour her child” (Rev. 12:4).

This conflict, this hellish animosity, has not begun just prior to the birth of the Christ. Rather, this is but another cog in the wheel of history, initiated in Eden. After the serpent’s deception of Eve, God announced, “And I will put **enmity** between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen. 3:15). Ultimately, this prophecy would be fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ, but this enmity accounts for Satan’s perennial assault on mankind, and on the children of Israel in particular.

Once God had revealed His plan to bless the world through the seed of Abraham, the fight was on. Throughout the ages, the Devil had planted seeds of rebellion in the hearts of God's people.

Even as the people were receiving their law at Sinai, the influence of Satan is seen in the construction of the golden calf (Ex. 32). Again, at Kadesh-barnea the people listened to lying spies and refused to take the land offered by the hand of their Creator (Num. 13). When they finally took the land after 40 years of wanderings, they rebelled by failing to drive out all the foreigners as God had instructed (Jud. 2:1-4). They quickly became idolaters, being snared in the trap of their pagan neighbors (Jud. 2:10-11). When prophets were sent to return the people to God, they were murdered (Acts 7:52). While the Devil could not defeat Jehovah, he could certainly run interference to God's eternal purpose by corrupting those who were essential to its fulfillment. But there would always be some hearts devoted to God, and through this faithful remnant the Messiah would come.

“And she was delivered of a son, a man child ...” (Rev. 12:5). Satan could not prevent the fulfillment of God's plan. The Lamb of God is born into the world; He is come a King “to rule all the nations with a rod of iron.” Furthermore, her child is “caught up unto God, and unto his throne.” It is from His seat at the “right hand of God” that Jesus occupies “the throne of David” as “both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:29-36). This is not pointing to a future fulfillment, but describes the state of affairs at the time of this present persecution. Christ rules and reigns now, exercising His universal sovereignty over all mankind. As Hailey has explained,

He rules in His spiritual kingdom with a scepter of uprightness (Ps. 45:6; Heb. 1:8), but in the kingdoms of the world with a rod of iron, smashing to pieces and bringing them to an end as He deems fit (Ps. 110:5ff.; Rev. 19:15). The destiny of all nations of the world is in the hands of the Lord Jesus. (271-72)

Verse five succinctly reduces the totality of Christ's redemptive work into a few short words, although a greater elaboration will begin in verse seven. While verse five encompasses the birth, perfect life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and coronation of the King of kings, all those details are not necessary for first century readers to follow the plot. But at the same time, all those events form the backdrop of the *war in heaven* that has resulted in the present persecution.

In the meantime, after being delivered of the male child, "the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that there they may nourish her a thousand two hundred and threescore days" (Rev. 12:6). The language here is reminiscent of Micah's prophecy concerning the daughter of Zion: "... for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and shalt dwell in the field, and shalt come even unto Babylon: there will Jehovah redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies" (Mic. 4:10).

Just as a faithful remnant had been delivered by God from the captivity, so now a faithful remnant has emerged as disciples of Christ. This is still the remnant of God's people, Israel, but now the emphasis is on the spiritual. It's the same *olive tree*, but some natural branches have been replaced by wild branches (Rom. 11:11-27). This is the "remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. 11:5), "for they are not all Israel, that are of Israel" (Rom. 9:6). Now Jews and Gentiles, alike, "flee into the wilderness" in the face of persecution. Yet the trivial persecutions of men cannot destroy the eternal purpose of God! Whether at the hands of physical Israel or Romans, saints will prevail through divine providence.

The woman "hath a place prepared of God" where she is "nourished" 1,260 days. This *prepared place* points not to a specific locale, but rather to God's ability to sustain saints in *any* circumstance. The *nourishment* speaks of God's on-going provision for His elect, as demonstrated throughout all Scripture. For example, just as surely as Jehovah would not leave the liberated Israelites to starve in the wilderness, so He will not abandon persecuted Christians. And the period of one thousand two hundred and sixty days, covered in greater detail in another lecture, constitutes the duration of this present struggle (see Rev. 11:3; 13:5).

Of course, implicit in the guarantee of God's provision for the saints during this one thousand two hundred and sixty day period of affliction, is God's guarantee for all saints in all times of persecution.

Elaboration: defeat and victory! "And there was war in heaven ..." (vs. 7). So begins the second telling of the conflict, that will accomplish two purposes: identify the explosive culmination of Satan's vain struggle against God and give an explanation for the present persecution of the woman and "the rest of her seed, that keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus" (vs. 17).

John describes his vision of the confrontation between the dragon and the male child in language already familiar to Bible students. He describes Michael and the host of heaven pitted in combat against the Devil and his angels, followed by the expulsion of Satan. This passage is somewhat problematic for commentators.

Is John describing a literal attempt by Satan to invade heaven and depose the risen Christ (Summer 173)? Does he use war in heaven to point toward civil unrest in the Roman empire (Clarke 1012)? Is *Michael* to be understood as the Lord, Himself (Johnson 240)? Does the war in heaven indicate a *future* conflict following "the rapture of the church" (LaHaye 226)? Likely, the correct response is, "None of the above."

Revelation is a visual book; it should be read with an active imagination, able to conjure up its great visions in the mind's eye. Its pictures and symbols flash before our minds in melodramatic grandeur. And yet, these signs are just that—*signs*. They *sign-ify* concepts, not literal events. John cites the pre-creation event of Satan's rebellion and expulsion from heaven (Jude 6) to reemphasize his losing attempt to thwart God's eternal purpose in Christ. Further, Michael the archangel has already been identified in Scripture as one who stands as a warrior of God (Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1), and has disputed with the Devil over the body of Moses (Jude 9).

But what really sheds light on the actual point of this war in heaven, is not what John *sees*, but what he *hears*. Remember the early charge of this book? "He who hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches" (2:7). John hears

... a great voice in heaven, saying, Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accuseth them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and ye that dwell in them.... (Rev. 12:10-12)

The great heavenly voice makes two vital declarations here: (1) The redemptive work of Jesus has been fulfilled despite the Devil's interference; and (2) The Devil has been crippled in his power to accuse us before God. Both of these facts spell victory for the faithful.

The salvation, power, kingdom, and authority of Christ were all provided for at Calvary, and fully realized in His glorious resurrection and ascension. Through the Lamb's shed blood we are sanctified (Heb. 10:10). We have been made "a kingdom and priests" and we "reign upon the earth" (Rev. 5:9-10). And according to God's eternal purpose, all mankind can be redeemed into one body of saved believers (Eph. 2:13-22),

to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Eph. 3:10-11)

The exaltation of God's wisdom lies not in the church *as a functioning body*, but in the church *as the visible result of His redemptive work accomplished in Christ*. The church stands as the manifestation of God's grace in a world of condemnation.

But what of the Devil being cast down? Hendriksen offers a succinct explanation:

The battle in heaven and the hurling down of the dragon are not to be understood literally. Satan is 'hurled down from heaven' in this sense, namely, that he has lost his place as an accuser of the brethren. Whereas Christ was born and *rendered satisfaction for sin*, Satan has lost every semblance of justice for his accusations against believers. (171)

The Devil is the *Accuser*. We see him in Job 1:6–7 when “the sons of God came to present themselves before Jehovah ... Satan also came among them.” When asked by God, “Whence comest thou?” the Devil replies, “From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.” Satan has been on the prowl “as a roaring lion ... seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). Satan is a sinner, and wants to enlist all mankind in his army of lost souls. For ages he has been able to accuse men of heinous sins, and rightfully so. But now, for the faithful, the debt of sin has been paid in the person of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:21). When the Devil steps forward to lay an accusation at the feet of God, the Creator can reply, “Not guilty! The penalty has been satisfied.” For this cause we stand justified—declared righteous—in the eyes of Jehovah. Through the torture at Golgotha, we are washed in the blood of the Lamb! Therefore, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom. 8:33–34).

Warning: the battle continues. These are words of tremendous hope and power, yet they are coupled with a solemn warning as the voice from heaven continues: “Woe for the earth and the sea: because the devil is gone down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time. And when the dragon saw that he was cast down to the earth, he persecuted the woman that brought forth the man child” (Rev. 12:12–13).

Satan has failed miserably in his bid to destroy the work of God, but is not humbled by the experience. Instead, his hellish wrath oozes hatred and murder as he turns on the *objects* of God’s grace: those who would live godly in Christ Jesus. Satan’s only hope to rob Jehovah of His glory, is to destroy those whose very redemption stands as a living monument to divine grace (Eph. 3:21). In the short years between Pentecost and this Revelation, the Devil has actively labored to turn the faithful from Jesus.

From the arrest and threatening of the apostles (Acts 4), to full scale persecutions by Saul (Acts 8), to struggles with sectarian division (1 Cor. 1), to Judaizers attempting to corrupt the gospel of grace (Gal. 1), to godless gnostics (1 Jn.), to the present persecution at the hands of the Romans, Satan has worked overtime. If he could not stop the Son of God, he will do his best to destroy His adopted children (Gal. 4:5-6). And the flames of demonic rage are fanned to white-hot, “knowing that he hath but a short time” (vs. 12).

Whatever the intended time frame, we are again told of God’s deliverance of the faithful woman. This time, the Holy Spirit reveals His message in the language of deliverance past. She is given “two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness” where she will be nourished by God’s providential care (vs. 14). This is the repetition of God’s promise to provide for His children, seen earlier in Exodus 19:4, “... I bare you on eagle’s wings, and brought you unto myself.” And it echoes Isaiah’s inspiring charge to trust in God: “But they that wait for Jehovah shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint” (Isa. 40:31).

But to the assurance of deliverance already seen in verse six, is added a new twist: “And the serpent cast out of his mouth after the woman water as a river, that he might cause her to be carried away by the stream. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth” (Rev. 12:15-16).

Here is an elaboration on the extent of Satan’s vengeance, and another allusion to Old Testament language. In Isaiah 8:5-8, God threatened to send the Assyrians as the “waters of the river” to wash away the sinful in Judah. Likewise, the Devil will do all in his considerable power to “wash away” the redeemed of the earth in the flood of persecution. It would be highly speculative to assign any *specific* incident to this vision, but suffice it to say, Satan’s efforts *in toto* would appear as an overwhelming flood. Doubtless, many saints would, indeed, be drawn away from the Lamb of God, whether by sword, social pressures, or false teaching.

Yet God’s providential care is again guaranteed! “The earth is Jehovah’s, and the fulness thereof” (Ps. 24:1). At the devilish rebellion of Korah, God’s earth swallowed up the enemies of truth (Num. 16:30–33) just as the parted waters of the Red Sea had earlier swallowed the Egyptians (Ex. 14:26–27). Likewise, even the earth itself, thus indicating every tool at the Creator’s disposal, is used to assure His protection of the woman. God is faithful; He will not allow the righteous to perish. And this is the essential theme of the entire Revelation—those who trust in God and His Lamb will reign in victory! “He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son” (Rev. 21:7).

As this spectacular glimpse into the struggle of the ages closes, John’s vision brings his first-century readers to their point in history. “And the dragon waxed wroth with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, that keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus” (Rev. 12:17).

Satan is not yet finished; this period of fierce persecution is not yet finished, either. It seems that “the rest of her seed” refers to those first spoken of in chapter six. At the opening of the fifth seal, John sees a vision of the precious souls of dead saints, slain “for the testimony which they held.” They cry out from beneath the altar, “How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” (Rev. 6:9–10). They long for the just retribution of Jehovah, but are told to, “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” (Rev. 6:11).

God’s justice is *sure*, if not necessarily *swift*. Those who trust in the Lamb will be victorious, although many will forfeit their physical lives. “For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it” (Mt. 16:25). The redeemed in this conflict would be those who “loved not their life even unto death” (Rev. 12:11).¹⁴

¹⁴ Dewhirst, S. (1994). [The Woman, the Dragon, and the Male Child](#). In F. Jenkins (Ed.), *Overcoming with the Lamb: Lessons from the Book of Revelation* (pp. 93–100). Temple Terrace, FL: Florida College Bookstore.



When a Dragon Tried to Eat Baby Jesus: The Nativity Story We Don't Talk About

The dragon who failed to devour the child in the manger swallows the man atop the cross. In so doing, unbeknownst to this beast, he ate poison.

None of the Gospels mention this unwelcome visitor to Bethlehem, but the Apocalypse does. John paints a seven-headed, ten-horned red dragon onto the peaceful canvas.

You can read all about it in Revelation 12.

It's the nativity story we don't talk about. A dragon trying to eat our Lord. The red dragon was standing "before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron."

SILENT NIGHT, VIOLENT NIGHT

The Birth of Christ marks the genesis of war. God invading our world. Hell's foundations quaking as the ancient terrors of demons awake. The dragon spreading his wings & flying into battle, flames bellowing from his lungs of brimstone and fire.

Philip Yancey writes, "From God's viewpoint—and Satan's —The Nativity signals far more than the birth of a baby; it was an invasion, the decisive advance in the great struggle for the cosmos."

Silent night,
violent night,
hell and heaven
meet to fight.

Wars have been waged over money, property, honor, and power. But this war—the greatest conflict in human history—is over us.

The dragon sports many names—the serpent, the liar, the god of this world—but perhaps his most fitting name is Satan. It means Accuser. That's what John calls him later in the chapter: "the accuser of our brethren...who accuses them day and night before our God," (12:10).

He wields the weapon of accusation. And by it he enslaves us in guilt, shame, depravity, and lies. Each evil is a link in the chains that bind us. And each chain the Accuser wraps round and round our souls. His greatest fear is that we will hear that his enemy has come to set us free.

So, in the town of Bethlehem a red dragon swoops in to swallow this little child who has come to liberate us from accusation. To make us children of his Father. To shatter every chain binding us to a life of bondage. He must then be stopped. He must then be silenced. He must be killed!

WHEN THE DRAGON ATE POISON

The Birth of Baby Jesus begins the narrative of violence that marks the life of the Liberator. The dragon misses his opportunity in Bethlehem. So, he hounds our Lord down to Egypt. Then back to Galilee. He trails him into the desert with tempting words. And, finally, after 33 years of warfare—and repeated defeats—he finally wins.

The dragon who failed to devour the child in the manger swallows the man atop the cross.

In so doing, unbeknownst to this beast, he ate poison. For if anything will destroy an accuser, it is taking freedom into his bowels.

At the death of Jesus there was a great rattling of chains. The links of evil that bound us snapped in two. A world held in bondage to the dragon was, in the death of the Son of God, immediately and irrevocably freed forever from his captivity.

It all began in Bethlehem. Unseen by human eyes, hell and heaven battled over us. And heaven, in the end, stood on the neck of hell and pressed his foot into the throat that had so long accused us.

The accuser of our brethren, John wrote, “has been thrown down,” (12:10). He was conquered “by the blood of the Lamb,” (12:11). – Social Media Posting



The Conflict (Revelation 12) The last chapter concluded with the downfall and utter destruction of the oppressors of the Christians. From the conflict we learned that God is longsuffering & willing to allow His children to undergo horrific persecution in order to give all mankind the opportunity to come to repentance. We have also seen that God will not infringe upon man's free will choice to choose his own destiny. What an incredible irony it is to contemplate this. The enemies of the early Christians were bent upon their destruction, using all manner of earthly means to inflict pain and suffering upon them. Whatever atrocities their minds could conceive of was implemented against the Christians in their full measure. And what did the Christians have to fight back with? Their weapons were taken from the word of God, their only armor was the sword of the Spirit, love, compassion and concern for the wellbeing of all mankind. The world was determined to kill them but their mission was to save their enemies from the eternal consequences of their own actions.

Chapter 12 of Revelation starts back with the coming of righteousness which we earlier saw in the beginning of chapter six with the introduction of the white horse. The entire vision which illustrated the coming of Jesus, then the coming of Satan and his allies all the way up through the persecution & ending with the total destruction of the enemies of righteousness and the ultimate victory of the saints over them is about to be replayed in its entirety. The difference with this episode is that we are going to be given a lot more information that was left out of the earlier account - the Beast only mentioned in passing in Revelation 11:7 will be described in detail. We will meet his ally and they both will be positively identified in the replay of the vision. The horrors of the persecutions as well as the attributes of the enemies of righteousness are more graphic as to their descriptions.

One cannot help but wonder why God would choose to reveal the events represented in the Revelation in two parts. God had no intention of educating the enemies of His people as to His purpose and their fate if they refused to seek His righteousness. God says He is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him. This implies diligent seeking is required in order to receive the rewards. It can be reasonably stated that nobody on earth who knows nothing of the one true and living God is going to pick up a copy of Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel or the Revelation and read through it casually and understand it. Long before any worldly enemy of the Christians ever made it to the second half of the book, they would be utterly lost in a quagmire of figurative language for which they would be utterly helpless to figure out. The work would be dismissed as senseless letter belonging to a group of superstitious zealots. There would be no perception of danger to the enemies of the Christians who would come into possession of it at some time. The entire Revelation is revealed in stages that build on each other. The evil earthly characters in the Book of Revelation aren't positively identified until later on for a good reason. The enemies of God's people are going to have to read a significant way through the letter in order to get these important clues that will identify them as the ones who are going to be the ultimate losers in the conflict.

Another very probable reason is so that the Christians who first read the Revelation will see early on that they are going to be victorious if they overcome and remain faithful. It is good to see quickly that one is going to win the conflict so that the following details are a little easier to absorb. God plants this seed of hope early into the minds of the first readers before they get to see all the forthcoming details. Revelation is a message of hope and perseverance to the people of God, but it also contains evidence of the suffering they will undergo as the events unfold before them.

A third possible explanation is to demonstrate to the readership that the events described in the book are not played out in chronological order in a step-by-step progression. The events described in Revelation were already being carried out concurrently to some degree.

And the fourth reason for the two-stage revealing of the Revelation is that the first series of visions serves as an introduction to the second. When the reader realizes the second series of visions are a re-enactment of the first, it serves to help keep the focus on what it really is and avoid going off in wild tangents thinking it is a type description of events associated with the end of the world. Scripture is plain in other writings that the end of the world is going to come like a thief in the night during a time when people think there is peace and safety for all (1 Thessalonians 5:2-3, 2 Peter 3:10, Matthew 24:44). Those who contrive Jesus reigning on earth from Jerusalem for a thousand years are in error. God swore that no seed of Jeconiah would rule from David's throne in Judah ever again (Jeremiah 22:30). Jesus was a direct descendant of Jeconiah from both Mary's side and Joseph's. God did not leave any doubt there at all.

With the first series of visions used as an introduction and compliment to the second series, it becomes quite clear what the second series is all about. It was written to the same group of people and carries the same message of hope and perseverance, it has the same list of characters both good and evil, the conflict described therein is the same and the outcome is the same. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). **The contents of the little book which John was told to take and eat is being developed now and is the subject of the following series of visions.** - Edited, *Church of Christ Articles*

Revelation 12:1

"And a great sign was seen in heaven: a woman arrayed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars"

The two sides in conflict in Revelation are good and evil. The characters are God and His children in the corner of righteousness and Satan and his followers in the corner of evil. The rules are very simple. The evil characters will use whatever earthly means are at their disposal to destroy God's children and God's children will use only the spiritual weapons described in the word of God. Those on the side of evil are going to perish forever and while they are trying to destroy those on the side of good, the children of God are trying to save them from their eternal fate.

"A woman arrayed with the sun".

The sun is our primary source of light and God is our spiritual source of light. The woman illustrates the relationship between God & His faithful children. In this case, the remnant of the faithful from the nation of Israel is in view, described as a woman is representative as the bride of God in much the same fashion as the church today is the bride of Christ (Romans 7:4).

"and the moon under her feet"

The moon is representative of lesser figures of authority so it being under the feet of the woman places the leaders of the world in subjection to the faithful Israelites.

"and upon her head a crown of twelve stars"

Stars are representative of individuals so the crown of twelve stars will represent the twelve sons of Jacob who then became the patriarchs of the Israelite nation. The overall picture here of the radiant woman is the remnant of the faithful children of Israel, with God as her head and with the world at her feet.

Revelation 12:2

"and she was with child; and she crieth out, travailing in birth, and in pain to be delivered."

The child about to be delivered is none other than Our Lord & Savior, Jesus Christ, the promised messiah. The children of Israel who remained faithful to God were certainly in misery & were crying out for the coming of Christ. The stage is now set. **The time period for the starting point of this vision is before the birth of Christ on earth.** We have now been introduced to the righteous characters in this conflict. We have God represented as the sun, the faithful children of Israel and the Son of God about to be delivered on the scene. Now it is time to meet the evil force.

Revelation 12:3

"And there was seen another sign in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads seven diadems."

And now we meet Satan who is represented by a dragon. The figure of the dragon always represents Satan in the Revelation and is positively identified in the ninth verse of this chapter. The characteristics used here to describe him are "great" which is representative of his power and "red" which represents his murderous, bloody character. He is pictured with seven heads which is a figure for perfect. In this instance it means the perfect embodiment of an evil mastermind that's dedicated to lies, deceit and sinful treachery. He is pictured with ten horns which means he has complete power within his realm of operation. Obviously, Satan doesn't have complete unrestricted power or our lives would be unbearable on earth. Consider what happened to Job when God allowed Satan a little more freedom to afflict than was normally issued. Imagine if you can what our lives would be like if the same entity were granted unrestricted access to us on earth. Upon Satan's head were pictured seven [diadems](#). This is not the same as the crowns worn by the righteous which is the "*stephanos*" crown of the victor. Satan never wins any permanent victory and he is going to be utterly defeated in the end so he is only shown to wear a diadem and is never pictured wearing the victory crown.

Revelation 12:4

"And his tail draweth the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon standeth before the woman about to be delivered, that when she is delivered he may devour her child."

The dragon's tail drawing a third of the stars of heaven points to Satan's rebellion against God when he led many angels with him and they were cast down and bound in the hadean realm in chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment, (2 Peter 2:4, Jude 6). **It is entirely possible that the rebellious angels explains the presence of those evil spirits on earth during the time of Christ on earth. We know from scripture that the time of evil spirits on earth was temporary because in Zechariah 13:1-2 it was prophesied that the evil spirits would be caused to pass from the land during the period of time when Christ walked the earth. Statements made by the evil spirits to Jesus during their confrontations seem to support the idea of their presence on earth being a temporary arrangement (Matthew 8:29). [More @Chapter 20 Commentary]**

The third part of the stars of heaven is a similar figure to the first four trumpet announcements when a third part of each realm was affected. The figure represents more a significant percentage rather than a literal part of the whole. Certainly, it can't be concluded that an exact third of God's angels sinned and were cast out of heaven, but, the fraction given certainly suggests a vast number. We don't know how many angels God created but Revelation 5:11 gives a hint. The angels numbered with the rest of the righteous around the throne of God were numbered as "*ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands*". The Hebrew writer simply called them an "*innumerable company of angels*" (Hebrews 12:22). Obviously, the number of defecting angels was significant. One cannot help but wonder why they would do such a thing after being in Heaven and seeing the power of God firsthand. This certainly speaks volumes to the persuasive and deceitful nature of Satan to be able to deceive and lead astray such a vast host of heaven's messengers.

"and the dragon standeth before the woman that is about to be delivered, that when she is delivered he may devour her child"

Satan is pictured standing in front of the radiant woman who is about to bring forth Jesus Christ on earth. Obviously, Satan knows what is forthcoming and intends to waste no time in trying to destroy Jesus Christ as soon as He is born. Satan working through Herod sought the child's life right after He was born to the extent that His parents had to flee with him to Egypt in order to protect Him (Matthew 2:13). It should also be noted that this is not the only time Satan, acting through earthly agents tried to destroy God's plan for bringing forth the Messiah from the seed of Israel. The Egyptians, Haman in Esther 3:13 and Antiochus Epiphanes were all agents of Satan who had tried to destroy Israel. Satan standing before the radiant woman of Israel was not a one-time event that suddenly happened as Jesus was about to be born, rather this conflict had been going on for centuries. Satan has always stood in opposition to the plan of God.

Revelation 12:5

"And she was delivered of a son, a man child, who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and unto his throne."

This is a picture of the entire life, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. No need to elaborate here, the Christians who would be reading this were fully aware of all the details surrounding the life of Jesus Christ. Jesus has ascended to the Father and is ruling all the nations of the earth from His throne in Heaven (Acts 2:33-35, Hebrews 10:12-13).

Revelation 12:6

"And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that there they may nourish her a thousand two hundred and threescore days."

After Jesus ascension back to Heaven to reign from the Father's side, the faithful became the spiritual kingdom that Jesus ruled over. This spiritual kingdom, also known as the church, began in Jerusalem on Pentecost following Jesus' crucifixion as revealed in Acts chapter 2.

The church in Jerusalem grew in leaps & bounds in the first years after its establishment. In Acts 8 we see the beginning of a great persecution. This persecution was primarily from the Jews who rejected Jesus Christ as the Messiah. In Acts 8:1 we see that because of the persecution of the Jews, the Christians *"were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria"* and in verse 4, *"they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word."*

To understand what the wilderness is in this context, one must look at it through the eyes of the people that were living it. These Christians were displaced from their homes and driven out into the unknown to seek new places to live. From their perspective, they were driven out into the wilderness. And we see that they found places prepared for them by God.

God in His providential care made sure the Christians had a place to go and "They" were nourishing the church. This is God, His Spirit and Jesus providing the nourishment from heaven and the food in view here is in the form of both spiritual and providential. And under the care of the Godhood the church prospered and grew.

Revelation 12:7

"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels (going forth) to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred and his angels"

One thing we need to keep in mind when interpreting figurative statements is they never suggest a meaning opposite the figurative statement. Therefore, it can be concluded that "war" can't mean "no war". The elements in the statement may be figurative but the activities cannot be. For instance, when we were faced with the locusts, it was the activities and the results that helped to define what the locusts represented. In this statement, the activity is a conflict. Inspiration calls it a war. There is a conflict mentioned here so it cannot be denied that a conflict existed. Many able scholars hold to the belief that this & the next two verses describe an invasion attempt by Satan against the throne of God after they were expelled from heaven in verse 4.

Scripture is clear that there were angels who sinned and were cast out of heaven, "For if God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (2 Peter 2:4). But notice two things in this context. First the immediate text says they were cast down to hell which in the original language is tartaroo or tartarus which is the tormented side of the hadean realm and there awaiting the day of the Lord and the final judgment. See 2 Peter 2:9 for additional explanation.

Notice that Peter did not mention a stopping place of earth along the way. What we do learn here is that there was a time when angels sinned and were cast out of heaven. Jude 6 reveals what these angels did that was sinful, "*And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day*" (Jude 6). So, the angels that sinned and were cast out of heaven to the place of punishment because they disobeyed God and left their own habitation.

So, it stands to reason that at some point in time the angels left heaven and came to earth and then were denied access back to heaven. This is a possible explanation for the existence of the evil spirits on earth during the time of Christ. The evil spirits existed and were on earth and they had to come from somewhere. However, this presents a difficulty in that the timeframe for the war in heaven is now at the time of Christ on earth. Most of the scholars agree that the fall of Satan occurred at the time either before or shortly after the creation of earth. We must also acknowledge that inspiration places Satan in a conversation with God on two occasions in the book of Job. One would understand a two-way conversation would require that both be in each other's company, so it is not unreasonable to conclude that Satan was in the presence of God and the context suggests a host of the "*Sons of God*" presenting themselves to the Lord. So, the question arises, did this meeting happen in heaven? Nowhere else in scripture were angels referred to as "*sons of God*".

The true meaning of "*Sons of God*" is found in Romans 8:14. They are followers and worshippers of God; and so were those mentioned in Job. So, Satan having access to heaven is not supported in Job. There is plenty of information in scripture that supports a pre-incarnate form of Jesus Christ on earth and this is a possible explanation for how the Sons of God presented themselves before the Lord without being in heaven. Also, it should be noted that in the account of Job, Satan had to acquire God's permission before he could afflict Job on both occasions and he was forbidden to kill him and Satan obeyed those divine directives. Satan was bound at this time and this fact will come into play later on in this study.

We must also give some consideration to the vision in Zechariah 3 where Satan was seen at the side of Joshua as an adversary. Many commentators use this account to demonstrate that Satan had access to the presence of God. If this were true, then so did Joshua. Furthermore, the Zechariah text states that the event was in the company of the "*angel of Jehovah*". So, we can easily dismiss this verse as supportive of the claim that Satan had access to the throne of heaven which is used by some to support that the war in heaven happened all at once during Christ's time on earth.

During Christ's ministry on earth, He sent seventy disciples out to preach the gospel in neighboring towns. Before He sent them out, He gave them the power to cast out evil spirits. Upon their return they declared to Jesus that even the evil spirits were subject to them through His name. Jesus' reply to them was, "*I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven*" (Luke 10:18). Those who support the war in heaven during the time of Christ point to this verse of scripture every time & if the heaven Jesus mentions here is actually heaven, then Satan has to have been there in order to fall from it. However, in the absence of any supporting scripture that places Satan in heaven itself, it is difficult to also place him physically there in the presence of God. It appears that Jesus is in fact saying He can see the power and influence of Satan falling from a very lofty vantage point. It was not Satan that the disciples cast out, it was the evil spirits, and none of them were said to have been cast out of Heaven, rather, they were cast out of living people on earth. The evil spirits being cast out of the people did not cause Satan to be cast out of heaven. It is also significant to note that when Jesus said He beheld Satan falling, the evil spirits were already on earth and had been for some time. If there was a war going in heaven at that time, then why were the evil spirits still on the earth? It seems more consistent to think of this as the influence of Satan on earth weakening dramatically as a result of the power given to the disciples through Jesus.

There is no support for a literal war in heaven during the time of Christ in the rest of scripture that cannot be reasonably explained away. Did a conflict happen where Satan and those angels who sinned were expelled from heaven? Absolutely yes. Satan and his angels, as they are referred to in Revelation 12:9 have been cast out of heaven, they are forbidden to return and they are all bound in chains of darkness reserved for judgment (2 Peter 2:4, Jude 6), and 2nd Peter 2:9 makes it clear that this period of imprisonment is not pleasant. It is clear from the text that when Satan & his angels left heaven, it was not under peaceful conditions. But there is no conclusive evidence to support the belief of some that Satan led an army of angels in an attempted *invasion* and overthrow of heaven. In fact, it is quite evident from an observance of the way in which the evil spirits on earth acted towards Jesus upon their encounters that they knew who He was, and they always obeyed His directives without rebellion.

It is very logical to conclude that if the forces of evil were going to lead a revolt against heaven while Jesus Christ was on earth, they would have started it off by slaying Jesus Christ or at least attempting to. It does not make any sense to think that Satan and his angels who were forced to operate under constraints on earth would even have the barest chance for a victory in heaven. Why would they have any better chance to overcome God in heaven than they did to overcome Jesus as a human on earth? They couldn't touch Him and they well knew it and the inspired accounts which tell of their encounters reveal only that when Jesus Christ gave them an order, they obeyed it. While on earth, Jesus Christ was a man. He had to have food in order to live, when He was cut, he bled just like any man would, He could and did suffer. Jesus Christ was as human in his existence on earth as any of us and as such would be an easy target for any angel to outright destroy in an unrestrained confrontation. Satan had to have divine permission to even touch Job and divine permissions were obeyed. Clearly something is in place which forces the evil entities to obey the divine directives. It would be foolish and naive to think that the evil spirits obeyed Jesus out of any desire by them to do so. Clearly, there were restrictions on the activities of Satan and the evil spirits or Jesus would have perished the instant He was born.

So, the question becomes not "was there a war in heaven?" rather, **"when was the war in heaven?"**. That there was a rebellion in heaven which resulted in the defeat and expulsion of Satan and "*his angels*" is beyond question. We do not know anything about this ill-conceived and foolish confrontation other than the fact that Satan and His allies did not prevail and the outcome was unpleasant for them in the extreme. The most logical explanation of this and the following three verses is that an ongoing spiritual warfare, which had been going on from the beginning of the creation, reached its climax at the final triumph of Jesus over death.

Revelation 12:8

"And they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven."

Satan and an obviously large host of angels couldn't overcome God's throne, earthly principalities and powers didn't stand a chance. God's throne and purpose stand inviolate and unconquerable against any and all opposition. Nothing can stand in the way of God's will. Satan and his foolish followers, at some point in history, found themselves booted out of heaven forever.

Revelation 12:9

"And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him."

And this is the climax of a conflict that had been ongoing since before Satan deceived Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. **Looking at this through the eyes of the first readers, it is easy to see this as the final and ultimate defeat of Satan once and for all which was evidenced by Jesus' triumph over death.** Satan and his angels may have thought they had won when Jesus died on that cross. They were not alone in that either. Jesus' disciples were in a state of confusion and indecision. Their champion had died on that cross and they thought Satan had won. It was no secret that Jesus was supposed to arise because the Jewish leaders had guards placed at His tomb, but the shock of His death was more than many disciples could handle.

Revelation 12:10

"And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying, Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accuseth them before our God day and night."

We see in this part of the vision, the eternal purpose of God by way of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. God's righteous nature demands the punishment of death for sin. Satan and the sinful angels well knew this and it is obvious here that God was reminded of this by Satan continually. Satan is demanding man suffer the same punishment for sin that he received. Mankind sinned and Satan is right there accusing mankind of this and wanting to know why God has not given them the same treatment He got. When Jesus Christ died at the hand of man for the sins of man, the penalty of death which God's righteous nature had demanded was paid in full by Jesus Christ who was one of three persons of the Godhood. In effect, God paid the penalty of death for man's sin in man's place. Satan did not know what God's plan was until it unfolded and when it did and the debt was paid for the sins of mankind, Satan had no more complaint against man with God. Until Jesus had paid the death penalty for man's sin, Satan had a valid argument.

Satan hates God and He is powerless to harm God. The only way Satan can hurt God is to drag mankind whom God loves through the muck and mire of sin and then cast it in God's teeth. Of course, Satan's hatred is especially focused on God's faithful and it is the faithful he wants most to bring down. He knows that when he brings down one of God's own, God suffers for it. Old Testament scripture reveals that it was God's faithful who were the targets of Satan's accusations. Satan tried to say that Job was only faithful because of the goodness God showed him. When that failed to be true, Satan said Job would curse God to His face if God would allow him to afflict Job directly and Job prevailed and prospered. In Zechariah 3:1 we see a picture of Satan resisting Joshua who was standing sinful and God clothed Joshua in clean garments. There is no evidence in scripture anywhere of Satan opposing unbelievers - so - from this we can conclude that Satan's primary attention was directed towards God's faithful children.

Now that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has paid the penalty for the sins of mankind, all faithful children of God can stand before Him justified of their sins. Because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, faithful children of God can no longer be accused by Satan. Satan cannot accuse God's faithful children of sin anymore because God provided them a way of appearing sinless before Him by suffering the death He demanded for man's sin, Himself. In today's language we can illustrate this thusly: "Satan, you demanded the same penalty for your sin be inflicted on sinful man, so I went down there and died for them in their place. I suffered the death you demanded of them myself, now stop accusing them and get out of my sight."

With the death of Jesus and the coming of the Christian age, there was a justification of sin, never before known. The Hebrew writer taught that the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin (Hebrews 10:4) and that the transgressions under the first covenant were forgiven (Hebrews 9:15). All who lived before the cross and who will live after can have the complete and total forgiveness of sin. It was at this time that salvation for man had come & the power of God had been revealed and the spiritual kingdom of God was established. **This part of the vision is the coming of the church of Christ!**

Revelation 12:11

"And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death."

And this is a vision of those who overcame and triumphed over Satan. There are three conditions here for the overcomers. There was the blood of Jesus which served as the perfect sacrifice, the will of God revealed in the New Testament & faithfulness to the terms of the New Covenant even to the point of death. Without any one of these, there is no salvation.

Revelation 12:12

"Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe for the earth and for the sea: because the devil is gone down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time."

Through the sacrifice of Christ, we have a *"better covenant, which was established upon better promises"* (Hebrews 8:6). We have every reason to rejoice because now we can stand justified in the sight of God, something never before known to the children of God. Satan can no longer accuse the faithful in God's sight for past sins. All that is left for him now is to deceive the nations and try and lead as many astray as he can. Without question, Satan knows now that there will be people who live in God's presence forever. He knows what his fate is and knows there will be no escape for him so his mission now is to take as many with him as possible. This is the only avenue left open for him to oppose God and cause Him suffering. Satan knows the only way he can hurt God now is to hurt those he loved so much and he can do this by deceiving them and leading them astray away from the shelter of His church. Satan's time is short and he knows it, so his efforts towards this end are reinforced.

Revelation 12:13

"And when the dragon saw that he was cast down to the earth, he persecuted the woman that brought forth the man (child)."

When Satan realized he could no longer accuse the righteous, he set out to try and destroy the faithful children of God. This is the beginning of the great persecution.

Revelation 12:14

"And there were given to the woman the two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness unto her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent." Looking at this thru the eyes of first century Christians, this is likely one or both of two events being in view.

In Acts 8:1, we read of the first great persecution of the Christians by the Jews: "*Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.*" These Christians left their homes and fled the City of Jerusalem out into the unknown and scattered all over the Roman Empire preaching the gospel (Acts 8:4). From the perspective of the Christians who fled, they were going out into the wilderness and away from their homes. The apostles stayed behind in Jerusalem when the first Christians fled. To those leaving their homes, fleeing for their lives, it doubtless looked to them like they were heading out into the wilderness like the children of Israel did when they left Egypt.

The "*time and times and half a time*" is three and a half years, representing an indefinite period of time, which is the same time period as in verse 6. The nourishment for the faithful Christians during this time could be the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit providing them with the word of God which was their spiritual food. The providential care of God can be said to be included in this as well. It is obvious from the content of the letter of Revelation itself that God was extremely concerned for the well-being of His children and He made sure they knew He was with them and in control of the situation.

Revelation 12:15

"And the serpent cast out of his mouth after the woman water as a river, that he might cause her to be carried away by the stream."

Water as a river is a familiar Old Testament picture of an oppressive flood against God's people. "*And Jehovah spake unto me yet again, saying, forasmuch as this people have refused the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son; now therefore, behold,*

the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the River, strong and many, (even) the king of Assyria and all his glory: and it shall come up over all its channels, and go over all its banks; and it shall sweep onward into Judah; it shall overflow and pass through; it shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of its wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel (Isaiah 8:5-8). Similar examples of water being pictured as oppression against God's people is found in Isa. 43:2 & Psa. 32:6; 144:7.

The serpent sending a flood from his mouth is a figure for the amount of oppression he will send forth upon the children of God. Pagan worship with all the lusts associated with that, lies, deceit, false philosophies, false teachings and false accusations against the church were just a part of the river of persecution that Satan spewed forth against the saints.

Revelation 12:16

"And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth."

This is a picture of God's providential care for His people. Looking back to an earlier vision, God made it plain that His retribution on the people of the earth was held back in favor of God's children. Earthquakes, floods, famines, diseases and other natural disasters hampered and weakened the instruments of Satan's wrath and he was unable to completely destroy God's people from the face of the earth.

Revelation 12:17

"And the dragon waxed wroth with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, that keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus"

Satan is angry because he cannot destroy Christians from the face of the earth so he is going to entrench himself and continue his war with God's people for the rest of the time available to him. Satan is still at war with Christians and those who "*keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus*" are still fighting the battle between good and evil. It is a worldwide battle and the stakes are the souls of mankind, both saved and unsaved. The world is filled with false gods and false worship.

Summary of Chapter Twelve

This was the introduction to the bittersweet contents of the little book John was told to take and eat. Revelation chapter 12 is a overview of the whole coming of Jesus Christ from the Israelite nation. The vision portrays the birth and ascension of Jesus to the throne of God in Heaven. In this vision we see the fall of Satan and his angels and his rage over his defeat by Jesus Christ. Satan finds himself cast out of heaven and powerless against the heavenly host so he turns his malicious hate upon those who God loves still on the earth. Bent on their destruction, he goes about trying every method of temptation and deceit he can think of to bring about the destruction of God's faithful children from the earth.

The introductions to the characters in the little book have been made, the setting for the vision has been set and now following will be the details of the battle between good and evil specific to the minds & experiences of those Christians living in the first century. And in the end of this series of visions, we see death itself and all those who chose that as their destiny, forever cast into the lake of fire.

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Foy Wallace's Interpretation of Chapter Twelve From His Commentary:

Revelation 12 Verse 1 THE WOMAN WITH CHILD (Chapter 12: 1-2)

–12:1 1. And there appeared a great wonder in heaven. The word wonder here meant a sign—a sign was seen in heaven. There are numerous uses of the word heaven in the scriptures. Among the Hebrews it was used chiefly in three senses. First, the aerial heavens where the winds blow and the rains form and the birds fly; second, the firmament where the stars as pendant jewels adorn the sky, and where all the constellations and planets are in orbit; third, the highest heaven, the third heaven, the residence of God and Christ, the dwelling of angels and mansions of the blessed. 2. A woman clothed with the sun. The sun is the great luminary that God created and placed in the heavens to preside over the day. The sun being obscured and ceasing to shine were symbols of calamity and darkness settling over nations. In the same way the shining of the sun was used as a similitude of the glory of God. When the Spirit in John, the seer, needed a figure to adequately set forth the glory of the church represented by the woman, he selected the flaming orb of the day—the woman, the church, was arrayed with the sun, the very glory of God. 3. And the moon under her feet. Standing with the moon under her feet was symbol of the exaltation of the church—an extended description of the glorious and exalted position of the church among and in the midst of all the creations, institutions, and governments of man. The symbol picture was most especially significant in the Roman world where this glory and exaltation would in succeeding events become visibly manifest to all the authorities of Caesar's empire. Isaiah the prophet pictured the church (chapter 2:2) "on top of the mountains, exalted above the hills." The vision of the woman standing with the moon under her feet was the same imagery of exaltation. 4. And upon her head a crown of twelve stars. The stars are the glory of all the luminaries which adorn the heavens. No part of the visible creation exhibits the supreme glory of God so illustriously as the starry firmament. The crown of stars was the diadem of highest glory on the head of the woman—the glorious church. In royalty it was the ornament of queens. Ahasuerus "loved Esther above all the women . . . so he set the royal crown upon her head." (Esther 2:17) The stars were used in scripture to designate all luminaries of heaven, except the sun and moon. The twelve stars on the head of the woman is representative of totality, of completeness, of perfection. There were twelve tribes of Israel, representing the whole Old Testament church. There were twelve apostles for the New Testament church. The twelve stars in the diadem on the woman's head were a complete symbol of the whole church as typified in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New Testament.

Verse 2 The woman's pain

–12:2 - - 1. And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. A similar figure was used by the prophet Isaiah (66:7-8) of Israel in exile. Israel in the Old Testament was said to bring forth children. The church, in Romans 7:4, was said to be in spiritual conjugal relation with Christ resulting in bearing fruit unto God. John mentions "her children" (2 John 1:1) in symbolizing the church as the "elect lady." The woman here symbolized was the church in trial and persecution.

2. Travailing in birth. In this period of tribulation, the church would produce (birth) children in sorrow for martyrdom. 3. And pained to be delivered. During the period of greatest tribulation the church did not cease to bear her fruit; she continued to bring forth children, but in pain and persecution and martyrdom. The following verses will develop further the application of these verses to the part of the woman's seed that was martyred—the "child that was caught up unto God"—and the part of her seed, called "the remnant," or rest of her seed, that remained on the earth to suffer, but not to die. (3) The summary of the symbols. The context of chapter twelve yields three major points which must be classified and discriminated in order: First, the woman was a symbol of the Jerusalem church –represented as "the new Jerusalem," in chapter 21:2 at the close of the Revelation, and stands for the whole church. Second, the man child referred to the martyred souls as "the first-fruits unto God and the Lamb." (Chapters 6:10- 11; 14:4; 20:4) The woman's seed "caught up unto God and to his throne," who thereby entered into a state of victory over the dragon and his wrath in a distinctive sense. (Chapter 12:5) Third, the remnant or rest of the woman's seed were distinguished from the man child, as being that part of the woman's seed who suffered the trials of the great tribulation but were not slain or beheaded as were the martyrs. (Chapters 6:9-11 & 20:4) The woman of this chapter, therefore, must be considered as the organic body of the church—the totality of its members; distinguished from her seed, or children—the constituent members of it, in the two classes mentioned. The text and context will sustain this analysis, and these viewpoints can be maintained.

Verse 3 THE GREAT RED DRAGON (Chapters 12:3-6) In this chapter of Revelation the names Satan, Devil, Serpent and Dragon were used interchangeably, and evidently personified the persecuting powers hostile to the church; that is, Nero and his successors, in whom the persecutions and the persecutors were personified.

The dragon with multiple heads and horns—12:3-4.

In this reference, of verse 3, the sign was in the same heaven mentioned by Christ in Luke 10:18 : "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." It meant his dominion of diabolical influence. The church is called the "kingdom of heaven" because it is the reign of heaven in the hearts of men, and which designates its divine realm. Jesus said to Pilate, "Now is my kingdom not from hence." The word "hence" means here—his kingdom is here but not from here; it is from heaven. The word "heaven" here referred to its heavenly origin & character. The word "now" referred to its immediate establishment in the world. But the heaven of Satan, from which he fell (Luke 10:18) meant the realm of his diabolical influence, and referred to the political authorities, governments and powers of the whole Roman world. It was the sign of an appalling persecution of unprecedented fury, beginning with the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, which was soon to burst upon the church; and the sign of this chapter was comparable to the signs of the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, thirteenth chapter of Mark, and twenty-first chapter of Luke, all of which contain the Lord's description of the events of the same period.

2. A great red dragon

—12:3. The dragon referred to Satan, the antagonist of the church, personified in the active persecutor—Nero and his successors—as representative of all that was opposed to Christ and the church. The flame-colored description of the red dragon was the type of the destruction of war and the bloodshed of martyrdom. As in chapter six the colors of the horses corresponded with the mission of the riders. The horses were symbols of war and the red horse signified bloodshed. So, it was here—the red dragon signified the murderous character of these minions of Satan—the Roman and heathen persecuting powers.

Having seven heads and ten horns—12:3. As in chapter 5, verse 6, the seven eyes of the Lamb represented the perfection of wisdom, so the seven heads of this verse indicated the perfection or completeness of the universal rule and government of Rome, the seven-hilled city of the Caesars, to which the number seven in this verse reference may have been an allusion. But it was an evident symbol of the complete power of the ruling Roman emperor. The ten horns represented the unified and universal power of the Roman emperor through the ten tributaries of the Roman government—all of which were in complete subjugation to the Caesars of Rome's seven hills on the throne of which at this time sat Nero Caesar, the ruling emperor. The ten horns, therefore, denoted the ten kingdoms over which the emperor ruled.

And seven crowns upon his heads–12:3. The seven diadems upon his heads show the regal glory of this dragon. It should be noted that the diadems were not the crown of stars which was upon the woman's head, indicating the divine glory of the church; but here they were crowns of diabolical power and assumed glory. It is not an exaggeration that the great antagonist of Christ & the church in that era of greatest crisis should appear in symbols of pomp and power.

Verse 4 – And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven

–12:4. The tail of the dragon was in the imagery of the sweeping power of the church antagonist and the destruction behind him in the wake of persecution, described in the symbol of pulling the stars from their orbits with the angry lash of his enormous tail. It was the vision of the presumptive power of the persecutors of the church.

And did cast them to the earth–12:4. The reference to casting down to the earth a third of the stars of heaven appears to have had application to the part of the political world that was subject to these destructions–Jerusalem, Judaism and the Jewish state. The application to geographical or political divisions could have had no meaning. The same expression in chapter eight referred to the three woes of destruction, one part each, as noted in the comments on that section. Here the imagery was that of a symbolic portion of the luminaries of heaven being dragged down by the dragon's tail. It signified his potent weapon in the power to harm in the pending events of the destruction of the Jewish world, represented by the destruction of Jerusalem, the downfall of Judaism and the end of the Jewish state.

The object of the dragon's rage–12:4 And the dragon stood before the woman . . . for to devour her child. This statement indicated that the object of the dragon's deadly rage was the woman, which symbolized the church; and her child, which meant the martyred saints to which the woman would give birth in the pain of persecution and martyrdom. The woman's child was here employed not in a singular sense but in the collective use of the word.

Verse 5 – And she brought forth a man child

–12:5. The use of the word man child here is in neuter gender. And it is not singular number any more than the use of the word "mother" when used in a collective sense; and that is the sense in which man child was used here – collectively, denoting that portion of the church, or the woman's seed, which was to be caught up to God in the martyrdom which followed. That the man child did not refer to Christ becomes evident in the following verses.

The expression caught up to God from the face of the dragon would hardly be a fitting description of the ascension of Christ, but it was an appropriate symbol of the triumph of the martyrs who "overcame . . . by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." It further harmonizes with the scene of victory for the souls of the beheaded in Revelation 20:4. The man child was not a single person but a collective body. It was that part of the woman's seed which was put in contrast with the remnant, or the rest of her seed, in verse 17. The woman's seed compares with the firstborn ones of chapter 12:23 of Hebrews "which are written in heaven"; and "the first-fruits unto God" (Revelation 14:4); and the "kind of first-fruits of his creatures" (James 1:18). The man child that was caught up unto God was that part of the woman's seed, or children, who were martyrs – "the souls of them that were slain for the word of God," under the altar, in the suffering of death in chapter 6:9-11; and on thrones in the state of victory in chapter 20:4. The remnant, or rest of the woman's seed, or children, remained on the earth to suffer persecution but not martyrdom. It compares also with the account of the two witnesses who ascended up to heaven in chapter 11:12, and the effect on the enemies who beheld them. It is not unusual in the symbolic imagery of scripture description to characterize members of the church as its children. Examples of this are found in Romans 7:1-4; Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 12:23; Hebrews 12:28; 2 John 1:1; 2 John 1:4; 2 John 1:13.

Who was to rule all nations–12:5. The reason apparently for the interpretation that the man child refers to Christ is the statement of verse 5, that he "was to rule all nations with a rod of iron." But this same phrase was used in the language of Christ to the members of the Thyatira church in chapter 2:26-27: "He that overcometh . . . to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron." The rod of iron was the symbol of the impact of the gospel on the pagan world through the victory of the church, resulting from their persecutions. It signified the inexorable character of the law of the gospel in retribution and reward.

Verse 6 – The woman's flight into the wilderness

–12:6. And the woman fled into the wilderness. The context of these visions surrounded the events prior to and including the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, and the scattering of the church in Judea by onslaught of persecution. Jesus foretold such a flight in his description of the destruction of Jerusalem in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew. This cannot be considered an application too light or limited or unimportant for this vision. The portent was tremendous. It was of extremely ominous and terrible proportions.

In the Lord's warnings and in his own forebodings he exhorted them to pray that the flight might not come at a time when hindrances to the flight could not be overcome, and the difficulties of escape would be insurmountable i.e. to the woman with child, who could be greatly handicapped in flight; in the winter when cold weather would add to suffering and misery; on the sabbath day, when due to the Jewish observance of the sabbath the exits of the city would be closed, its gates locked, barring an expeditious flight, and they would find themselves entrapped. The period of escape from Jerusalem after the city was alerted would be so short that the Lord warned the one on the housetop not to come down to enter his house for even clothing or food; and the laborer in the field not to return to his house for such purpose, for the same reason. Describing the horrors of the siege Jesus called it "the tribulation of those days; and quoted the prophecy of Daniel 12:11 on "the abomination of desolation" (Matthew 24:15) as being fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem. During the siege one million plus people perished. All the houses and underground chambers were filled with perishing bodies; famishing people ate putrified flesh of human corpses; mothers ate the flesh of their own babies. Outside the besieged city the expatriated race of Jews throughout the empire were slaughtered.

The signs and symbols of Revelation were but the extensions of the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, spoken by the Lord Himself in Matthew's record and extended by his servant John in the visions of Revelation. In this chapter 12 and verse 6 of Revelation, John stated that "the woman (the church) fled into the wilderness." This was precisely what Jesus commanded his disciples to do. When the signs which he had set forth should appear Christians in Jerusalem and Judea were to make hasty their flight. In Matthew 24:33 Jesus said to them: "When ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." In the parallel record of Luke 21:20, He said, "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh"— and they did know it. In Matthew 24:16 the Lord said, "Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." In Luke 21:21, the parallel adds, "And let them which are in the midst of it (Jerusalem) depart out" — and they did, they departed and fled. In Wars, Book III, Section 3, page 3, **Josephus relates that after the armies of Cestius Gallius, Roman general, had besieged Jerusalem, they withdrew — and during this interval the disciples fled, according to the Lord's admonition. The historian Josephus was an unbeliever and admitted his inability to account for the cessation, but declared it was nevertheless a fact. All who believe the statements of the Lord in Matthew twenty-four, Mark thirteen and Luke twenty-one, know & understand the why it was the Lord's doing.**

2. To a place prepared of God. The disciples' flight was to a place where Jesus had directed them: "Let them which be in Judea flee to the mountains." But Revelation states that the woman fled to "a place prepared of God." The place where Jesus commanded is the place that God prepared. The descriptions are parallel. Furthermore, Jesus said in Matthew 24:34 : "This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." All of the signs of Matthew 24:1-51 are above verse 34. Jesus said they were all fulfilled in the generation of people who heard his words. Jesus said to the disciples in Luke 21:31-32 : when "ye see" and "know ye"; and "I say unto you." His emphasis was on the fulfillment of the signs in events of their own lives. If the time of these things was so remote as to be yet future, there was no point in this exhortation for them, and no application to them. As the signs of Matthew 24:1-51 were fulfilled in that generation of living people, so the symbols of Revelation were fulfilled in the experiences of the existing churches.

3. That they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. Here is an instance of a literal period of time, a specific date, introduced into a figurative & symbolic context. The context yields the same exact computation of a thousand two hundred and threescore days of the woman's flight into the wilderness. It was the same period of "the forty and two months" of the preceding chapter eleven – the same mathematical time period in which Jerusalem, "the holy city" was trodden "under foot forty and two months." In the record of Luke 21:24, this period of the treading under foot of Jerusalem was limited by the phrase "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." It was the same period of time as the "forty and two months" of Revelation 11:3, and the thousand two hundred and threescore days of chapter 12:6.

The specific mathematical period designated, historically verified, follows this order: Emperor Nero delivered the mandate for the siege of Jerusalem to Vespasian, his imperial officer, in the month of February A. D. 67 when the war against Judea was declared. This was the beginning of the period which ended in August A. D. 70, when the city of Jerusalem was razed, ravished and destroyed, the temple desecrated and demolished, bringing an end to Judaism and the Jewish state. This exact computation is attested, as in the authoritative works of Jewish Testimonies, Volume VIII, by Lardner, and Josephus' Wars of Jews, Volume VII. No more evidence needed.

The time period covering the flight into the wilderness was a chronological match to the forty-two months or twelve hundred sixty days in which Jerusalem was besieged. There is no need to look farther away for the fulfillment of these apocalypses. But assigning Revelation to the same period as all the other New Testament epistles, all of which were written before the impending trial and tribulation and distress, lends coherency and harmony to its apocalyptic delineations.

THE WAR IN HEAVEN (Chapter 12:7-17)

(1) The War with Michael and His Angels

-12:7-8. 1. There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels. The war in heaven meant the hostilities which developed with the tributary governments of Rome. Two classes were here placed in opposition—Michael and his angels are put in opposition to the dragon and his angels. The dragon and his angels represented all of the powers of paganism and darkness. Conversely, Michael and his angels were representative of the truth and the light of Christianity. Michael was represented in Daniel 12:1-13 as defender and guardian of Israel. So, Michael and his angels were the representatives and protectors of the woman - the persecuted church. They fought against the dragon and his evil angels by the means of the war between the satellites of Rome, because these conflicts within the Roman empire diverted the emperor's attention from the persecutions of the woman and gave respite to the church. History verifies this outbreak of wars within the Roman empire during this period of persecution; and in Matthew 24:1-51 Jesus foretold that such wars would exist to "shorten these days."

-12:7-8. 2. "And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven."

– 12:8. The almost universal belief that Satan originated in heaven with God and Christ, apostatized from his created angelic state, caused war among the sinless world of God's own heaven, and because he could not be tolerated there, he was expelled to this mundane sphere to trouble and torment all humanity for all time—that is an inherited belief or notion completely out of harmony with the character of heaven. It is a great incongruity. Heaven, where God dwells, is the divine domain of light, where is no darkness, no evil, no apostasy. Hell is the diabolical realm of darkness, where there is no purity, no good, and where light cannot penetrate. The generally accepted view that Satan became a wicked angel in heaven where God dwells, and that he corrupted and recruited other angels for his revolution, puts apostasy in heaven and is incompatible with the nature of the angels of God in heaven. If apostasy can befall the inhabitants of heaven, in consequence it would render insecure all who obtain that world, in that being subject to apostasy they, too, might be expelled. No sin, nothing evil, can enter or prevail in the abode of the pure and holy in the eternal mansions of God's habitation. The meaning of the heaven from which the Satanic dragon was cast is the same as the heaven from which fell Lucifer, the wicked Babylonian king. When Jesus said to the disciples (Luke 10:18)

that he "beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven," he did not mean that with physical sight he had seen the devil as a physical object fall-it was rather the Lord's forecast that he had foreseen Satan's complete defeat and downfall from his throne of evil dominion. It was Satan's own heaven or domain of rulership from which he would fall, and it would come soon and as swiftly as lightning – and it did. 3. And the great dragon was cast out . . . which deceiveth the whole world . . . he was cast out into the earth

– 12:9. The dragon and his evil agents "prevailed not" against Michael's protection of the woman, which he accomplished by the diversion of the emperor's diplomacy to employ his armies to quell the revolutions in many parts of the imperial world. The context of this section was a diversion from the main scene due to the side effects of the involvement of the Roman rulers in the revolutions in their far-flung tributaries. So, the statement neither was their place found any more in heaven was a reference to the final outcome, and is not chronological, or in the order of sequence here. The dragon prevailed not against the cause of the woman (the church) which Michael represented triumphed, in the war with heathenism which the dragon represented, and he eventually "prevailed not" but lost his own place in heaven – that is, in the governments which had been used to persecute the church. And, he was cast down to the earth—that is, Satan was cast out of his sphere of influence through the government authorities against the church. He was cast down to the earth—the place of the inhabitants of the nations as distinguished from the children of the woman, in the church. The woman had appeared in the same sphere with the dragon in the war in heaven, as antagonists and was represented by Michael against the dragon. In the final outcome of this struggle the dragon lost his place of power and influence—hence, cast down from his high position in which he had been able to deceive the world. Dethroned from his dominion he went in search of other spiritual prey, as mentioned in 1 Peter 5:8 –"the devil as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." The dragon in the end was seen as having lost "the war in heaven" against the woman. Jesus anticipated this defeat of Satan in John 12:31: "Now is the judgment of the world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out." This judgment was pronounced upon the dragon in the war against the woman. He lost his place of dominion, but continued to deceive the world, as declared by Paul in Ephesians 2:2: "According to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." The phrase "prince of the power of the air" denotes a sphere of influence only. Satan has no longer a dominion of power. He is only an influent being who exerts a deceptive influence, an infiltration insensibility affecting the mind and conscience –an inflow of evil.

In Revelation the term earth, as previously stated, designated the place of nations, distinguished from the realm of the church. And air refers to the sphere of life and influence. Thus, having lost his power of dominion, he is now prince of the power of the air—that is, having only an exercise of influence which only operates through "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Jesus Christ through the gospel destroyed Satan's power – he holds no power of dominion over any one. He can operate only through the sphere of influence. The one who serves Satan is a willing servant "through the spirit of disobedience." God has the power to destroy both soul and body of one who refuses to serve him (Matthew 10:28), but Satan has no power over any one (Hebrews 2:14); if one does not choose to follow Satan, he can do nothing; he has no power to conscript, and no power to punish. And the great dragon was cast out into the earth. Satan "prevailed not" against the woman, the church, and was "cast out into the earth," the place of the nations, where he would again in a broader effort seek to deceive the whole world, as distinguished from the church. And his angels were cast out with him. These Satanic angels included all of the combined forces of heathenism which he had employed against the church, and as "prince of the power of the air," he continued to operate in the sphere of life and influence through the spirit of disobedience.

Verse 10 The victory of the woman—12:10-17.

The verses now under consideration set forth the woman's victory over the dragon and parallels the triumph of the Rider of the white horse of the sixth chapter who was the conquering Christ of the closing verses of chapter eleven.

1. And I heard a loud voice saying, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ—12:10. This "loud voice" of victory reverted to the chorus of "great voices" in 11:15; and the exclamation "now is come salvation . . . and the kingdom of our God" was repetitive of the refrain of chapter 11:15, "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ." The meaning is that the kingdoms of the world became the kingdoms of the Lord by the conversion of its citizens. It was anticipation of world-wide expansion of Christianity through the gospel, after the destruction of Jerusalem, as forecast by the Lord in Matthew 24:31 – and that is the meaning of the statement, "now is come salvation . . . and the kingdom of our God." The salvation here meant deliverance of the woman (the church) from the dragon; and strength referred to the source of endurance; and the power of his Christ referred to that authority higher than Rome's emperor, that divine rod of iron by which the power of Satan, personified in the persecutor,

had been broken & by which his diabolical character had been exposed. 2. For the accuser of our brethren is cast down—12:10. In verse 9 it states that the dragon was cast out into the earth—the place of the nations, or the political society. This was not the positions of government authority included within the sphere of the phrase in heaven. In verse 10 the dragon (the persecutor) was called the accuser of our brethren. The emphasis put on the accuser of our brethren by the additional statement, which accused them before our God, day and night, indicated the habitual character of the dragon-accuser, that the oppositions of the persecutor would be persistent and continuous.

Verse 11 But they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto death

—12:11. The victors here are not the same company as Michael and his hosts of verse 7. The dragon had lost that war and had been cast out of that sphere of conflict but continued his opposition to the brethren of those of whom Michael was defender and protector – he extended his persecutions to the woman's offspring, or the church beyond the region of Jerusalem and Judea. But as Michael and his hosts had prevailed against him in Judea so did the brethren elsewhere who became the objects of the dragon's extended persecutions. And this verse commemorates by anticipations the victory which the saints had won on the ground or cause and by the means of the blood of the Lamb, the shed blood of Christ. The further reason for their victory was the word of their testimony – because of the faithful testimony which they had borne in oral declarations. The high tribute in the praise that they loved not their lives unto death meant that these persecuted saints had disregarded their lives for the sake of their cause; in the willingness to join the martyrs they displayed the fidelity that brought them victory over their accuser and persecutor.

Verse 12 Therefore, rejoice ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them.

—12:12. The power of the persecutors broken, and the accuser of the brethren exposed, was here the cause for this rejoicing of the heavens – because it had been delivered from the evil spirit of the accuser. The heavens here meant that spiritual realm referred to in Ephesians 1:3 as the heavenly places. The phrase and ye that dwell in them meant that these heavens are the spiritual abode of every faithful soul. (Ephesians 2:6)

Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! - for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

-12:12. The persecutions which had been focused on one sphere of the dragon's activity in the realm of governments against Jerusalem were not expanded to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea. The word earth here was used to denote the land of Palestine – as the reference to the beast of the land designated the Palestinian persecutor. The word sea indicated the regions of the empire beyond the land of Israel. The dragon's defeat in the first sphere of his war against the woman intensified the activities of his persecutions, and having great wrath he transferred his oppositions and expanded them to the earth and the sea—to all regions where the children of the woman, the objects of his wrath, could be found. The statement because he knoweth that he hath but a short time was based on the fundamental principle pervading the apocalypse – "which things must shortly come to pass" (1:1); and "the time is at hand" (1:3).

The binding of Satan, the dragon, and casting him into "the bottomless pit" were included in the things which in the first chapter of the Revelation the seer announced as at hand, and must shortly come to pass; which things in the last chapter he declared must shortly be done (22:6); and quickly to occur (22:7); and, once more, at hand (22:10). From the first chapter to the last the Revelation repeatedly emphasized the immediacy of the events, removing them from remote fulfillment. It forms a solid argument for the fulfillment of the symbols of Revelation in the experiences of the churches addressed.

Verse 13 - - He persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.

-12:13. Here the scenes narrated in verses four to nine were resumed. These descriptions repeated in different symbols the events of the first series which chapters four to eleven had envisioned. In verses four to nine of this chapter the woman's flight into the wilderness was related. Here in verses 13 and 14 the reason and manner of her flight were described. The reason was that under the guardianship of Michael and his hosts the dragon and his forces prevailed not in the "war in heaven"—in the high places of authority in governments — against the woman's seed. Being defeated it was said that neither was their place found any more in heaven—that is, in the sphere of previous activity against the church, in the realm of political authority and government.

However, Michael's triumph and the dragon's failure to destroy the woman's seed did not prevent the further persecutions. Enraged at being thwarted in his plans to annihilate the church by the destruction of the man child in Jerusalem, where it was born, and which was caught up to God and his throne, the dragon turns upon the woman and launched a general persecution against the whole church. It was at this point and for this reason that the woman fled into the wilderness (verse 6), the manner of the flight being described here in verse 13. The "two wings of a great eagle" that were given to her was the same symbol of divine strength employed in the exodus of Israel from Egypt. In Exodus 19:4 God said to Israel, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagle's wings, and brought you unto myself." The instinct of the eagle, when its young are ready to attempt flight, is to hover over the nest and flutter its wings to lead the young ones into the venture. In this same imagery, and doubtless in allusion to it, the seer of Revelation represents God's hovering protection and imparted strength in the flight of the woman from besieged Jerusalem into the wilderness, as God did for Israel in the exodus from Egypt, to "a place prepared of God" (verse 6), or "into her place" (verse 14) – the same place. It is evident that the context of Revelation is only an extension of the Lord's predictions in Matthew twenty-four and that the Revelation was received and recorded several years before the destruction of Jerusalem, the impending "present distress" of 1st Corinthians 7:26, which was so soon coming upon the church of the God. In the same Corinthian context the apostle said, "the time is short."

Verse 14 - - Where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

-12:14. In this wilderness, or place prepared of God, where Jesus instructed the disciples who later formed the Jerusalem church to flee, the verse states concerning the woman that she was nourished for a time, times and a half time. This nourishment of the woman in "her place" compares with the manna by which Israel was fed in the wilderness, upon which event this description is based. In the Old Testament experience it was the result of the flight from Egypt of the church of Moses in the wilderness of Sinai; in the experience of Revelation it was the church of Christ in the flight from Jerusalem to her place in the wilderness of Pella—that place prepared of God, where she was nourished by providential protection.

The numerical designation for a time, and times and half a time was equivalent to the forty and two months (of chapter 11:2), and the thousand two hundred and threescore days of chapters 11:3 and 12:6, and they were equal to the same thing. They all refer to the mathematically calculated period of twelve hundred and sixty days between Nero's order to Vespasian in the declaration of war and the completion of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem which brought an end to the Jewish state & the system of Judaism. The mystically phrased expression of time and times and half a time was related to the ebbing and flowing of the tide of the persecutions and was comparable to the reference in chapter 17:8 "the beast that was, and is not, and yet is." The beast was when the persecutor was active; the beast was not when there was an interval of time between the persecutions; and the beast was seen as being reactivated in the last expression yet is. In a similar way the time and the times, of chapter twelve, referred to the period of the persecution in stages, and the expression of half a time was the symbolic reference to the shortening of the period of tribulation as indicated in chapter 11:9 in the expression three days and a half, and as foretold by the Lord in Matthew 24:22. It is consistent that the time and times and half a time shall be considered to mean the same shortened period as indicated in the expression three days and an half, in both of which the exact period from the commencement of the siege to the termination of it was certainly designated.

Verse 15 - - And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

-12:15. The water as a flood from the mouth of the serpent was the symbol of an overwhelming tide of persecution, combining all of the Satanic forces of destruction at the command of the serpent. The most significant Old Testament use of the flood symbol is Daniel's parallel prophecy on the city destruction of Jerusalem, generally referred to as "the seventy weeks of Daniel." (Daniel 9:27) The mathematical computations bring the fulfillment of this prophecy from "the going forth" of the commandment to rebuild and restore the temple to the final destruction of Jerusalem—the whole period from the proclamation of Cyrus to the end of the Jewish commonwealth— in the words of Daniel "the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined." (Daniel 9:26) The dual phrases "the end thereof shall be with a flood" and "unto the end of the war desolations are determined" referred to the persecution flood and war's end terminating with the fall of Jerusalem and end of the Jewish state.

Thus, the prophecy of Daniel is identified and merged with the apocalypse of John on the siege with its overwhelming flood of persecution. Such is the evident application of chapter 12, verse 15, of Revelation—"And the serpent cast out of his mouth as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood." The woman escaped this flood of the horrible onslaught of this war of the Romans against Jerusalem, declared by Nero, ordered by Vespasian and executed by Cestius Gallius and his general, Titus. These related events blend naturally and historically with the apocalypse, and they are not anachronistic.

Verse 16 - - "And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth."

-12:16. The symbol of the earth in Revelation has been defined as the place of nations. That was its meaning here. The rebellions and uprisings and local wars which were occurring and increasing at this time, causing many conflicts among the subordinate kingdoms and nations of the empire, diverted the attention and action of Rome, and thus detracted Roman authorities from the persecutions. It had the effect of a diversionary strategy. Here again the predictions of Jesus in Matthew twenty-four parallel the apocalypses of Revelation. Jesus said: "For nation shall rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." This is exactly what occurred—and that is how the earth helped the woman and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. The leading thought is that divine providence overruled the transpiring events to both protect and sustain and deliver the woman – his church – in the day of her persecution.

Verse 17 - - And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

-12:17. Because his strategy to destroy the church within Jerusalem, by the woman's flight and the help she received from the earth, the dragon's wrath, mentioned in verse 12, was intensified in the persecution of the remnant of her seed – or as otherwise translated, rest of her seed. By the phrase *remnant*, or rest of her seed was meant that part of the church which did not dwell in Jerusalem and Judea and was not of the martyred number.

The woman's seed was composed of two classes – first, we have the man child, represented collectively as first-fruits, who were caught up unto God, these were symbolizing the martyrs; second, the remnant or rest of her children who were not martyrs, but remained on the earth to pass through the tribulation. The word man child is an aggregate term which could not have referred to a single person, any more than the collective phrase rest of her seed could have had singular meaning. The text will not yield to the view that the woman's man child was Christ. There is no principle of exegesis which can represent the church as the mother of Christ. But there are numerous examples that represent the nation of Israel in the Old Testament and the church in the New Testament collectively as composed of the same ones who are separately called the children, as a part of the whole... Matthew 13:38 refers to "children of the kingdom." The kingdom is composed collectively of them all, as a whole, yet they were all children of it. Galatians 4:26 calls the spiritual Jerusalem "the mother of us all" – it's composed of us all collectively, but the mother of us all separately. Hebrews 12:23 refers to the general assembly and church of the first born. The word firstborn is in the plural number in the Greek text and means the firstborn ones. The general assembly and church are collective, but the firstborn are the children of it. So, it is in Revelation with the woman – the church; and her seed, children composed of the two classes—the man child (martyrs) caught up unto God; and the rest of her seed, throughout the empire, against which the dragon "went to make war," and who, with the plaudits of the seer, kept "the commandments of God" and had "the testimony of Jesus Christ."

The summary of the symbols. The context of chapter twelve yields three major points which must be classified and discriminated in order: **First, the woman was a symbol of the Jerusalem church – represented as "the new Jerusalem," in chapter 21:2 at the close of the Revelation, and stands for the whole church.** Second, the man child referred to the martyred souls as "the first-fruits unto God and the Lamb." (Chapters 6:10- 11; 14:4; 20:4) The woman's seed "caught up unto God and to his throne," who thereby entered into a state of victory over the dragon and his wrath in a distinctive sense. (Chapter 12:5) Third, the remnant or rest of the woman's seed were distinguished from the man child, as being that part of the woman's seed who suffered the trials of the great tribulation but were not slain or beheaded as were the martyrs. (Chapters 6:9-11 & 20:4) The woman of this chapter must be considered as the organic body of the church—the totality of its members; distinguished from her seed, or children.

The Background of the Conflict

Woman

(Revelation 12:1-2 NKJV)

Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.

The Background of the Conflict

Woman

Satan

(Revelation 12:3-4 NKJV)

And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. {4} His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.

The Background of the Conflict

Woman



Male Child

Satan

(Revelation 12:5 NKJV)

She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.

The Background of the Conflict

Woman
Male Child



Satan

(Revelation 12:6, 13 NKJV)

Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days. {13} Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child.

The Background of the Conflict

Male Child



Rest of her
Children
(12:17)

(Revelation 12:17 NKJV)

And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.



How many heads does each beast have ?
How many Horns does each beast have ?

Daniel 7



One Head
No Horns

One Head
No Horns

Four Heads
No Horns

One Head
Ten Horns

Seven Heads
Ten Horns

Daniel 7 Beasts
Has
Seven Heads
Ten Horns



Revelation 13 Beast
Has
Seven Heads
Ten Horns

Revelation 13

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. ΑΑ). 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.¹³

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’.¹⁷ 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’.²⁰

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, ג = 200, ו = 10, ו = 6, ו = 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 (ἑξακισχιλίους τετρακοσίους 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 ἑξακισχιλίους τετρακοσίους 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.²⁹

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.⁴²

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 φιλέλλην 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 τετιμῆν 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.⁵⁰

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.'

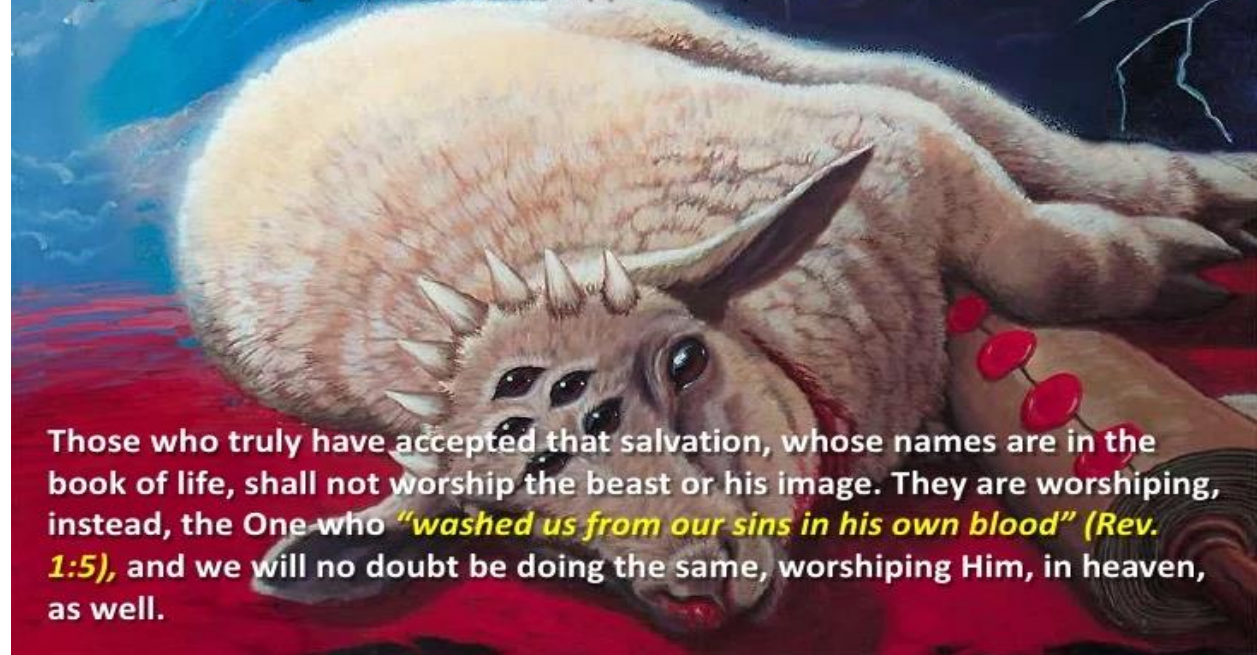
If Greece awarded honours, accolades and citations as official sources and imperial correspondence confirmed, Nero could publicly boast about these on his return to Rome in his official triumphal entry. These imperial honours implemented across the Aegean Sea by the governor of the province of Asia would 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.¹⁵

¹⁵ 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.



Yet, in the midst of all this, we have Revelation 13:8, which refers to Jesus as *"the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"*; that is, even before all this began on earth, the *"everlasting covenant"* (Heb. 13:20) had been in place, offering all humans the opportunity for salvation.



Those who truly have accepted that salvation, whose names are in the book of life, shall not worship the beast or his image. They are worshipping, instead, the One who *"washed us from our sins in his own blood"* (Rev. 1:5), and we will no doubt be doing the same, worshipping Him, in heaven, as well.

The Identification of the first Beast

There are two beasts mentioned in Revelation - the first is introduced in Chapter 13:1 with the second one coming on the scene in verse 11. We are going to focus primarily on the first beast with this study. If there is to be any degree of accuracy in the identification of this beast we must consider two things. One is to whom this letter was written, and secondly, we must take into account the symbolism in effect in the day and time in which the book was written.

Many people today think the beast is a malignant force yet to come. There are those today in a panic over the veri-chip technology which advocates the implanting of a microchip under the skin in order to identify and track people. They are convinced that this technology can grow into the mark of the beast. There is also technology in the development stages where certain world-wide retail chains are looking into a chip that can automatically scan items as one walks from the store and automatically deduct the cost of these items from one's account. The problem with this is that this does not take into consideration, those to whom the letter was specifically addressed. What value would writing such a letter have for people who were undergoing severe persecution at the time if it were a revelation of events roughly 2000 years in the future?

The text we will be looking at is Revelation 13:1-10:

1 and he stood upon the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns, and seven heads, and on his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy.

2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as (the feet) of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority.

3 And (I saw) one of his heads as though it had been smitten unto death; and his death-stroke was healed: and the whole earth wondered after the beast;

4 and they worshipped the dragon, because he gave his authority unto the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? And who is able to war with him?

5 and there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and there was given to him authority to continue forty and two months.

6 And he opened his mouth for blasphemies against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, (even) them that dwell in the heaven.

7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and there was given to him authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation.

8 And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, (every one) whose name hath not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain.

9 If any man hath an ear, let him hear.

10 If any man (is) for captivity, into captivity he goeth: if any man shall kill with the sword, with the sword must he be killed. Here is the patience & faith of the saints.

First, we can determine easily that the beast is certainly not Satan. Satan is represented in chapter 12 as the dragon who made war with the remnant of the radiant woman's seed. In verse 2 we see the dragon, Satan, giving the beast his power, his position or throne & his great authority. In verse four we read that the heads of the beast worshipped the dragon, Satan. So, the beast cannot be Satan since it derives its abilities from and is in a submissive allegiance with him. It is obvious that the dragon, Satan, is using the beast for the achievement of his own purpose. So, with Satan as the enabler of the beast we can confidently eliminate him from being in consideration as the beast.

Verse 1 of [Revelation 13](#) starts with the continuance of the sentence in Revelation 12:17. John saw the dragon, (Satan), standing on the sands beside the sea where the beast emerges from the water. Interestingly, the symbolism used for "beast" was used by Daniel to represent a ruler or his government, ([Daniel 7:2-8](#)). Daniel utilized the same animal imagery to represent the four world empires which were Babylon, Medo-Persian, Grecian and then the Roman Empire. The fact that the leopard, bear and lion are used here probably demonstrates that the Roman empire was a composite of the other three. This usage of apocalyptic language would have been familiar to those of the time who were versed in old covenant figures of speech.

The Book of Revelation was written in language the Jews would be able to understand without incrimination before the Romans, thereby giving them more incentive to destroy those who were holding fast to their faith. We can easily see today how successful this manner of writing was in that the New Testament book continues to be a source of misdirected doctrine. Anybody with a poor familiarity of Old Testament speech would be utterly baffled by the figurative language of this book.

Looking closely at John's description of the Beast we see Satan standing upon the sand of the sea. This would likely be the Tyrrhenian sea, which bordered the territory and land of Italy, where the Roman empire had its capital with the imperial palaces built alongside the banks of the Tiber River. This precise imagery places the dragon within close proximity of the Beast, overlooking and personally directing the coming struggle against the faithful remnant of the radiant woman's seed. This thought squares perfectly with New Testament teaching that Satan had been given the power to do as he will with the nations of the Earth, ([Matthew 4:8-9](#)). In addition to the close proximity of the Dragon to the beast, the Hebrews not being a seafaring people, recognized the sea as being capable of bringing storms of immensely destructive proportions. Daniel used the imagery of the sea when describing the four great beasts arising in [Daniel 7:3](#). Notice particularly the language used in [Daniel 7:7](#), *"After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible and strong exceedingly; and had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns."* While not all Biblical scholars agree, it is our belief that Daniel's prophecy is about the rise of the Roman empire. Certainly, the Jewish Christians, well versed in Old Testament teaching would instantly see a parallel and would draw the same conclusion that the beast of Revelation 13 and the beast of Daniel 7:23 were one and the same.

The beast is said to have ten horns with a diadem, or crown, on each, and seven heads with the name of blasphemy on each. An interesting point in History may shed some light on what the 10 horns could represent. The Roman Empire was made up of several geographic territories called provinces. Each province fell under the control of a provincial governor.

As a rule set by Augustus there were always 10 senatorial provinces in the Imperial government system. These provinces were under the direct control of a Proconsular Senator, with little need for intervention by the Emperor, though he had the power to appoint and/or dispose of these governors if he wished. The governors, served for one to three years depending on which province he was over.

The number "ten" carries with it the meaning of completeness in the minds of the Hebrews, thus simply meaning the complete number of vassal kings within the Roman empire which is the more likely interpretation. One must be very careful when literalizing a number surrounded by so much symbolic language. Consistency with symbols normally demands they be taken in the same way throughout as with the rest of the surrounding imagery.

The seven heads probably referred to the seven hills of ancient Rome. Every October there was a commemoration to the fact that Rome was founded on seven hills. The seven hills of Rome; Cermalus, Cispius, Fagatal, Oppius, Palatium, Sucusa and Velia, figured prominently in Roman mythology, religion, and politics.

The seven heads could also have represented seven Roman emperors. These emperors reigned with such power and distinction that Roman temples were erected to each one of them. These Roman emperors were worshipped in these temples as Gods and Lords. This practice started with Augustus Caesar and evolved into 1st Century mandated emperor worship.

So, we now have a mental image of just how powerful a foe has arisen against Christianity. The Parthians were no help – the Romans, who worshipped many Gods, hated them. There weren't enough Christians to make any kind of impact on the socio-economic scene. However, when drought, famine, or natural disaster struck, the Christians with their one-deity worship were blamed. [Not worshipping the city or civic gods made for a pagan charge of atheism.] The Jews were no help, they were excused from Emperor worship (a *religio licita*) and were of no help whatsoever to the Christians (the *religio illicita*).

Revelation 13:3, "And (I saw) one of his heads as though it had been smitten unto death; and his death-stroke was healed:" There are plenty of theories as to what this death blow was. One of the most popular I read was that this was the crushing of Satan's head prophesied in Genesis 3:15. However, upon a more careful consideration of the text, we can see that the beast is something other than the dragon, (Satan), which therefore doesn't make sense. John mentioned this death blow to one of the seven heads or emperors, as a means for the identification of the beast to the Christians. It therefore stands to reason that this blow must be something that is widely known and easily attributed to its rightful understanding by the intended audience. This said, in 64 AD, during the night of July 18, fire broke out in the merchant area of the city of Rome. Fanned by the summer winds, the flames quickly spread through the dry and wooden structures of the Imperial City. Soon the fire took on a life of its own consuming all in its path for over six days and seven nights. When the conflagration finally ran its course it left nearly seventy percent of the city devastated. Of Rome's fourteen districts only four remained intact. Three were leveled to the ground. The other seven were reduced to only a few scorched and mangled ruins. This event happened during the reign of Nero and would be something that definitely would be in the minds of the people of that day. The mental association between the burning of Rome and the wounded head of the Roman Empire would be easily recognized. There was plenty of time for this death blow to one of the heads to be healed. History tells us that Rome was built back bigger and better than ever.

In the Hebrew mind, the number 6 was symbolic of that which was not perfect, thereby evil. Seven represents perfection. Six being one less than perfect is falling short of the mark. The definition of "sin" is literally, "to miss the mark". So, to obtain the ultimate of which was evil or lacking, the apocalyptic writers of John's day were using a series of three sixes to represent the worst evil that could befall. Furthermore, this number was reserved for those in government who caused evil to be administered.

PLEASE READ PRECEDING ON "PLAYING THE NUMBERS"

THE BEAST WAS BEYOND DOUBT THE EMPEROR NERO!

The Identification of the Second Beast

There are two beasts mentioned in the 13th chapter of Revelation, The first is introduced in verse 1 with the second one coming on the scene in verse 11. Having established that Satan is the dragon who is the enabler of the first beast who is the Imperial Roman Empire, there follows the rise of a second beast who will further set its destructive sights on the Remnant of the Radiant Woman's seed who are faithful and keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ; the *addressed Christians*.

The future is indeed looking bleak for the Christians. Imperial Rome wants them gone. Their religion is in direct conflict with the Romans because they refuse to worship the emperors. The Romans blame every calamity on the Christians thinking their own gods are angry with them because of the Christians. Just when it looks like it can't get any worse, we see the rise of yet another ally of the dragon. When one considers the plight of the Christians, one can't help but consider the trials of Job. Satan is indeed a formidable enemy who is willing & able to use whatever means at his disposal to bring about the destruction of Christians. This knowledge should give any thoughtful person pause to consider just how wicked and powerful our enemy really is. Nothing would give Satan more pleasure than to see all of mankind brought to the same point of suffering or even worse than that which was handed out to the early Christians.

These thoughts in mind, let's look at the second beast of Revelation 13.

Revelation 13:11-18

11 And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like unto a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

12 And he exerciseth all the authority of the first beast in his sight. And he maketh the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose death-stroke was healed.

13 And he doeth great signs, that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men.

14 And he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs which it was given him to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast who hath the stroke of the sword and lived.

15 And it was given (unto him) to give breath to it, (even) to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as should not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

16 And he causeth all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the bond, that there be given them a mark on their right hand, or upon their forehead;

17 and that no man should be able to buy or to sell, save he that hath the mark, (even) the name of the beast or the number of his name.

18 Here is wisdom. He that hath understanding, let him count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man: and his number is Six hundred sixty and six.

In verse eleven we see the second beast coming up out of the earth as opposed to the first beast which came out of the sea. The imagery here could be that the dragon had the first beast at his right hand and second beast at his left, directing the actions of both. The earth beast has two horns like unto a lamb and spoke like a dragon. The horns are symbolic of power and authority, so the earth beast having only two horns like a lamb, is inferior to that of the sea beast which has seven horns befitting the awesome power of a dragon. With the horns of the sea beast representing the emperors of Rome, it would be consistent to view the two horns of the earth beast to be representing literal figures. The usage of the word "lamb" instantly paints the imagery of the pure and holy. So, it would be entirely possible, even likely that the allusion to a lamb would be representative of a religious order in the minds of the Christians.

This earth beast may have had horns like a lamb but don't be deceived by appearances; he spoke as a dragon. It is exceedingly important to pay heed to the fact that the text described the horns as being "like" unto a lamb, and not "the" lamb.

The earth beast exerciseth all the authority of the first beast in his sight. This malignant force is operating under the direct authority and has the total approval of the first beast. Whatever authority the sea beast has, the earth beast has the power to exercise or enforce it in his presence. **The earth beast has the power to enforce the worship of the sea beast upon all mankind. The first beast was the administrator and the second beast was the enforcer.**

It was given to the earth beast to do great signs in the sight of men, even to the point of making fire come down out of heaven upon the earth. The immediate question that arises is; were these signs actual miracles, or were they deceptions? Miracles were always given to confirm the word of God. There have always been imitators and false teachers. Moses and Aaron faced the imitators when Aaron threw his staff to the ground & it became a snake. The imitators did likewise and the snake from Aaron's staff overcame the fakes and consumed them, (Exodus 7:10-12). The forces of evil have often had ability to deceive, but the real always overcame deception. Verse 14 gives us the answer to the question of whether these signs were miracles or not. "And he deceiveth them that dwell on earth by reason of the signs which it was given him to do in the sight of the beast." They were deceptions, albeit good ones, but deceptions nonetheless. [Revelation 13](#) is not the only scripture that alludes to deceiving signs & lying wonders as being within the abilities of the wicked, ([2 Thess. 2:9](#), [2 Timothy 3:13](#)).

The earth beast mandated idols be built to the sea beast whose head had been severely injured but survived. We do not know if this language is literal or figurative, however either can be explained. Either way, because of the authority of the land beast, imperial citizens had two options before them. Either worship the emperor and live, or refuse and die!

Now we come to the infamous *mark of the beast*. If anyone refused this mark, they were not allowed to buy or sell goods. This means clothing, food, essentials for living. In the Emperor Cult controlled cities, those who worshipped the emperor were required to request and receive a certificate in order to buy and sell, obtain licenses for regulated activities such as marriages and to participate in certain programs within the Roman empire as if they were Roman citizens. This request was worded thusly:

*To those who have been appointed to preside over the sacrifices, from *name of the petitioner*, from the village of *petitioner's village or place of residence*, together with his children, *names of all children and where they reside*. We have always sacrificed to the gods and now in your presence and according to the regulations, we have sacrificed and offered libations, and tasted the sacred things, and we ask that you give us a certification that states we have done so. May you fare well, *followed by the name of the petitioner.**

The certificate they received read:

"We, the representatives of the emperor have seen you sacrificing."

This certificate was then authenticated with the seal or signature of the Imperial Representative. Without this certificate, no one could receive the stamp of the emperor. No one, without that stamp, was allowed to buy food, sell goods or participate in any government programs whatsoever.

When we study the contemporary history of this period, we can find an organization who acted as the enforcer for Roman worship policies. This was the Commune' or better known as the Roman Concilia. The Concilia, was a religious organization formed during the early Principate of Augustus, and was rapidly established throughout the Empire and its provinces. A principate was a form of rule in the early Roman Empire in which some republican forms were retained in the government.

The Augustan principate transformed the long-standing Republican system of government to a monarchy couched in the traditional Roman practices and forms. These monarchs were originally called princeps but later became known as emperors. They were expected to represent and balance the interests of the Roman military, the senate and of the Roman people. They were to maintain peace, security and prosperity throughout an ethnically diverse empire.

The imperial cult functioned by officially acknowledging an emperors' office and rule as divinely approved and constitutional. A deceased Emperor held worthy of the honor could then be voted a state divinity (divus, plural divi) by the Senate thus elevating the emperor to the status of a (demi)God. **This act is referred to as 'apotheosis'.** Roman Senate granting of apotheosis or godhood was intended to impart religious, political and moral judgment on Imperial rulers in the perception of the Roman citizenry. It was an act of treason to neglect the policies of the imperial cult.



Christians properly regarded the Imperial Cult of the Emperor as a particularly offensive instrument of "pagan" impiety and persecution. The Cult later became a focus of theological and political contention during the ascendancy of Christianity under Constantine the First. Once Christianity gained the status of *Religio Licita* - Organized Christianity and the policies of the Imperial Cult became severely opposed to each other making it impossible for the two to co-exist without compromise and neither side of the opposition retained their original structure. A deviant form of Christianity was arising and the policies and practices of the Imperial Cult were on the decline.

The emperor Julian failed to reverse the waning support for Rome's official religious practices. Theodosius I adopted Christianity as Rome's State religion which resulted in Rome's traditional gods & "Imperial cult" being officially abandoned. However, many of the rites, practices and status distinctions characterizing the cult to emperors were perpetuated in the theology and politics of the Christianized Empire.

The Roman Imperial cult, sometimes referred to as the *Concilia*, or the Commune was a state organized and sanctioned entity which served as an Imperial propaganda machine with intention of elevating the popularity of the emperors. When the Imperial Cult was officially abandoned, many of its rituals, organizational and ideological were transferred to later religious institutions, especially those of Western monarchies, Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodox Churches.

To a Christian, worshipping the emperor as a God was forbidden regardless of the circumstances or hazard to personal lives. Christians were boycotted in the market places for failure to bear the stamp of the emperor. Marriages, wills, real estate transactions were all illegal without the stamp of the Imperial Cult. Thus, the Christians who refused to worship the emperor were declined the official stamp thereby making any transaction with them illegal. When the *Concilia* spoke, they spoke as priests in the name of Roman state religion.

Several commentators and Bible scholars believe that the land beast was the apostate Christian church of Rome in its infancy. The apostate church of Rome in any capacity never had or assumed the authority to persecute or execute anybody for refusing to worship any emperor. By the time the apostate church of Rome rose to power, the Concilia had been officially discarded. **The Roman Concilia had the authority which fits perfectly with verse 15, "and cause that as many as should not worship the image of the beast should be killed."**

It should be noted that several well qualified Bible scholars hold to the belief that the land beast is the Roman church in its infancy. Due to the fact that influences of the Imperial Cult found their way into the apostate church, this belief isn't entirely wrong. This certainly explains similarity between the apostate church and the land beast in John's vision. It should be noted here that both entities used religious practices to influence and control the people and that the declining Imperial Cult heavily influenced the apostate church as it rose to power.

Scholarship is divided over whether the land beast is the Imperial Cult or the apostate Roman church. It would make for a well-rounded study for everybody to consider all viewpoints in an effort to ascertain the truth. That being said, given the evidence from both Biblical and historical texts, that the Dragon in [Revelation 12](#) is Satan. The sea beast is the Imperial Roman Empire with Emperor Nero as the leader, and the land beast was the Roman Concilia, or Imperial Cult, who acted as the enforcer of state religious policy for the Roman Empire and later influenced the apostate church of Rome.

Revelation 13:18

"Here is wisdom. He that hath understanding, let him count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man: and his number is Six hundred and sixty and six".

“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.” - DLB

Foy Wallace's Interpretation of Chapter Thirteen From His Commentary:

Verse 1 THE Two BEASTS (Chapter 13) The vision of chapter twelve dramatized the enmity of the dragon for the woman—the church of Christ—and his determination in wrath to expand his war on the rest of the woman's seed to the whole of the Roman empire. It was for this reason that chapter thirteen begins with John's vision of the dragon placing himself on sands of the sea for the purpose of extending his war against the woman, whose seed was destined to destroy him, and in fury he had turned upon "the rest of her seed" in persecuting them to extinction. (1) The composite beast of the sea—13:1-2. 1. And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea—13:1. Until this stage of vision the dragon's activities had been confined to Palestine, but now a beast rises out of the sea as the instrument by which to implement and to execute his diabolical plans. He summoned aid from Rome. The beast had seven heads and ten horns, and was the symbol of the great power of Rome. The ten horns represented the ten divisions of the Roman empire, the emperor of which was seated on a throne situated on the seven hills of Rome, the universal symbol of the imperial city

Verse 2 - - 2. Like a leopard . . . a bear . . . a lion

—13:2. In moral and political character the emperor was featured as a composite monster after the likenesses of the ferocious beasts of prey, the leopard, the bear and the lion. The ten crowns, or diadems, on the ten horns symbolized the royalty and rank that belonged to the ten kings of the tributary kingdoms, and the great universal power of the ten-kingdom empire. In addition to the ten-crowned horns, upon the heads of the beast the name of blasphemy was inscribed. This is a fitting description of Nero Caesar, in whom "the Neronic anti-Christ was incarnated," who assumed divine names and prerogatives, and commanded the worship of the emperor. 3. The dragon gave him great power, and his seat and his authority—13:2. The world power of the Roman empire could not have been more accurately described. The visions are not symbolic of the city of Rome. There is no allusion to "the eternal city." The visions of Revelation were not a history of Rome, but within their symbols were included the graphic representations of the emperor and the empire. The Roman See—in Latin, a seat of power and authority— was derived from the dragon, who gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. The dragon, therefore, was personified in the emperor of the Roman empire. Later, in verse 11, the second beast appeared on the land, as a satellite of the first beast, to execute his orders. The dragon gave the seat and the power and the authority to the first beast.

The second beast of the land was said, in verse 4, to have worshipped the beast of the sea. The land beast represented the Palestinian persecutors, which were subordinate to the Roman emperor, having no authority, except as derived from him. The distinction between land and sea, in these designations of the two beasts, is simply that the land in the vision stood for Palestine, and the sea for Rome, separated from Palestine by the sea, and symbolized as universal in sway.

Verse 3 (2) The wounded head of the beast

-13:3-4. 1. And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast-13:3. The wound inflicted was not in one of the horns of the beast, which represented the satellite kingdoms, but in one of the heads—in the seat of the empire itself. This wound, which was nearly a death stroke to the empire, appears to be the result of the help the earth gave to the woman in the civil wars which had threatened the power of the empire, and which resulted in temporary victory for the woman, the church. But it was not for long. The wound was healed by the power of the emperor conquering the rebellions and bringing to an end the civil wars, and the power of the empire was augmented to such an extent that all the world wondered after the beast—the whole Roman world marvelled at the universal power of the empire.

Verse 4 - - 2. They worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?

- 13:4. From this a dual pagan worship resulted. They worshipped both dragon and beast – that is, they worshipped one in the other. Thus, it becomes even more evident that the near-death stroke to the empire was caused by the uprisings, rebellions and civil wars. But the empire survived the stroke, because the wound was healed when the insurrections and rebellions were conquered. This victory of the empire produced the pagan idolatry for the dragon and the beast, personified in the Roman emperor—hence, the worship of the emperor.

Verse 5 - - (3) The blasphemies of the beast

-13:5-10. 1. And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies-13:5. With malignant satisfaction and gloating over the success of the conquests, the beast proclaimed an impious profanation against God– to blaspheme his name.

The emperor not only opposed God, or spake derogatorily of God, but he blasphemed-desecrated the name, Jehovah, which was held in the ultimate degree of reverence by the Hebrews: "I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac and unto Jacob by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them"—Exodus 6:3. This was God's name—my name, the text says, and was indicative of the attributes of eternal and immutable self-existence: I AM THAT I AM—, Exodus 3:14. It was this eternal and almighty name which was with arrogant imperial defiance blasphemed, assuming for himself the attributes and prerogatives of God and commanding the worship of the emperor by all the world. The Jehovah passage of Exodus 6:3 is one of sublimity. It is God's own declaration of omnipotent majesty. God is Jehovah, the great I AM, and to address Him in the common pronoun you is a degrading familiarity with God that is inexcusable. The Lord's command to call no man Father upon this earth prohibits addressing men as God, and it conversely forbids speaking to God as if He were man. The name Jehovah forbids familiarity. "And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them." The descriptions by Paul, in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, of the sacrilegious assumption of divine exaltation by the emperor for himself, parallels the visional representations of the same thing by John in Revelation. The Thessalonian passage refers to "that man of sin . . . the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." This passage as a reference to emperor Nero could not be made more obvious without actually calling his name; but for either Paul or John to mention the name of the living emperor in such connections would have accentuated the persecutions all over the empire—hence, the code language of these descriptions of verses 5 to 10. 2. And power was given unto him to continue forty and two months—13:5. Here is the third repetition of the thousand two hundred and threescore days of chapters eleven and twelve; and, as previously commented, it embraces the exact mathematical period from the date of Nero's order to Vespasian for the invasion of Judea to the fall of Jerusalem. This was the period of time assigned to the emperor beast for the accomplishment of the destruction of Jerusalem and the obliteration of the Jewish state.

Verse 6 - - 3. To blaspheme his name, his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven-13:6. The emperor's blasphemies of the name of God were extended to "his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven." The tabernacle was the original name for the temple, and indicated the aim of the emperor to destroy it. The phrase "them that dwell in heaven" referred to the Jewish authorities, and signified the emperor's purpose to bring to end the Jewish state.

Verse 7 - - 4. It was given unto him to make war against the saints

-13:7. That power was given the devil to execute the mission; indicating again the identity of the dragon and the beast in the persecution of the church-the dragon being personified in the emperor. He was thus represented as giving power to the beast-emperor as his instrument for the persecution of the church, to overcome them by the siege and destruction of Jerusalem the sacred city and holy temple. The sweep of this diabolical power to exterminate extended beyond Jerusalem and Judea to all kindred, and tongues, and nations, and, after the destruction of Jerusalem the persecution spread over the whole empire.

Verse 8 - 5. And all that dwell upon the face of the earth shall worship him

-13:8. In all the places of the nations (the symbolic meaning of the earth) within the empire the worship of the emperor prevailed under imperial edict-except, the faithful saints. It is declared that all "whose names are not written in the book of life" worshipped the emperor. But the saints who were "faithful unto death" (Revelation 2:10) did have their "names written in the book of life of the Lamb"; and they resisted the imperial decree, but suffered tribulation rather than worship the beast. The reference made to the names not written in the book of the Lamb "slain from the foundation of the world," has been misused to support the doctrine of election and reprobation- the elect and non-elect. But the contextual meaning is twofold: first, that God's plan from the beginning included the slain Lamb, as all of the altars and types of the old dispensation symbolized; second, that from the beginning God has cataloged in heaven a registry of the faithful names from the first patriarchal servant of the old dispensations to the last suffering saint in the church of the Lamb.

Verse 9-10 - - 6. He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and faith of the saints.

-13:10. After the declaration concerning the eternal plan of the ages, verse nine added: "If any man have an ear, let him hear." This was a note calling solemn attention to the divine pronouncement of verse ten. This significant statement was both a note of warning and a word of consolation: first, a warning that retribution would be administered to the persecutors who incarcerated in prison and killed with the sword the saints-they would suffer the vengeance of God, and experience the same evils which they inflicted on his church; it was the admonition to all of the churches that all who exercised the patience and faith, though they faced captivity and sword during the period of the dragon's rage, would ultimately have the reward promised.

Verse 11 -- (4) The subordinate beast of the land

–13:11-18. 1. And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon"

–13:11. The environment of these visions is not in accord and cannot be forced into harmony with the labored effort to identify the second beast with religious Rome, the papacy or the Latin church. The beast symbol in the apocalypses of the Old Testament, as well as in Revelation, has stood for organized political world-power. The development of the Roman papacy was too distant–too far away–to fit into a context of such immediate character. There was constant emphasis on nearness, immediacy and shortness of time. The attempt to make the announcement of Jesus in Mark 1:14-15 that "the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand" refer to a yet future time could be no more inconsistent than to make "the time is at hand" in Revelation 1:3 encompass the "dark ages" and the end of time. When Peter said to the dispersed members of the church "the end of all things is at hand" (1 Peter 4:7), he referred to the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the Jewish state as being near–it was impending. When Paul said to Timothy (2 Timothy 4:6) "the time of my departure is at hand" he meant that his decease was near. It does not aid the argument to assert that the statement of John in Revelation means the beginning of these events for John did not say these things must begin–he said, must shortly come to pass–and the time for them to come to pass was at hand. Premillennialists in the church attempt the same evasion by admitting that the kingdom announced by John and Jesus was "at hand" and that it began on Pentecost, but claiming that its ultimate growth would be in the millennial reign of Christ on the earth. For some who are opposed to the millennial contention to fall into the same method of argumentation is but to help the cause of millennial heresy. In neither case can the expression at hand be stretched beyond immediate points of the two declarations–the immediate events. The historical events of far distant future whether the papacy, the pope, Martin Luther or Alexander Campbell are all outside the scope of Revelation. And we need not go outside the provincial governments of Judea and the Palestinian representatives of the Roman emperor to identify the second beast–the beast of the land–and find the fulfillment of the visions concerning him. Verse eleven states that this second beast came up out of earth, or the land–from whence he received the designation the beast of the land. Because the events surrounded Jerusalem and the Jewish state; and the land in this vision meant the land of Palestine–especially Judea–and beast is the symbol of the Jewish persecutors in Palestine. That this second beast of the land was a satellite of the first beast of the sea is seen in the statements that he caused the earth–the people of Palestine–to worship the sea beast, and this second beast derived the only exercise of his authority from the first beast, and worshipped him.

The first beast, of the sea, was the Roman empire, personified in the emperor; the second beast, of the land, was personified in the ruling persecutors of Palestine, who were the instruments of the Roman emperor to execute his authority and power. This is further symbolized in the fact that this second beast had horns like a lamb but spake as a dragon-deceiving them that that dwell on the earth to worship the image of the emperor. There is nothing in these descriptions to fit the much later emergence of the papacy and its popes. The beasts represent the world-power of Rome. The beast from the sea was the emperor; and the beast of the land was the subordinate rulers of Palestine, exercising delegated power, as the emperor's representatives. Verse 11: He was from the earth, or land, not from the sea—denoting the local persecutors of Palestine. He was a false prophet visualized as a lamb in appearance, but speaking as the dragon. The two horns of the lamb represented two notorious rulers which Josephus mentioned (in Antiquities, Book XX 11, 1; and Wars, Book II, Chapters 14-15) as being sent by Nero, the emperor, into Palestine as his representatives. This beast appeared as guileless as a lamb, but as a false prophet he possessed the infernal spirit of the sea-beast, and deceived the land—the people of Palestine—into the worship of the sea beast, the emperor.

Verse 12 2. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed

–13:12. This second beast appeared as guileless as a lamb, but as a false prophet he possessed the infernal spirit of the sea-beast, and deceived the land—the people of Palestine—into the worship of the sea beast, the emperor. Verse 12: He was a mere satellite of the sea beast, whose wound of rebellion and civil war within the ten-kingdom empire was healed by the sheer power of force. This power brought all kingdoms and provinces under submission to the Roman head. The second beast as a servile and menial instrument of the first beast, enforced his will, exercising an authority not his own, but was derived solely from the superior beast number one, the Roman emperor. In this subservience the land beast in obedience to sea beast, "causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast"—the emperor. The earth referred to the provincial governments; and them that dwell therein had reference to the people who were under their political rule. The grievous blow inflicted on the empire by civil wars was referred to as a deadly wound on the sea-beast which had been healed by his conquering power; and this brought the kings, governors, and people into submission to worship the emperor.

Verse 13: He performed visional pseudo-signs, which were not actual, in order to deceive, such as Jesus foretold (Matthew 24:24) would precede the destruction of Jerusalem; and such as Paul described (2 Thessalonians 2:3-9) as characteristic of the pretensions of "the man of sin and son of perdition." The wonders were merely the magical machinations of the Roman emperor-beast to deceive. Josephus relates that two representatives of Nero, by the names of Albinus and Gessius Florus, in this very period, were sent into the land, and being notorious for wickedness they made pompous ostentations before the people. (Antiquities, Book XX, II, I) These are facts recorded by the eye-witness historian on the scene of things; and there could be no more fitting fulfillment of the two horns of this beast.

Verse 14: He was identified with the false prophet by his utterance of pseudo-prophecy, of which deceptions Jesus also warned (Matthew 24:11) as a portent of the destruction of Jerusalem; and which Paul (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12) declared would characterize that wicked (one) . . . "whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness . . . that they should believe a lie." The events prior and posterior to the fall of Jerusalem are so consonant with the anticipations of Jesus (Matthew 24:1-51) and of Paul (2 Thessalonians 2:1-17) that it is utterly unimaginative to gaze into the future centuries for successively occurring events in both secular and ecclesiastical history to fulfill them. The only apparent explanation for it is that the theories of historical theology require it, and they have been taken for granted so long as to have become so fixed in the thinking that they have been accepted as factual. No events of the future can be created or can occur to harmonize more compatibly with these scriptural apocalypses and apostolic descriptions of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, the demolition of the temple, the downfall of Judaism and the end of the Jewish state. Added to the biblical facts, the histories of Josephus, Pliny, Eusebius and other annals of the times and the near times, verify them.

Verse 15: The second beast created a life image of the superior beast, and exercised the power given to him to command its worship. In verse 14, it is stated that this was made possible by the prestige of the sea-beast from "the wound by a sword" but "did live"—that is, the display of the power of the empire in subduing in war the rebellious provinces, brought to the emperor an idolatrous worship, which the land-beast (the emperor's representative in Palestine) promoted, and in which he participated; and he commanded the Christians who would not worship the emperor to be banished or slain—which introduced the martyrdom of the saints.

Verse 16: He compelled the people of all stations small and great, rich and poor, free and bond to submit to the edict of emperor-worship—which symbolized *the mark of the beast*. This visional mark was an evil emblem of submission to emperor-worship. It was the stigmatic badge of the beast stamped in their right hand, or in their forehead, signifying a binding oath of loyalty. All who conformed to the imperial orders received the mark of the beast, personified in the Roman emperor—the Neronic anti- Christ.

Verse 17: He compelled all the subjects of the provinces to bear the mark of the beast by an economic warfare, that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or name of the beast, or the number of his name – the enforcement of a maniacally rigorous interdict, an imperial boycott that would make life impossible for all who refused to wear the stigmatic name of the demonic emperor. By such means the provincial procurators forced all of their subjects into abject submission to the imperial edict of emperor-worship, which was the mark or badge of the Satanic beast-the emperor. Thus, the mark of the beast simply meant to yield and bow to the edicts of the Roman emperor to worship his image.

Verse 18 - - (5) The mystic number of the beast

–13: 18. "Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man, and his number is Six hundred threescore and six." The fact that the mystic number was assigned to the first beast, or sea-beast, shows that the second beast, or land beast, had no independent power or authority, but was the minion of the emperor. This land beast, as previously indicated, represented the Jewish persecutors in Jerusalem and Judea, but performed no official acts without the consent, permission and authority of the sea-beast, the Roman emperor. The introduction to verse 18, Here is wisdom, points to the cryptic character of the following statement, let him that understandeth count the number of the beast—that being the code number of six hundred sixty-six. It is a basic truth that the Book of Revelation was written in code, on the same principle that the army communicates messages in code intended only for the military personnel, but to be withheld from the public. For the same purpose the contents of Revelation were composed in code for the vital information and concealed instruction to the churches facing the impending persecutions; but to be withheld from the pagan Roman world. There were in all of the churches the spiritually endowed teachers, who possessed the "spiritual gifts" of the inspiration era, as recorded in chapters twelve and thirteen of First Corinthians. In the catalog of such gifts were listed the special endowments of "wisdom," "discernment," and "understanding." This agrees with the words of the text, here is wisdom, and let him that hath understanding count the number.

These supernaturally endowed teachers in the churches could certainly decipher the cryptogram. It has been established that the beast was the Roman empire, personified in the living emperor. **It is so evident as to be patent that to mention the name of the living emperor in these connections would have been disastrous to the church—it would have precipitated a premature onslaught against Christians which could have resulted in their complete obliteration in every part of the Roman empire.** A cryptogram is a writing in ciphers, or secret letters, with symbolic figures and representations having a hidden significance. Cryptography is the art of writing in secret characters. A cryptographer is one who has mastered the skill of deciphering or decoding the mystic letters. The prophets and teachers in the New Testament churches were not professional cryptographers, but being the recipients of "spiritual gifts" by apostolic impartation, they possessed inspired powers to discern that which the ordinary mind could not discover. It is not without reason that 1 Corinthians 12:8 and 1 Corinthians 13:2 would include the necessary power to decipher the code of Revelation 13:18 to the members of the churches involved in these calamitous developments and trying experiences, which were so immediately present with them, but so remotely past to us. Far-fetched and fantastic solution is neither satisfying nor sufficient. It must be relevant to the text and the context. There is such a solution in the official appellation of Nero Caesar. The designation of this emperor as yielding the 666 code is actually found in the rabbinical writings. Inasmuch as John was writing for the information and instruction of Hebrew Christians, it is appropriate and expedient that the code name for the Roman beast should be hidden in Hebrew ciphers, thus less likely to be discovered by the pagan authorities into whose hands the Revelation might come; and whereas the Roman empire was the beast of verses 1-8, the numerical name must of contextual necessity designate the one in whom the empire was personified. No name could be more conclusive and decisive than that of Nero Caesar—the ruling emperor.

The Hebrew tongue was employed in chapter 16:16 in the symbol of Armageddon, and for less reason than justifies Hebrew ciphers in this case. In chapter 17:11 the beast was visualized as the sixth ruling emperor in succession from Julius Caesar. Though Julius was the head of the Republic, before the empire was actually formed, nevertheless the Republic merged into the empire; and it was from Julius Caesar, the first of the imperial rulers of Rome, that the title Caesar passed to his successors. Josephus mentions Julius as the first in the line of Caesars. The eminent Philip Schaff, in his Bible Dictionary, records that the imperial title descended from Julius Caesar.

The original Speaker's Bible Commentary, published by the order of the English Parliament, states that Professor Bryce, of Oxford, had justly placed Julius Caesar, from whom the name Caesar passed on to his successors, as first of the imperial rulers of Rome. These and many other ancient and modern historians and scholars count the imperial rulers from Julius Caesar. This fact has a decisive bearing on the pre-destruction-of-Jerusalem chronology of Revelation. It is a rather strange process that would omit the original Caesar in order to qualify another than Nero for the ruling emperor when Revelation was composed. The line of the first six Caesars was as follows: Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero. The sixth emperor, according to chapter seventeen, was ruling—and he was Nero. It is so signified as to be conclusive that the Hebrew consonants in the official name Nero Caesar form the exact numerical figure of six hundred sixty-six. It is also factual that Irenaeus in the early second century mentioned this solution to the numerical appellation. He further mentioned that some of the old manuscripts computed the number to be six hundred sixteen, and a current abbreviated form of writing the name of Nero among the Hebrews formed exactly that figure—six hundred sixteen. These facts are but further proof that it was the common understanding among the Hebrews that Nero was the intended character. The proof of the numerical meaning of the Hebrew letters is available in the Hebrew alphabet, and they are not difficult to decipher. In the order of the official title of Nero Caesar it would be as follows numerically: 50-200-6-50-100-60-200 = 666. The International Critical Commentary on Revelation states, along with other scholars quoted, that the solution is to be found in Hebrew, not in Greek, and that Nero Caesar is the man of the number. There could have been no way more effective or plausible for John to withhold the meaning of this code from the public, but also to bring it within the perception of the oppressed churches, than to conceal it in their native Hebrew, to be deciphered by the spiritual discerners in the churches, who were evidently signified in verse 18: Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast and here is wisdom—that is, the answer to the mystic number is in the imparted wisdom of the spiritually gifted prophets and teachers in the churches. So, in the search for a figurative beast to fit the symbolic numerical name—why skip that old Roman beast! He was there in the midst of it all, and he is relevant to the text and context. To ignore that period and assign these events to the future, is the same mistake committed by the modern pseudo-prophets, who gather an armful of Old Testament prophecies, skip the New Testament fulfillment completely, and assign the prophecies by sheer assertion to a future fulfillment. Essentially the same process is employed, inadvertently and unintentionally when the symbols of Revelation are assigned to future centuries. There could be no more natural application of this symbolic number than the name of the Roman emperor, and the most exacting analyst could not demand a more fitting solution.

Making War Against The Saints

(Revelation 13:1-2a NKJV)

Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. {2} Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion...

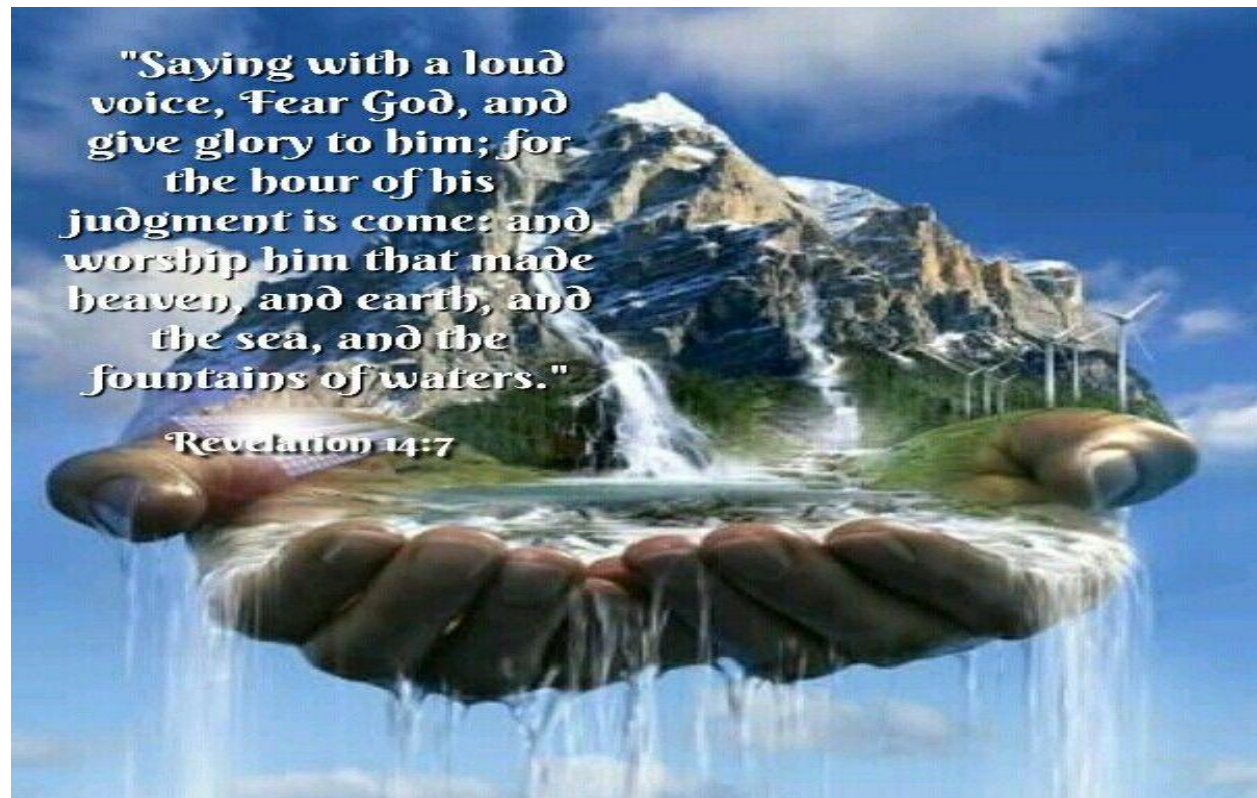
Sea Beast

Making War Against The Saints

(Revelation 13:2b, 4, 7 NKJV)

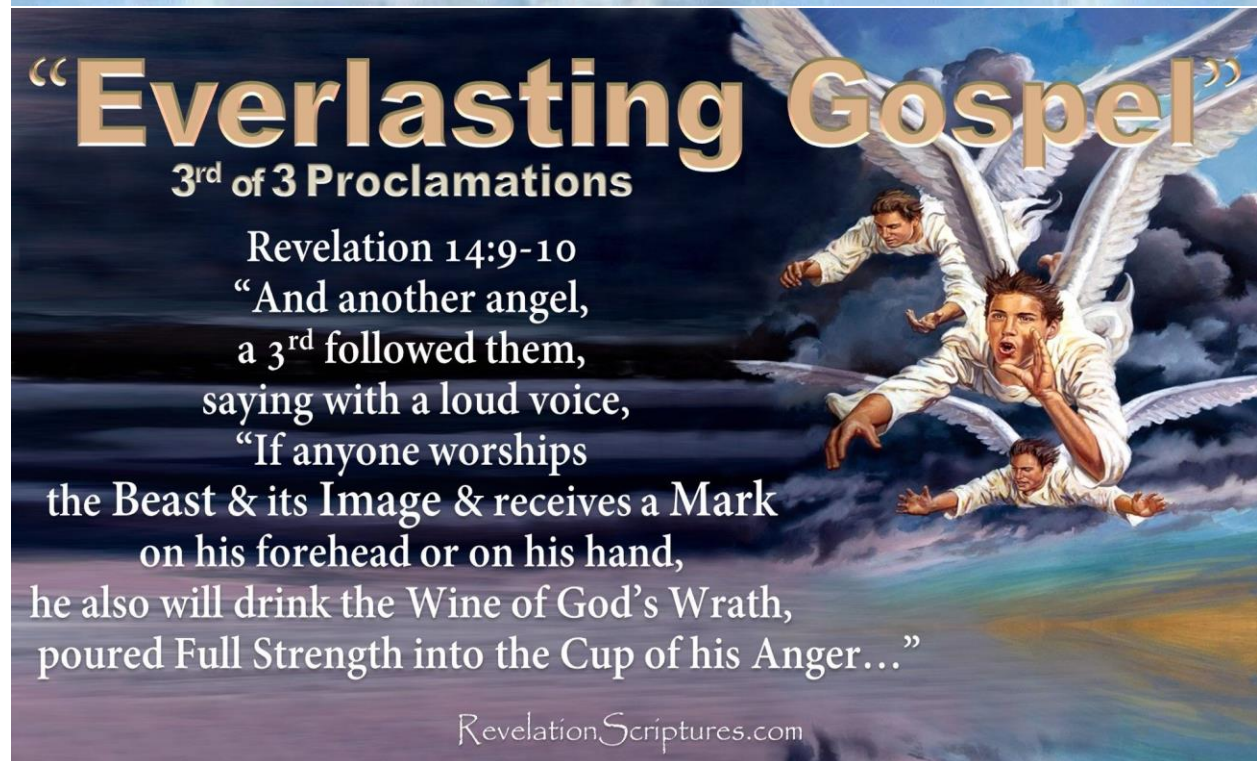
...The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. {4} So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" {7} It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.





"Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters."

Revelation 14:7



“Everlasting Gospel”

3rd of 3 Proclamations

Revelation 14:9-10

“And another angel, a 3rd followed them, saying with a loud voice,

“If anyone worships the Beast & its Image & receives a Mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the Wine of God’s Wrath, poured Full Strength into the Cup of his Anger...”

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN REFERENCE TO 144,000 VIRGINS

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 Victorious Lamb and the Redeemed (Revelation 14:1-5)

Revelation 14:1

And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on the mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads. (ASV)

Revelation chapter 14 opens with the Lamb standing on the Mountain Zion. The lamb is symbolic for Jesus Christ, (John 1:29, Revelation 5:6), and the mount Zion is used in the scriptures to represent the physical Jerusalem, (2 Samuel 5:6-7), the church, (Hebrews 12:22-23), and here for heaven or divine headquarters at the Father' right hand, (Acts 7:49).

Notice the Lamb, (Jesus) was not seen standing on the sand of the sea, like Satan, (the Dragon), or rising from the restless waters like the Roman Empire under Emperor Nero, (the first beast), or on the earth like the second beast, (the Roman Concilia). Rather, the lamb was standing on mount Zion which throughout Jewish history consistently represented victory. Hebrews 12:22 notes Mount Zion as the location of the church of the living God, the immovable kingdom. The Word of the Lord was said to go forth from Jerusalem, which is also Mount Zion. Jesus, the champion of the Christians, was seen, looking down from an immovable, eternal, invincible Mount Zion, here representing Heaven's headquarters of which Satan directly attacked but was defeated and was thrown down.

Standing with Jesus on Mount Zion was the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had the Father's name written in their foreheads. The number twelve represented a complete nation and religious organization to the Hebrews. This is the number of the tribes of Israel which as a whole represented their nation which descended from Abraham. There were twelve tribes, there were twelve stones on the breastplate of the high priest, (Exodus 28:21). At the dedication of the alter at the tabernacle, each tribe offered their sacrifice, one per day for twelve days. Then when the alter was dedicated there were twelve chargers of silver, twelve silver bowls, twelve spoons of gold, twelve bulls sacrificed along with twelve rams, twelve yearling sheep and twelve goats, (Numbers 7).

When the Israelites crossed over the Jordan river into the promised land they carried twelve stones to build an altar, (Joshua 4:3). When Elijah confronted the priests of Baal, he built an altar of twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of Israel, (1st Kings 18:31). There are more examples but this is a sufficient sampling to establish that the number 12 had a very significant religious meaning to the Hebrews. It symbolized completeness in their organized religion. Twelve times itself and then multiplied by 1000, a multiple of 10 which represents a complete man, would thus represent a religious assembly of complete *Jewish* Christians of vast proportions, hence the visual imagery of a large number of the redeemed. This large group of redeemed souls is further identified as we move further along in the chapter.

So, we have the image of Jesus standing on an unconquerable position with a large number of the redeemed surrounding Him. These souls have the name of His Father written in their foreheads. This imagery is in contrast to those who bore the mark of the Beast and identifies them as belonging to God and abide under His protection. This language calls to mind the words of Jesus as quoted in John 6:27, ("*...for him hath God the Father sealed*"). Paul spoke of the sealing twice in his letter to the Ephesians in 1:13 and 4:30. So, we see that the name of God written in the foreheads of the redeemed are representative of the "sealing" or the marking of ownership that takes place when one becomes a child of God.

Revelation

14:2

And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and the voice which I heard (was) as (the voice) of harpers harping with their harps: (ASV)

John heard a voice from heaven which substantiates Mount Zion as being the heavenly headquarters in verse 1. The voice John heard and described for us in earthly terms was like many waters, great thunder and harpers harping with their harps. John did not literally hear water, thunder and harpers with harps. The water probably represented soothing peace and tranquility, the thunder described volume, and the harpers with harps, beauty and harmony.

Revelation

14:3

and they sing as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders: and no man could learn the song save the hundred and forty and four thousand, (even) they that had been purchased out of the earth. (ASV)

Please note that in verse 2, John described the voice he heard as a singular designation, while in verse 3, he uses the word "they" characterizing a plurality of singers. This is significant in the text to note that John described these singers as singing with one voice. This is representative of absolute unity, which is what every Christian is to strive for. The song John heard was the unified redeemed singing with one voice, a song that only they could learn because no one else has the right to partake in it. It is likely a song of praise and victory. Those who are not redeemed will not get to partake in the singing of that song.

The four living creatures and the elders will be the same as those depicted in the throne scene of Revelation 4:6-11. Each creature had eyes in front and back signifying the all-seeing omniscience of God. Hebrews 4:13, "And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do." (ASV) One creature was like a lion which represents strength. Another is like a calf which could represent endurance under the yolk. Another has the face of a man which could represent intellect. And the fourth is like an eagle which represents penetrating vision and swiftness in the execution of judgment. These creatures are always before God, revering Him and declaring His holiness and his eternal nature. Psalms 90:2, "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." (ASV)

The elders mentioned will represent great historic figures in the minds of the Christians. Such figures as Abraham, Moses, and Elijah; great figures of faith designed to inspire hope and perseverance in the minds of the oppressed saints. Of significance in identifying them in Revelation 4:10 is the description of them "casting their crowns before the throne."

These elders enjoy kingly authority, but it is due entirely to their relation to God, all of their authority being derived from him. This is a beautiful symbolization of words in this verse. They are elders before the throne of God, but they owe it wholly to God and when they bow before the Almighty, their authority, which is represented in their crowns is doffed and thrown at the creator's feet. When the creation looks upon the throne, all eyes are on God.

At the end of verse 3, we have the hundred and forty-four thousand mentioned again in this context, and John identifies them for us this time; Revelation 14:3, "*the hundred and forty and four thousand, (even) they that had been purchased out of the earth.*" (ASV) Those who have been purchased out of the earth are the redeemed, bought back from death by the blood of Jesus, (Acts 20:28).

Revelation

14:4

These are they that were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These (are) they that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were purchased from among men, (to be) the first-fruits unto God and unto the Lamb. (ASV)

John devotes the entire next two sentences to further identify the hundred and forty-four thousand. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 11:2, "*For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*" The saints written of in the New Testament were often referred to as a "bride" in their relationship with Jesus Christ, (Ephesians 5:27, Romans 7:4). There is another sense of defilement for which John is undoubtedly alluding to in the imagery here. Idolatry is characterized in scripture as committing spiritual adultery.

In Ezekiel 23:37 we see God's condemnation for participating in the idolatrous worship of Molech, where part of the worship was the sacrifice of their children by fire to the pagan god. This idolatrous worship was characterized as adultery. Those to whom John were writing were warned not to bow down to the beast and worship him. Therefore, it is obvious that John's reference here to the virgins is representative to those who refused to bow down and worship the Roman Emperor. John is making this vision more personal to the oppressed Christians as the imagery narrows down to them specifically.

These (are) they that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. Refusing to worship the Beast was a priority to those who would stand with the lamb on Mount Zion, but it was by no means the only requirement. In addition to refusing to bow down to Nero, the redeemed had to be faithful to Jesus and keep His commandments whatever they may be or wherever they may lead.

These were purchased from among men, (to be) the first-fruits unto God and unto the Lamb. Those who stand with Jesus were purchased from among sinful mankind. Of significance is the wording "*the first-fruits unto God and unto the Lamb.*" The use of the word "*first-fruits*" leaves no doubt that there will be more redeemed than those pictured in this imagery. This is in direct contradiction to those denominational doctrines which espouse the number of souls in heaven to be literally one hundred and forty-four thousand.

Denominational teaching literalizes the hundred and forty-four thousand in various ways to represent the number of saved souls who will be taking up residence in heaven with God. Some of those who hold to this doctrine try to set forth the idea that earth will be regenerated sometime in the future and Jesus Christ who is said will reign for a thousand years from Jerusalem.

It is not in the scope of this study to examine all of the variant beliefs regarding the misuse of the hundred and forty-four thousand symbol. However, it should be noted here that to literalize any element of this imagery demands the rest of the figures in this context be interpreted literally as well. So, with this in mind, if the hundred and forty thousand is literal then we can also infer from the accompanying text that they will be all men in consideration of the fact that they had never been defiled with women. In addition to this, the fact they were all virgins according to the text, means that no one who had ever been married would have any hope of being among those privileged to live in heaven. Therefore, heaven would be populated with a hundred and forty-four thousand men who had never been married. No woman that ever existed would get to live there with God in heaven. Such a notion is utterly ridiculous and should be summarily rejected on the basis of being at best nonsense. There is no limit to the damage one can do with scripture through selective literalization of the text. The figure of the hundred and forty-four thousand is as symbolic as the rest of the language complementing it within the context.

Revelation

14:5

"And in their mouth was found no lie: they are without blemish." John teaches that there will be no liars in heaven, (Revelation 21:7-8, Revelation 22:15), and the redeemed are spotless, washed in the blood of the lamb, (Revelation 1:5)

These five verses in Revelation 14 are full of imagery, and it's no wonder. The letter has reached a significant turning point. The enemies of God and the Christians are not going to prevail. Their defeat is being announced before the struggle even begins. If such a document stating this and the following facts plainly were to fall into the hands of the authorities, it would result in a wholesale extermination of the already hated Christians. Just the rumor of Jesus being born was enough to spell the doom for every male child 2 years old or less under the rule of Herod. Imagine what the result would be if Nero had come into possession and could understand a document that spelled out his ultimate defeat?

A paraphrase of what John was saying could be worded thus:

"And I saw Jesus Christ, our champion, standing on an unconquerable position surrounded by the redeemed, knowing them personally. They were all singing a comforting and beautiful song of victory. The song they sang before the throne of God was a song no lost person could ever know or hope to sing. They never gave in to the Roman Emperor or bowed down to worship him. They kept the commandments of Jesus to the end and were among the first to be saved from among the men of the earth."

The Turning Point (Revelation 14:6-13)

God is about to reinforce His exhortation to remain faithful and now we start seeing God's judgment on the Jewish Nation & City of Jerusalem. As mentioned before, the danger to the Christians as a result of this letter being understood by the local authorities was very real. The language is becoming increasingly figurative as the judgments that God will hand out to TWATKI or "The World As They Know It" is revealed in detail to those who can understand it. Our understanding of the next sections depends on an understanding of who the letter was written to and who the recipients of God's judgment will be.

Revelation 14:6-20

6 And I saw another angel flying in mid heaven, having eternal good tidings to proclaim unto them that dwell on the earth, and unto every nation and tribe and tongue and people;

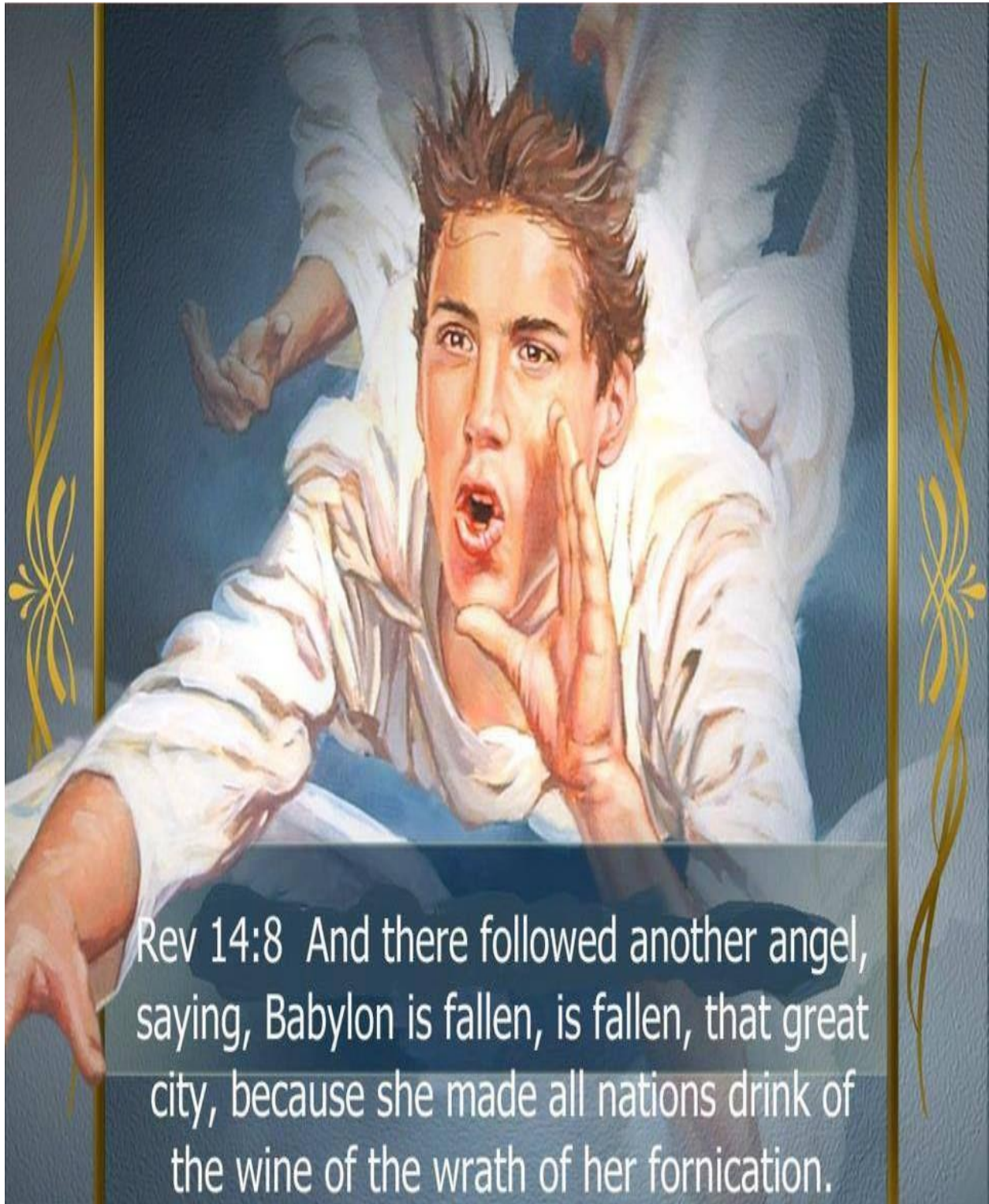
7 and he saith with a great voice, Fear God, and give him glory; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of waters.

This is a turning point in the book of Revelation. The hour of God's judgment has come. The Jerusalem Jewish Capitol With It's Temple Observance Center - The Jewish Religious System With It's Temporal Theocratic Authority Structure - will not be allowed to continue. The angel mentioned here is representative of God's saints preaching the gospel to the whole world, (Matthew 24:14; Colossians 1:23). The oppressed Christians are receiving another message of hope. There is good news to those who are suffering. Fear God, worship Him, stay faithful for His judgment is now imminent.

Revelation 14:8

And another, a second angel, followed, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, that hath made all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

Here, Babylon represents the City of Jerusalem. God speaks of the destruction of the city as if it has already happened. This will help shroud the real meaning of the message from the authorities and those familiar with scripture in the Old Testament will also remember that God announced the fall of the real Babylon at least fifty years before it happened: Jeremiah 51:8, "*Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: wail for her; take balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed.*" When God makes a decree, it is as if it is already accomplished: Isaiah 46:10, "*declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not (yet) done; saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure*" and Isaiah 48:3, "*I have declared the former things from of old; yea, they went forth out of my mouth, and I showed them: suddenly I did them, and they came to pass.*"



The Babylon = Rome Theory #1

by Arthur M. Ogden

All of us must admit that we do not know when the book of Revelation was written. I have presented the case for the early dating of the New Testament Apocalypse but I cannot prove **exactly when** this marvelous book was written. Someone recently said, "The important issue in understanding the book of Revelation is not the date... The real issue is not so much when the book was written but what was it all about?" I agree. If we can establish what this book is about, we can go a long way in finding the answers to the book. I personally think we ought to thrash it out until we get to the bottom of it. It is attainable. I gladly make my contribution even if proven wrong in the end. I hope all who read this presentation will accept the same challenge.

In previous articles, I presented evidence from the Apocalypse tying it to other Biblical sources demanding identical recognition. If our reasoning was correct, we accurately connected the Revelation to the desolation of the nation of Israel & the destruction of their capital city, Jerusalem. This would argue that the book was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. I contend that Babylon the Great symbolizes Jerusalem and that her destruction portrays the destruction of Jerusalem which was then approaching when John wrote.

Others contend for the Babylon = Rome theory. Some very strong arguments support this view. Let us give due consideration to these arguments before closing this part of our studies.

Babylon Sits On The Seven Heads

One of the strongest arguments for the Babylon = Rome view is found in [Revelation 17:9](#). John writes, "*And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth*" (Revelation 17:9). Many contend that the seven mountains correspond with the seven hills of Rome identifying the royal city which governed & controlled the Roman Empire. On the surface this argument looks reasonable but it is based entirely upon supposition and assumption.

Men read this text and immediately assert that John said **hills**. Then it is claimed that "*every body understood what was meant when talking about the seven hills of Rome in a first century context.*" Where do we get the right to change the word **mountains** to **hills**? Mountains are not hills. The scriptures make a distinction ([cf. Luke 3:5; 23:30](#)). Even those who argue this recognize the difference. Recently, a lecturer who argued this, later said, "Jerusalem was up in the mountains and they (horses) don't work too good up there. When we talk about the mountains of Jerusalem, they were really mountains and Rome we are talking about hills for the most part." So, you see, he knew the difference. When we have to change the word of God to fit our theories we are treading on dangerous grounds.

I too have argued that the seven heads identify with Rome (*Avenging*, pages 280, 331). My reasons are simple, reasonable and contextually sound. I reached this conclusion without consideration of the harlot. You see, the seven heads are on the sea beast which represents the Roman Empire ([Revelation 13:1-3](#)). The heads are seven "*mountains*" and "*kings*" ([Revelation 17:9,10](#)). John was not identifying geographic location. I think he used mountains in the symbols of **governments** as used in the Old Testament. The king of Babylon was a **destroying mountain** and would become a **burnt mountain** ([Jeremiah 51:25; cf. Isaiah 2:2,3](#)). Each Roman king had his own government or administration. There were seven administrations under Rome's first seven kings. These were the seven mountains with their kings. The seat of government for these kings & their administrations was Rome. The seven heads, therefore, symbolize the power structure which controlled the Empire from Rome.

This is how I backed into the position that the seven mountains symbolized Rome. The heads were a part of the beast and not a part of the harlot. Babylon simply sat (or was carried by the beast) upon the seven heads which identified the kings of the Empire ruling from Rome.

Some have said, "it would not make sense for Jerusalem to set upon the heads. If it were Jerusalem, it would make more sense if she sat upon the back or on the tail." Absolutely not! To symbolize Jerusalem, Babylon had to sit on the heads. Here's why. The harlot was *carried* by the beast. The word *carried* means "to carry a burden." (*Thayer*, pages 98,99). The beast (Roman Empire) carried the harlot as a burden. Only the heads would carry Jerusalem. The rest of the Empire would not. Josephus is full of it. The peoples of the Empire resented the Jews getting special treatment because of their religion. So, they persecuted them in efforts to bring them into compliance. The Jews through Jerusalem's power structure constantly appealed to the Caesars and the Senate for protection of their religious rights. Decrees were passed down protecting the Jews and their religion. It was the governments of the

Roman Empire which protected and granted their rights and in that sense *carried them as a burden* (*Josephus, Ant., 14, 10*). If the Roman kings & their administrations had not supported the Jews, the peoples of the empire would have turned upon them long before 70 A.D. So, you see, there is a reason why the harlot (Jerusalem) is portrayed as sitting on the heads. This was the proper place for her because it portrays reality.

Again, the harlot is not the beast or any part of the beast. She was simply carried by the beast. In order to clearly evaluate John's picture, let me ask a simple question. Was Rome any part of the Roman Empire (the beast)? Is it not true that Rome existed long before the Empire was born and was always the essential ingredient of the Empire? Yet, in John's presentation, the harlot is not on the beast when it first appears ([Revelation 13](#)) and she is not on the beast when it is destroyed ([Revelation 19](#)). Rome, therefore, was not Babylon the Great because Rome was a part of the Roman Empire from beginning to end. John's picture of Babylon fits Jerusalem perfectly.

Babylon Reigned Over Kings

Perhaps the strongest argument for the Babylon = Rome theory is based upon [Revelation 17:18](#). *"And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth."* It is contended that this settles the matter since Rome was the one and only city that ruled over the kings of the earth. Therefore, Babylon had to equal Rome.

It is my contention that Jerusalem and Jerusalem alone fulfills this text. Note carefully that Babylon ruled as a *city*. This is where men ignore what John said. *Babylon ruled as a city!* Note carefully that this is *a city* reigning over the kings of the earth. It is not kings reigning over other kings, but *a city* reigning. Did Rome reign as a city over kings? No, a 1000 times. *Did Rome reign as a city over her own kings?* Was it not the other way around? Kings ruled Rome! Indeed, that is the way it was. Rome never ruled as a city but Jerusalem did and we do not have to go out of the scriptures to prove it. We can explain how Jerusalem reigned as a city but we cannot explain how Rome reigned as a city over the kings of the earth. We can only explain how Rome ruled through the sovereignty of kings. Did Rome rule the Caesars? The fact is that Rome as a city ruled no one. Jerusalem ruled through her power and her influence as the city of the great King. Actually, thru her power politics, Jerusalem even exercised dominion over the Roman kings. Read Josephus, he is full of it. We have to be blind not to see how it worked.

My position that Jerusalem reigned with a sovereignty that was above that of kings has been questioned by some. I realize that the natural understanding of the text in our English translations suggests the idea of "exercising authority over." The only reason I offered the other explanation was that Vine suggested it (cf. *Avenging*, page 333). He said the words used here were "suggestive of a distinction between the sovereignty of mystic Babylon and that of ordinary sovereigns" (*Vine*, Vol.3, p.269). I have no reason to believe that Vine thought Babylon was Jerusalem, but he suggested that the rule of Babylon was different from that of kings. Was the rule of Rome different from that of kings or was the rule of Rome that of her sovereign kings? We know the answer. Jerusalem ruled as the city of the great king but her rule was not that of kings. Her power and rule came from the fact that she was the one and only Holy City in the world of that day. She truly ruled as a city.

The word translated *over* in this text means *over or above*. I haven't any problem with our present translations but the passage may be saying that Babylon had a sovereignty that was *above*, i.e., greater, superior, or higher than that of earthly kings. I take this view of the passage because it is the best way to understand the sovereignty of a city. Let me also add, that whether Jerusalem was occupied by foreign powers had nothing to do with this kind of rule. Jerusalem ruled as a city even while lying in ruins ([Daniel 6:10](#); [cf.2 Chronicles 6:36-38](#); [Psalms 137](#)).

Conclusion

I can say without fear of contradiction that Jerusalem reigned as a city over the kings of the earth. The **BIBLE** proves this. Some think that these two above arguments *clearly* identify Babylon as Rome but they do not come close to it. These arguments are neither conclusive nor convincing.

Some are wondering what drives us to find another explanation other than the *clearly Babylon=Rome* explanation. The reason is very simply. **Rome does not fit the picture**. There is no fulfillment of the things forecast for Babylon if she is Rome. Think about this seriously, friends. If Babylon is Rome, there is yet to be a destruction. This denies the *"at hand"* fulfillment foretold. No, Babylon cannot be Rome because Babylon was to be destroyed by the sea beast which represents the Roman Empire and it **never happened**. The Roman Empire was destroyed nearly 1500 years ago while Rome, *the Eternal City*, has never been destroyed. There's no way you can shake it and come up with a fulfillment.

A failure to have a fulfillment of the destruction of Babylon the Great, per the Babylon = Rome theory, seriously questions the integrity of both Jesus and John as prophets of God. Let us remember the scriptural warnings of [Revelation 22:18,19](#).

Further, Rome does not fit the picture because it ignores John's chronological order. In Revelation 14, the fall of Babylon precedes the warning against the worship of the beast and his image ([Revelation 14:8,9](#)). In [Revelation 17-19](#), the fall of Babylon precedes the destruction of the sea beast and the false prophet. Chronological order is essential since John revealed things that were shortly to come to pass ([Revelation 1:1](#)).

Prophecy is history revealed before it happens, therefore, it must have chronological order. If Babylon symbolizes Rome, John's order is wrong because any fall of Rome argued must follow the worship of the beast and his image. Christianity's conflict with the Roman Empire was over before the city of Rome was ever threatened. Since the City of Rome has never been destroyed as described by Babylon's fall, the fall of the Roman Empire preceded any prescribed fall of Rome. I am sorry about Rome because it does not fit John's picture.

When we consider Jerusalem as the city symbolized by Rome, we have no problem with chronological order. The everlasting gospel was preached to all men, Jerusalem fell and Christianity's conflict with the Roman Empire developed precisely as pictured in [Revelation 14:6-11](#). Again, Babylon fell in [Revelation 17-18](#) followed by Christianity's confrontation with the Roman Empire and the religions which served the Empire. Jerusalem's fall fits the chronological order. Rome does not.

The Babylon = Rome Theory #2

by Arthur M. Ogden

In our last article, we began a discussion of the Babylon = Rome theory. In this study, we will discuss several other arguments often made to establish the theory.

Babylon's Attire

It is maintained that, "Babylon's adornment fits Rome best because the colors of purple and scarlet portray her as a Royal and Harlot city." This may be correct but it does not prove Babylon is Rome. Jerusalem was described in this fashion in the Old Testament ([Jeremiah 4:30](#)). The tabernacle and temple were made with these things ([Exodus 25-26](#); [35-39](#); [2nd Chronicles 2](#)). God was Israel's king and the Temple's location in Jerusalem made it the Royal city. Though Jerusalem turned harlot ([Isaiah 1:21](#)), she was still decked in her attire.

Babylon Sat Upon Many Waters

The argument is made that, "Babylon symbolized Rome because she sat closer to the sea than Jerusalem." This explanation ignores what John said. John explained that the "*many waters*" were "*peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues*" ([Revelation 17:15](#)). To ignore John's explanation in favor of our own is to create an unscriptural characteristic. John was not talking about literal waters! He was talking about people from the nations.

Babylon, the Great Commercial Power

Some contend that, "Babylon must be Rome because she was **THE** world-famous market and consumer of all the products mentioned and was known world-wide for this." You would think from these assertions that Babylon was the world's greatest market and consumer in that day. Where did this idea come from? John didn't say that. All he said was that this great market would be shut down.

The advocates of the Babylon = Rome theory like to talk about how small Jerusalem was compared to Rome and other cities. They say that Jerusalem with a population of 120,000 or less could not compare to these much larger cities and that it would be unreasonable to think that Jerusalem was Babylon the Great.

Jerusalem was small when compared to Rome, Alexandra, Ephesus, Antioch and others. All these cities had many more inhabitants than Jerusalem but, all of them together, didn't have the tourist trade Jerusalem had. Three times a year Jerusalem's loyal subjects were commanded to go up to Jerusalem to worship. Josephus indicates that some years as many as 3,000,000 people came to Jerusalem just for one of those feasts. Think about that! They went three times a year by commandment! On top of that there were other feasts & memorial days established by the Jews for which they journeyed to Jerusalem. Did they carry all of their needed provisions with them? Of course not. The business community of Jerusalem provided for these things.

Today, many of our large cities get into bidding wars for conventions. A convention of 10,000 means millions of dollars. Think about three a year with 3,000,000! Josephus tells us there was enough grain stored in Jerusalem to have fed the millions caught in the city for several years but one of the rebels burned it (*Josephus, Wars, 5, 1, 4*). How did it get there? Surely many merchants were involved.

Furthermore, while Jerusalem's local population was small, every Jew considered himself a citizen of Jerusalem ([cf. Isaiah 48:1,2](#)). It has been estimated that 12 to 14 million Jews lived in the world of that day and most of them made such a claim. This means that Jerusalem's citizenry reached out into all the communities of the world. There was no city in the world like it. Of this, Titus, Jerusalem's destroyer, said, the Romans "permitted you to live, either by yourselves, or among others, as it should please you: and, what is our chief favor of all, we have given you leave to gather up that tribute which is paid to God... till at length you became richer than we ourselves" (*Josephus, Wars, 6, 6, 2*). So, while Jerusalem's local population was small, her spiritual citizenry was world-wide.

Babylon as a Sea Trading Power

It is often asserted that, "Babylon was predominately a sea trading power." Where did anyone get that idea? Sure, the shipmasters, ships and sailors are mentioned in association with how Babylon got many of her products but there is nothing in the text that warrants the word **predominate**. John does not describe Babylon as the world's greatest sea trading power. John simply points out that those who depended upon the sea for trade with Babylon lost that market.

It is reasoned that, "Jerusalem sat up in the mountains and was land-locked and any thing they got from the sea had to be hauled over land." So what? The fact is, Jerusalem depended upon the sea. Solomon opened up the seas for trade nearly 1000 years B.C. ([1 Kings 9:26-28](#); [2 Chronicles 8:18](#); [9:21](#), [cf. 2 Chronicles 2:16](#); [Ezra 3:7](#)).

Josephus also points out that Jerusalem depended upon the sea for trade (*Wars*, 3, 3, 6). While I would not contend for a moment that Jerusalem was the world's greatest sea trader, she did get products from far by way of the sea. None of us know the extent of that trade. All John said was that Babylon as a market for sea trade would be shut down. He said nothing about her being the world's greatest sea trading power. This has simply been asserted as if it were fact. To assert something into a text in Revelation that is not there is dangerous, friends! ([Revelation 22:18,19](#)).

The Merchandise

It is contended that, "The merchandise found in Babylon was especially appropriate for Rome." Yes, and for nearly every city on earth. All of these things were found in Jerusalem and this is admitted by those who advocate the Babylon = Rome theory. They even admit that slaves were found there. John was not measuring how much or many of these things existed in Babylon but was pointing out that as a market for these things Babylon would cease to exist. Permit me to remind you that Rome has never been shut down.

The Great City

It is asserted that, "It was appropriate for Rome to be called *the great city* but not Jerusalem." This is a big assertion because Jerusalem is identified in the scriptures as a great city while Rome is not ([cf. Jeremiah 22:8](#); [Revelation 11:8](#)). This does not mean that Rome was not a great city, it was, but it does mean that God recognized Jerusalem as a great city whether we do or not do. Furthermore, the great city is mentioned nine times in the Apocalypse and one time John identifies her as the city "*where our Lord was crucified*" ([Revelation 11:8](#)). Surely no one thinks Jesus was crucified in Rome!

Saints Rejoice at Babylon' Fall

It has been argued that, "Since saints rejoiced over the fall of Babylon, she could not be Jerusalem because in the Old Testament the saints always wept when Jerusalem was punished." Of all the arguments I have heard for Babylon's identity, this is the weakest. Indeed, the people **living** in Jerusalem wept when she was destroyed. Jesus even indicated they would weep in 70 A.D. ([Luke 23:28-30](#)).

So, what is wrong with the argument? In the Apocalypse, those told to *rejoice* were martyred (dead) saints. They were martyred for their faith by Babylon the Great ([cf. Revelation 6:9-11; 17:6; 18:20,24](#)). They were promised vengeance and when it came they could rejoice. They did not die in vain. There was plenty of reason for the *apostles* and *prophets* to rejoice at the fall of Jerusalem. Jesus held Jerusalem responsible for the deaths of both apostles and prophets. We can prove this by the scriptures. *Can you prove by the scriptures that Rome was responsible for the deaths of any apostles or prophets?* If you hold to the Rome theory, you are duty bound to prove that Rome was responsible for the deaths of at least two apostles and two prophets?

Babylon's Apostasy Not Mentioned

It is contended that, "The absence of any references to Babylon's idolatry or of her having turned away from God is proof that Babylon is not Jerusalem." Evidently these people have not read [Revelation 17](#). Babylon is a whore and "*The Mother of Harlots, and Abominations of the Earth*" ([Revelation 17:1,5](#)). Why is she a harlot? Harlots are not born. They are made by the practice of whoredom when they **turn away** from what is morally right.

Babylon is also portrayed as the mother of Harlots. The harlots are the children of the mother harlot. Both, Isaiah and Ezekiel, picture Judah and Jerusalem as the mother of harlots ([Isaiah 57:3-12; Ezekiel 16](#)). Paul says, "*Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.*" The priests and rulers in Jerusalem departed from the Lord and lead the people into spiritual whoredom. The Old Testament is full of Israel's abandonment of God for idols. The gods with whom they committed whoredom were called **abominations** ([Deuteronomy 29:17; 32:16; Ezekiel 5:1-11](#)). So, reference is made to Babylon's (Jerusalem's) apostasy and idolatry.

Babylon's Old Testament Connection

It is suggested that, "Many of the statements made in chapter 18 are taken from Old Testament descriptions of pagan cities and therefore could not be descriptions of Jerusalem." While arguing this, they admit that some of the descriptions do come from judgment passages upon Jerusalem. By admitting this, they defeat their whole argument. If the description drawn from Old Testament references to pagan cities proves Babylon is not Jerusalem, then those descriptions derived from references to judgment upon Jerusalem proves that Babylon is not Rome either. This point is pointless.

Jerusalem View Misses Point

I recently heard a lecturer contend that one of the reasons for accepting the Babylon = Rome view is, "The Babylon=Jerusalem view ultimately misses the point." Nothing that was said on this point was worth mentioning because the point missed was the lecturer's own personal evaluation of the book. He formulated his view of the book and then decided that if another view does not support his view then it misses the point. It might miss that person's point, but missing the truth is another thing.

Whatever the point is in Revelation must be determined by scripture and not by someone's think so's. Incidentally, I believe the Babylon = Rome view misses the main point. I think it misses many points but that is from my point of view and does nothing toward proving the Babylon = Jerusalem view.

Conclusion

In concluding this part of our studies in the Apocalypse, let me remind you who hold to the Babylon = Rome theory that there are three things you must contend with.

(1) Jesus said, *"It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem"* (Luke 13:33). He also held that generation responsible for *"the blood of all the prophets"* (Luke 11:50). Since all the blood of prophets was to be found in Babylon (Revelation 18:24), you must explain how Rome could be destroyed to avenge the blood of the prophets without questioning the veracity of Jesus.

(2) God avenged the blood of apostles and the prophets on Babylon (Revelation 18:20). Since you contend that Babylon symbolizes Rome, you are required to prove that Rome was responsible for the deaths of at least two apostles and two prophets. Can you prove this?

(3) Babylon was to be destroyed, wiped out, never to exist again. You are responsible to prove that Rome was destroyed according to your view. There is much talk about the fall of Rome but no one can explain when it took place. Physically, nothing has ever happened to Rome! It is still the "eternal city"! It has **never** been destroyed! There is no fulfillment of John's prophecy if Babylon = Rome!

Revelation 14:9

And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a great voice, If any man worshippeth the beast and his image, and receiveth a mark on his forehead, or upon his hand,

This is another warning to the Christians. Do not worship the beast or the idols of the beast and do not receive the stamp of the emperor Nero. John used the words "*if any man*", meaning if anybody. None is excluded from this warning. Those who would give in and worship Nero to save their fleshly selves will suffer the wrath of God as vividly portrayed in the following verses.

Revelation 14:10-11

10 he also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is prepared unmixed in the cup of his anger; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

11 and the smoke of their torment goeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day and night, they that worship the beast and his image, and whoso receiveth the mark of his name.

One would think this passage would be in no need of comment, however, there are millions today who believe there is no fiery hell. There is a lot of figurative language here but it is describing a literal place of eternal fire and punishment. This is supported by the words of Our Savior in other scripture such as Mark 9:43-48. Again, the Christians are warned not to bow down and worship the Roman Emperor. The language used by John is especially strong here and should serve as a warning to these Christians and others after them that God is always to be obeyed no matter what the immediate personal consequences may be.

Revelation 14:12

12 Here is the patience of the saints, they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

13 And I heard the voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them.

John gives the words here that should ring loud and clear for oppressed Christians of the time and for all who come afterward. Those who keep the faith and die in the Lord will be the ones numbered at the side of the lamb. Don't give up! The wrath of earthly powers are temporary but the wrath of God is eternal. *"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul : but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."* (Matthew 10:28).

It cannot be overstated enough that obedience to the commands of God is not situational and absolutely required if salvation is to be had. The 1st century Christians under Nero's rule were undergoing some of the worst persecution in the history of Christianity and they were expected to hold firm to the end. God did not say, "ok, it's bad, so do what you have to do and I'll forgive you when this over. The blood of my son will get you all through this difficult spot." Rather, God commanded over and over, "Do not bow down to Imperial Idols; do not receive the mark of the beast; do not give in. Stay faithful even if it costs you your life." Those Christians under Nero's reign were told they were expected to remain faithful and obedient and failure to do so would result in the unmixed wrath of God being unleashed on them, being tormented with fire forever and ever, never to rest again.

There are millions and millions of people in the world today who profess Christ, believe and teach that once a Christian is saved, he or she can't so sin as to be forever lost. If this were true, the entire book of Revelation is a lie. The persecuted saints of the time were expected to be faithful and failure to do so resulted in their damnation. If the saints then could sin and be lost, so can we. *"So then, my beloved, even as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;"* (Philippians 2:12)

Revelation 3:5

"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." (ASV)

The Sickle (Revelation 14:6-20)

It is generally agreed that this is a picture of divine judgment. There is some disagreement over whether or not this is really representative of two separate judgments, one of the righteous and the other of the wicked, or if the imagery represents only a single judgment which God uses to defeat the forces of evil. The disagreement stems mainly from the futurist interpretation of Revelation, which has been previously noted, offers no value whatsoever those Seven Churches addressed - those oppressed Christians of that day. I believe the context supports a single instrument of God's judgment on the wicked in a dramatic way that leaves the reader with the impression that it will be terrible and final. The terror and scope of God's judgment is seen in the size of the river of blood, as deep as the bridle of a horse and about 200 miles in length.

Revelation 14:14

"And I saw, and behold, a white cloud; and on the cloud (I saw) one sitting like unto a son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle."

White symbolizes purity and a cloud is a vantage point of lofty perspective. Setting upon this pure lofty seat is Jesus wearing on His a golden crown, symbolic of the highest of authority and in his hand is a sharp sickle. The sickle was a sharp-edged tool used to harvest grain. We sometimes refer to it as a scythe, however a scythe typically has a longer handle. The reapers of the time would use a sickle to cut down the stalks of grain. The long curved blade served both to cut and to gather the stalks into a bunch as it is drawn toward the reaper. The stalks were then gathered into bundles and were later gathered and transported to the threshing floors.

The words "sharp sickle" do not bring to mind a pleasant thought for the harvest of the just. John the Baptist spoke of hewing down the unfruitful trees with an axe, (Matthew 3:10, Luke 3:9). Jesus also said that the unfruitful would be "hewn down and cast into the fire" (Matthew 7:19). Nowhere in scripture is it mentioned that the just will be gathered with a sickle.

Revelation 14:15-20

15 "And another angel came out from the temple, crying with a great voice to him that sat on the cloud, Send forth thy sickle, and reap: for the hour to reap is come; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

16 And he that sat on the cloud cast his sickle upon the earth; and the earth was reaped.

17 Another angel came out from the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

18 *And another angel came out from the altar, he that hath power over fire; and he called with a great voice to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Send forth thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.*

19 *And the angel cast his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vintage of the earth, and cast it into the winepress, the great (winepress), of the wrath of God.*

20 *And the winepress was trodden without the city, and there came out blood from the winepress, even unto the bridles of the horses, as far as a thousand and six hundred furlongs." ASV*

Three sickles are used to reap the vintage of the earth. One of them being with fire. Scripture is replete with passages that warn of the punishment of fire for the wicked. Those who were cut and gathered were cast into a press and trodden out with an enormous river of blood issuing forth.

The winepress is imagery drawn from Lamentations when the Prophet Jeremiah wrote of Judah's captivity in Babylon: "*The Lord hath trodden as in a winepress the virgin daughter of Judah.*" (Lamentations 1:15).

Ancient wine presses ordinarily consisted of two rectangular or circular excavations, hewn (Isaiah 5:2) in the solid rock to a depth of 2 or 3 feet. Where possible one was always higher than the other and they were connected by a pipe or channel. Their size, of course, varied greatly, but the upper vat was always wider and shallower than the lower and was the press proper, into which the grapes were thrown, to be crushed by the feet of the treaders. The treaders would get into the winepress with the grapes & walk back and forth, stomping on the grapes with their feet until the juice was extracted.

God's wrath is here described as being a great winepress. The imagery here is of God cutting down His enemies, casting them into the winepress & treading them out until they are completely destroyed with their blood flowing forth in a river. This is not representative of an instantaneous overthrow on the part of God, rather it is indicative of a methodical and systematic plan designed to utterly and completely vanquish His enemies.

[Isaiah 63:1-3](#)

1 Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.

2 Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winevat?

3 I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the peoples there was no man with me: yea, I trod them in mine anger, and trampled them in my wrath; and their lifeblood is sprinkled upon my garments, and I have stained all my raiment. (ASV)

The scene of the sickle and the winepress is telling God's people, with imagery they would be able to understand, that the oppressive forces of evil are powerful but are no match for God. This scene gives Christians of the first century hope as they are assured that God is still on His throne and that He cares for His people and that He will be their champion in the end and they will be victorious through Christ and through His divine judgment.

Foy Wallace Interpretation of Chapter Fourteen From His Commentary:

THE DISCLOSURES OF DIVINE JUDGMENTS (CHAPTER 14)

The fourteenth chapter appears to be an intentional prolepsis—the dating of events out of their chronological order – in that the scenes of judgment indicated the end of conflict and tribulation, whereas the following chapter reverted to the war against the church in accentuated fury. Thus, the entire fourteenth chapter was of a proleptic character. The development in order of the progressive descriptions of successive events was abandoned for the in-between scenes of the outcome in the victory of the saints and of judgment on the persecuting powers.

The chapter's imagery is that of the defeat of the three great foes of the church – the dragon, the sea-beast and the land-beast; followed by scenes of victory for the woman (the church), and of judgment on her foes. Verse 1 (1) The hundred forty-four thousand–14:1-5. 1. And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him a hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads–14:1. The Lamb standing on mount Zion was Christ: and mount Zion was the symbol of the new Jerusalem, where the new covenant was inaugurated, and where the church was established; and which Paul declared, in Galatians 4:26, to be the mother of us all. This heavenly Jerusalem was held in contrast with the old outward and earthly Jerusalem which here was representative of Judaism with all of its apostasies. This new mount Zion was the seat of the new spiritual temple, as the dwelling of the New Testament church, described in chapter 11:19 as "measured off for them that worship there" - the first-fruits, further mentioned by Paul as the firstborn, in Hebrews 12:22-23 : "But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." The hundred forty-four thousand was the numerical symbol for that great number of saints which were redeemed from the earth. These were the martyred number of the woman's seed, designated in chapter twelve as the man child which was caught up unto God in contrast with the remnant or rest of the woman's seed which remained on the earth to suffer tribulation, but not martyrdom. It is stated that this grand group of the hundred forty-four were the redeemed from the earth – they represented the select company of martyrs, purchased by the blood of martyrdom, and having been redeemed from the earth they therefore belonged to heaven where they had been caught up unto God.

These redeemed thousands with the Lamb had his Father's name written in their foreheads in contrast with not having the mark of the beast in their hands and on their foreheads. It was their badge of identification and mark of distinction. The number hundred forty-four thousand was based on the mathematical calculation of twelve times twelve, as a symbolic reference to the twelve patriarchs of the old dispensation and the twelve apostles of the new covenant, and the number signified the full number of martyred saints.

Here again the proleptic character of this chapter was applied, in that the full number of martyrs were visualized in the midst of rather than at the end of the scenes of death by martyrdom, which followed in the succeeding chapters. This chapter therefore abandoned the orderly succession of the events for the between scenes view of the final victory of the saints and judgment of the beasts.

Verse 2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps

– 14:2 The voice from heaven was in unison, and symbolized the same triumphant chorus of victory over the forces of the dragon, as in chapters eleven and twelve. The voice which John heard was as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder, and as the voice of harpers with their harps. It has been asserted that the reference to harps and harpers here justifies the employment of mechanical musical instrumentation in the worship of the church. **But a symbol never symbolizes itself, and a type cannot typify itself.** The scene is that of the spirits of the redeemed from the earth – and heaven is the home of the soul. What use could a redeemed spirit make of a material instrument? It is worse than folly—it is crass stupidity – to make a such literal application of figurative language. **The description is a comparison, indicated by the conjunctive adverb as.** The voice of unison in the vision was heard singing this new song of triumph before the throne of the Lamb. In the perfection of rhythm it was us the flowing of many waters; in the mighty volume it was as the peal of great thunders; in the sweetness of melody, it was as if it were attuned to strings of an hundred and forty-four thousand harps. **The Greek text has the same adverb as with the harpers as with the waters and thunders – as harpers harping with their harps.** It was the song of the myriad thousand, which no man could learn – which only the redeemed chorus could sing; it was not a song of worship on earth, but a refrain of triumph known only to the select company of martyrs & which belonged only to the throng before the throne. It was beyond all human imagination and/or contemplation.

Verse 4-5 These are they which were not defiled with women, for they are virgins which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, these were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God . . . in their mouth no guile . . . without fault before the throne of God—14:4-5. These verses were a further **description of this group of redeemed martyrs, of their spiritual purity while they dwelt among men,** before they were caught up unto God. Their virtues were extolled for purpose of impressing the church members in midst of pagan influences and surroundings. Though these martyred saints were in the visional sphere of glory in the triumph of the persecuted cause – their character on the earth before they ascended unto God was an exemplification of the spiritual purity which should be maintained by all who remained under the evil influences of pagan surroundings in the world. There is no distinction in character between the saints in heaven and the saints on earth.

Verse 6 (2) The three angels of judgment

–14:6-12. And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, kindred, and tongue, and people

–14:6. This angel of proclamation symbolized the evangelism of the world with the gospel, and was paralleled with the angels of Matthew 24:31, who were to be sent "to gather his elect from the four winds of the earth," after destruction of Jerusalem. The message of the everlasting gospel of this Revelation angel was the same gospel of the kingdom of Matthew 24:14; Matthew 24:31- which was preached by the angels who gathered the elect from one end of heaven to the other, after the destruction of Jerusalem. These angels of Revelation, as of Matthew twenty-four, symbolized gospel emissaries, and both passages (Matthew 24:31 and Revelation 14:6) referred to the universal expansion of Christianity which followed the downfall of Judaism. **The end mentioned in Matthew 24:14 – "and then shall the end come" – undoubtedly had reference to the end of the Jewish state and the termination of the period of the persecution by the rulers of Rome and Judea.** The visions of Revelation are again seen to be an extension of the Lord's abbreviated account of the same events in Matthew the twenty-fourth chapter, both of which were the delineations of the war against the Jews, the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, and of the terrible tribulation which the churches sustained and survived. The evangelistic angel of verse 6 had the everlasting gospel to preach . . . to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, while the angels of Matthew 24:31 were sent to gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. The events were the same, the angels were same, their evangelistic mission & gospel message were same,

the symbolism was the same and the period the visions covered was the same – the time of trial and tribulation of the churches during the war against Jerusalem, with all of the events connected with its downfall and the subsequent persecution of the church. The apocalypticist here envisions the immediate post-persecution unrestrained proclamation of the gospel. The angelic evangel was seen flying "in the midst of heaven" – that is, in the domain of the civil governments and political authorities that had waged the persecution against the church. But the persecutors were seen as having been defeated and the period of persecution as having ended, and the angel emissary was seen heralding the everlasting gospel to the people of the whole Roman world. It was the gospel which imperial power could not destroy, which had survived bloodshed and martyrdom—the everlasting and universal gospel then to be preached "unto them that dwell on the earth" (Judea and Palestine), where the saints had been killed, and "to every nation, kindred, and tongue, and people" (the whole region of the persecuting powers). It is the same universal, indestructible, everlasting gospel today.

Verse 7 - - Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come— 14:7. The loud proclamation of this angel was a strong expression of the truth that the gospel has a message of fear and condemnation as well as of joy and salvation. The message of the evangelistic angel is concluded with the exhortation to worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. These words declare that God is over every realm of the activities of the two beasts – the emperor and his satellite rulers—and that all should acknowledge and worship him.

Verse 8 - - And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication— 14:8. The second angel of this vision was the angel of doom—signifying the message of doom on Babylon—which here referred to apostate Jerusalem – and the eminent fall of the once holy city. In chapter 11 verse 8 Apostate Jerusalem was designated spiritually as Egypt and Sodom to symbolize her state of apostasy. The reference to Jerusalem was made indisputable by the identifying phrase "where also our Lord was crucified." The prophet Isaiah referred to Apostate Jerusalem as "the faithful city become a harlot - it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers." (Isaiah 1:21) The Lord's lament over the spiritual desolation of Jerusalem is recorded in Matthew 23:34-37, climaxed with the impassioned appeal: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." **The name Babylon had come to symbolize the ultimate in corruption, and the fallen Babylon of verse 8 is figurative of the spiritual degradation of Jerusalem—"the faithful city turned harlot,"**

and "which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where our Lord was crucified." The City of Rome was never a faithful city" to "turn harlot," but these phrases are a fitting description of Jerusalem before & during the time of Christ. The fornication of verse 8 compares with use of the same term in reference to Israel's unfaithfulness to God in their Old Testament history. The wine of the wrath of her fornication denoted the drunkenness of spiritual idolatry resulting from the wine of wrath, the evil deeds of which called down the condemnation of God which brought the end in the destruction of the city and its temple.

Verse 9 - - And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his Mark...

-14:9. The third angel of this apocalypse was the angel of judgment – the symbol of solemn warning against the worship of the beast, and receiving his mark. As has been previously shown the beast of the land (in Palestine) obeyed the beast of the sea (Roman emperor) and caused all the people to worship the Roman emperor whose image was the object of idolatry. This image worship was the mark of the beast. Having this mark inscribed in the forehead or in the hand was symbolic of its binding power, an inviolable oath of allegiance. This particular announcement of the angel isn't a pronouncement of judgment on the beasts, but rather a warning against the beast worship & the condemnation that would come to all everywhere who thereby received his mark.

Verse 10 - - The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone

- 14:10. The strong fermentation of wine used for liquors was very often made more savory and agreeable to the taste by additives of certain spices or ingredients. But the wine of the wrath of God upon the idolaters of the imperial image worship would be poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation & the wrath of God then unmingled with clemency and without mitigation would be their condemnation. The worshipers of the imperial beast would share the same judgment pronounced upon him. The elements of the torment meted out to idolatrous worshipers of the beast was figuratively described as fire and brimstone. The inflammable mineral known in that day as brimstone had sulphuric content & when burning emitted a suffocating smell. It was used to describe the torment of the wicked – symbolic of the ultimate degree of remorse and anguish.

Verse 11 - - The smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name

-14:11. The duration of the condemnation on the idolatrous worship of the Roman beast was expressed in these terms of equal fear in the fateful words of this text. The phrase forever and ever always meant endless. The single term forever may refer to a period of time—and though it must include all of the period to which it refers, it is limited to the duration of that period. On the other side of time, in eternity, there will be no time limitations; therefore, the words forever and everlasting and eternal (all from the same Greek term *aionious*) when used in reference to a reward or a punishment beyond this life must denote that which is without end. But when ever and ever are joined together in forever and ever, there is never a modification – it always means endless. Therefore, doctrinally, respecting the duration of the future punishment of the wicked, these verses carry no intimation of any limitation. Not only so—there is no cessation: and they have no rest day nor night—that is, no recess from torment, no release from punishment. The torment of the revelation beast was to be interminable and without intermission.

Verse 12 - - The beatitudes of the martyrs

- 14:12. The apocalyptist deviates here from warnings and judgements to speak encouraging words to the beleaguered saints in need of heartening encouragement. The statement here is the patience of the saints means that the existing conditions presented the opportunity to exhibit patience even unto death. In contrast with the mark of the beast received by the disloyal, they would have the distinguished mark of the saints in sustained & persistent faithfulness during the continuing persecution. The refusal to worship the beast (the Roman emperor), or his image (wheresoever it appeared or on whatsoever it should be inscribed) exemplified the faithfulness couched in the words they that keep the commandments of God and faith of Jesus.

Verse 13 - - And I heard a voice from heaven- saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them

-14:13. **This passage has been truly named the beatitude of Revelation.** It appears to have an identification with chapter 20:6: "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power."

Both passages referred to the martyrs – and here again the proleptic element of chapter fourteen is seen in verse thirteen, as the scene depicted was ahead of the orderly developments of the apocalypse; in that this benediction on the death of the martyrs belongs chronologically at the end; and was therefore a prolepsis with the other events of chapter fourteen. There is a remarkable variation in the form of address in verse thirteen. Instead of the usual form of seeing the vision of events, John was represented in this verse as hearing a command. The commanding voice said, Write. It was a special voice giving an order, not by way of a vision, but by a direct command to write it down. As stated, this verse along with Revelation 20:6 was a martyr scene: "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth" – meaning from then on in martyrdom. They belonged to the martyred group – the aggregate of the man-child "caught up unto God"; the hundred forty-four thousand "redeemed from the earth." They were the dead who had died in the Lord - in the cause for which they were martyrs. The beatitude of the Spirit was: That they may rest from their labors – that is, from the travail of persecution –and their works do follow them. There was a descriptive distinction here in their labors and their works. The labors referred to the parturition of birth–the travail, the pain, of bringing forth the man-child; hence, labors had reference to the rigors of the persecution unto death, or martyrdom. The works referred to their righteous acts in the midst of the period of torture and trial. These works, saith the Spirit ". . . do follow them." Their deeds of faith & fidelity in the unfaltering performance of their prime duty followed on after their martyrdom to abide with, comfort and encourage the rest of the seed – the remnant that remained on the earth–as though the martyrs by these righteous acts were yet among them. In that way one's righteous lives and deeds yet follow on among men after they are transported from this earth on which we dwell. These blessed dead had been swept from the earth in martyrdom, dying in the cause of the Lord, and though they had been "caught up unto God" and "lived and reigned with Christ" in a state of victory, they nevertheless remained in the spirit of their works with those who were left on the earth to face the next stages of the violent drama of persecution. Since the subjects of the Spirit's beatitude were represented as having died in the Lord, manifestly the object of the beatitude was to strengthen, encourage and uphold the living in their darkest hour. In that way it may be appropriately applied to the church today. Loyalty to Christ in any generation requires the full measure of the martyr spirit of courage and endurance, and martyrdom in its worst does not always result in immediate death. We may all possess the soul of a martyr, and in that spirit we live in the Lord, as the blessed dead had died in Him.

Verse 14 - - (4) The harvest of grain and vintage

–14:14-20. From the beatitude of the blessed dead in verse 13, the apocalypse turns to symbols of reward and retribution respectively for the living in the earth. As before repeated, the earth in Revelation imagery referred to the land of which Jerusalem was the center–Judea and all of Palestine, the scene of these visions of the persecuted church. The harvest of the grain symbolized the rich reward for the faithful still living in the church; the vintage of grapes signified retribution of the wrath of God for the enemies of the church. Indulging here in repetition, it is necessary to keep in perspective the fact that this fourteenth chapter is a prolepsis–an interposition between parts of the apocalypse, relating events out of sequence, on the order of reading the last chapter of a novel first to see how the story ends.

This latter part of chapter fourteen envisioned scenes at the end of the apocalypse of the compensations of reward for the faithfulness of the saints in symbols of reaping the harvest of grain; then the retribution of wrath for the oppressors of the church represented by casting the vintage of grapes into the winepress. With these essential considerations in mind, the latter part of this chapter may be epitomized as follows: 1. The Son of man on the white cloud was Jesus Christ. He alone is called by that title in Revelation–and in one other place only, in the vision of the golden candlesticks of chapter 1:13. The white cloud of this chapter was the same symbol as was mentioned by the Lord himself in Matthew 24:30 : "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power & great glory." It identifies the Revelation symbol with the Lord's description of the destruction of Jerusalem. The passage in Matthew 24:1-51 states that "all the tribes of the earth shall mourn," which is parallel with Revelation 1:7: "Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him: and all the tribes of the earth shall wail (mourn) because of him." As mentioned in the comments on this verse in chapter 1, the passages had reference to the destruction of Jerusalem and the mourning of all Jewish tribes & families all over the world, because of that calamity which had befallen their city and their state in the destruction and desolation of Jerusalem. There is a further parallel between the vision of chapters 6:2 and 14:14. Christ was the Rider of the white horse vision of chapter 6, and He was the Reaper of the white cloud vision of chapter 14–both visions being the scenes of triumphant procedure, picturing the conquering of the imperial persecutor and his minions. The Son of man had in his hand a golden crown–the symbol of the highest royalty, identifying him as the King of heaven, above all potentates of the earth, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. He had in his hand a sharp sickle –the symbol of reaping. The one sitting on the white cloud had come to reap the harvest of the earth–meaning Jerusalem and Judea.

Verse 15-16 2. The Son of man employs the ministry of angels to execute his will. One angel came out of the temple and signaled to the One on the cloud to thrust in thy sickle and reap. This was not an order from a superior voice, but the signal for the reaping to begin. It was significant that this angel came out of the temple which symbolizes the sanctuary that had been the object of destruction and desecration in the war against the Jews, which resulted in the fall of Jerusalem. The voice of the angel proclaimed: the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. (Verse 15) This angelic pronouncement signified that events had approached the end – not the end of time - but the end of Jerusalem, of the Jewish state, and of Judaism & this doom was signified in the declaration: The earth was reaped–14:16.

Verse 17 Another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sickle in his hand

–14:17. There was a distinction between the two angels and the two temples; the first angel came out of the temple which symbolized the sanctuary of the Jews, and was a proclaimer, having no sickle in his hand; the second angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, the abode of God, with sickle in hand, symbolizing a minister with power to execute judgment.

Verse 18 - - A third angel came out from the altar saying to the angel that had the sickle: Thrust in thy sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe

–14:18. This angel from the altar undoubtedly signified the answer to the cry of the martyrs under the altar of Chapter 6:9-10: "How long, O Lord, how long, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" The Lord replied that "they should rest (wait) yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed where they were, should be fulfilled." Now, the vision of these angels in chapter 14, sees the role of the martyrs in the visions completed and finished. The angel from the altar was seen answering the souls under the altar (chapter 6:9-10), and he made an announcement to the angel with the sickle that time had come to avenge the martyrs. With these signals the Son of man reaped the earth of its harvest of grain, and his ministering angel gathered the vintage of grapes. Here was a double vision: the harvesting of grain and the gathering of vintage. With the double vision there was the double instrument of reaping & pruning. It signified reward & retribution. The grain harvest represented the gathering of the faithful saints, and the vintage of grapes the crushing of their wicked oppressors. The symbols are comparable to the Lord's illustration of the wheat and the chaff, to the extent of the imagery of reward and retribution.

Verse 19 - - 3. The angel of judgment gathered the clusters of the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

-14:19. This was the vision of the terrible wrath of God that would be administered to the persecutors of His people. The winepress of ancient time was an excavation in rock, formed in the ground, and lined with masonry, in which to crush the grapes. Another cavity was made in the proper place and shape to receive the juice. Such excavations are even yet to be found in Palestine and in Syria. The treading of the winepress was performed with the feet, the red juice of the grapes flowing like blood. The reference to it was the symbolic description of the war against Jerusalem.

Verse 20 - - And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came from the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six furlongs.

-14:20. This was a description of the Roman armies gathered outside the city as God's agents of retribution against Judah and Jerusalem for their apostasies. The context presents a dual vision. First, the two beasts of the sea and of the land were symbolic of the combined effort of Roman and minion persecutors to destroy the church. These two persecutors were the objects of divine indignation in this vision of the great winepress of the wrath of God.

Second, the fallen Babylon of verse 8 was Jerusalem—the faithful city turned harlot. The symbolic description of these scenes envisioned the terrible war fought against Jerusalem, when the Roman armies gathered outside the city to tread Jerusalem as the winepress. The blood that came out of the winepress even unto the horse bridles signified the horrible slaughter, as though the battle horses waded in blood to their bridles. This was the vivid apocalyptic hyperbole of wrath so great and terrible that was administered to Judah and Jerusalem by the Romans in the Jewish war.

In the closing scene of this chapter the great winepress of the wrath of God would envelop the entire land of the Jews—the whole of Palestine. The last phrase of 14:20 declares that the winepress was trodden without the city by the space of a thousand and six furlongs. Mathematically computed that distance was the approximate length of the land of Palestine, and it was symbolic of the deluge of blood over the whole land during the siege of Jerusalem, and the war against the Jews, which ended with destruction of the city, the demolition of the temple, the downfall of Judaism and the final end of the Jewish state. It was the fearful vision of the inevitable and inexorable judgment of God against an incorrigible nation.

Revelation Chapter 15

- The scene in heaven.
- The Prelude to the Bowl Judgments



And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. (Revelation 15:1)



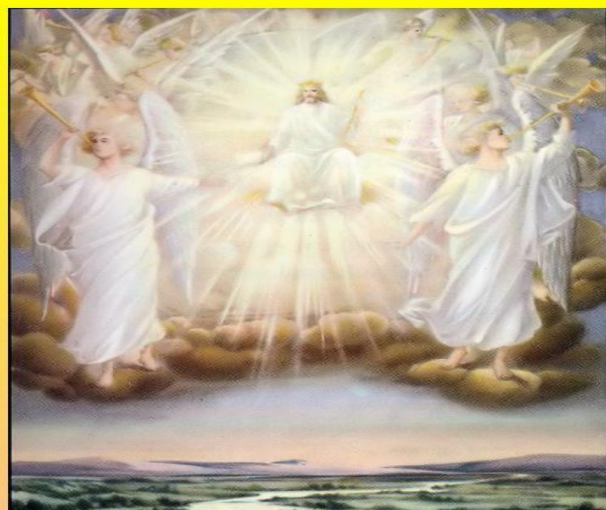
And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, *and* over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. (Revelation 15:2)

And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous *are* thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true *are* thy ways, thou King of saints. (Revelation 15:3)



Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for *thou only art* holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest. (Revelation 15:4)

And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. (Revelation 15:5-6)



Universal Church on Earth and in Heaven

Reference	Location	Description	Identification
6:9-11	Heaven (under altar)	Martyred souls crying for vengeance	Wearing white robes
7:1-8	Earth	144,000 from tribes of Israel	Seal on foreheads, called servants
7:9-14	Heaven (before throne)	Great multitude from every nation, tribe, and language worship and serve	Wearing white robes and holding palm branches, out of Great Tribulation
11:1-2	Earth	John to measure temple and altar	Worshipers while outer court trampled for 42 months
11:3-12	Earth/heaven	Two witnesses/prophets killed by Beast but taken up in cloud	Prophecy 1,260 days in sackcloth
12:10-12	Heaven	Martyrs rejoice because hurled down	Victorious through blood of the Lamb and word of their testimony
13:7-10	Earth	Beast conquers saints	Some imprisoned or killed by the sword
14:1-5	Heaven (Mount Zion)	144,000 sing new song before the throne	Name of Lamb and Father on their foreheads, virgins, firstfruits, not liars, blameless
15:2-4	Heaven (sea of glass)	Victors sing song of Moses and Lamb	Hold harps, victorious over Beast, his image, and his number

16:5-7	Heaven (from altar)	Voices acclaim justice of God's bowland judgments	Blood shed by saints prophets avenged by God's wrath
19:1-3	Heaven	Great multitude shouting "Hallelujah"	Blood shed by servants avenged by Babylon's destruction
19:6-9	Heaven	Great multitude heralds arrival of wedding supper of Lamb	Saints dressed in fine linen, bright and clean
19:11-21	Heaven/earth	Armies follow Rider into battle against Beast and kings	Riding white horses, dressed in fine linen
20:4-6	Heaven	Souls of beheaded come to life and reign for 1,000 years in first resurrection	Seated on thrones, held to testimony of Jesus and word of God, without Beast's mark on forehead or hand
20:9	Earth	Camp/city surrounded by Satan and his followers	Saints/city who are loved
21:1-4	New heaven/new earth	Holy City, New Jerusalem descending from God	Dressed as bride; people of God never again to experience death, mourning, crying, or pain
21:9-20	New heaven/new earth	Bride, wife of Lamb revealed	Holy City, Jerusalem descending from God and shining with God's glory as precious stones ¹⁶

¹⁶ Wilson, M. (2007). *Charts on the Book of Revelation: Literary, Historical, and Theological Perspectives* (pp. 67-68). Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional.

Comfort for the Saints (Revelation 15)

Let's call to mind that in Revelation 6:10, the saints asked God how long it would be before He avenged the blood of the slain saints shed by their oppressors. Here they are told that it is now time for the punishment due for the suffering brought about by the dragon and his allies. The forces of heaven are given the directive to implement the wrath of God upon the enemies of righteousness. Those who are still alive are given a picture of the triumphant martyrs who, having died in the religious and secular persecution, yet had kept their faith and endured to the end. The assurance to the oppressed is that if they too shall overcome they also shall receive the crown of life. It is as if the fallen martyrs are cheering their earthly brethren on to victory.

It is significant that once again, the saints are being exhorted to keep the faith. Don't give in, don't give up, because the God of all creation is aware, still in control, angry with the beast(s) and is about to step in and set things right. The cruel oppressors are about to face the wrath of God. In the end, secular forces of the Roman State together with the religious influence of the Roman Emperor Cults joined maliciously with the church/state theocratic powers of the Jerusalem Temple in common interest against the early Christian Movement - in an all-encompassing persecution of individual Christians at every angle of their daily life - each of these enemies will turn against the other - eventually eliminating any future threat to the Gospel's Global Expansion. As powerful as they now appear, they will succumb and the faithful saints of God emerge victorious. "*What then shall we say to these things? If God (is) for us, who (is) against us?*" (Romans 8:31). (ASV)

Revelation 15:1

And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having seven plagues, (which are) the last, for in them is finished the wrath of God. (ASV)

John saw a great and marvelous sign in heaven. There were seven angels with seven plagues to dispense on the earth. The number seven in the Hebrew Numerology represented completeness to the people of that era. This would suggest that John's vision previews the complete wrath of God which is to be directed toward the unrighteous. Biblical history is replete with examples of God's punishment upon the unrighteous. Sodom and Gomorrah, Egypt, Babylon, Assyria and many others suffered defeat at the direction of God due to their rebellion. **These judgments on earth pale to insignificance in the view of the judgment yet to come, when the eternal punishment of Hell shall be manifested upon them.**

Notice that the text refers to the "finished" wrath of God. This is no way means that the punishment of the unrepentant oppressors is over. God's eternal wrath will continue to be upon those outside of Christ, manifested in the eternal punishment of Hell. (Reference Revelation 14:10-11). This merely means that God's anger is complete and will be poured out onto the sources and forces of religious persecution until His purpose is fully executed.

Revelation 15:2

"And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and them that come off victorious from the beast, and from his image, and from the number of his name, standing by the sea of glass, having harps of God." (ASV)

This "sea of glass" was mentioned previously in Revelation 4:6, "And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind." The glass was mentioned in conjunction with the eyes of the living creatures and probably illustrates the transparency of everything to God who knows all things. (cf. 1 John 3:20) and sees all the works of man, (Job 34:21-22, Hebrews 4:13).

The sea represents a barrier between two points. A barrier from which turmoil and disaster can erupt suddenly and with little warning. Fire represents both the judgment of God and purification from sin. The "*sea of glass mingled with fire*" here would then seem to represent the all seeing eye of God, burning with the fire of the impending judgment. And standing there by this sea of glass are those who were "*victorious from the beast*", separated from God by the confines of their physical existence but still in fellowship with Him as Christians. Those who had rejected emperor worship and refused to accept the mark of the beast are there, ready to witness the coming fire. "*How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*" (Revelation 6:10). The time has come and all the faithful dead are there, looking on, encouraging their still living brethren and praising God. In revelation 21, the sea which stands between God and His children on earth is gone. The saved then stand in the actual presence of God in Heaven.

Let's pause and look at the "*harps of God*" in this context. The victorious are represented as standing beside the sea of glass which is mingled with fire and as having the harps of God. Many theological adventures have been made in order to literalize the "*harps of God*" in their futile attempt to legitimize the use of Manmade instruments of music in our worship today. The first problem with this is that if one is going to literalize the harps of God, one needs to look at literalizing the sea of glass mingled with literal fire too. The second problem with this that must be dealt with is that if there are literal harps of God in heaven, we can be assured they are not made by the fleshly hands of men. A third problem with this is that this vision is not one of the saints in the eternal bode of heaven, but rather, the vision is of the redeemed still on earth, the body of Christ.

Revelation 15:3

"And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are thy ways, thou King of the ages."

Moses and the Israelites sang a song of victorious deliverance over the Egyptian forces after they were destroyed in the Red Sea, (cf. Exodus 15:1-19). The Christians of the day, especially the Jewish Christians, would recognize this figurative representation of victory instantly. The song of the lamb is a figurative expression for the deliverance from the bondage of sin. Thus, the combined effect of both songs is a song of deliverance from both earthly oppression and the complete and utter deliverance and triumph over sin that is realized through Christ Jesus, the lamb. Moses' song of deliverance and Jesus' song of redemption are the ones only the redeemed who were "*purchased out of the earth*" can sing, (cf. Revelation 14:3).

Revelation 15:4

"Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify thy name?"

We will let the Bible comment on this beautiful verse.

Isaiah 45:23

"By myself have I sworn, the word is gone forth from my mouth (in) righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." See also Romans 14:11, Philippians 2:10-11.

Revelation 15:4 " *...for thou only art holy*"

1 Samuel 2:2

"There is none holy as Jehovah; For there is none besides thee, Neither is there any rock like our God."

Revelation 15:4 " *...for all the nations shall come and worship before thee;*"

Psalms 86:9

"All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and they shall glorify thy name."

Revelation 15:4 " *...for thy righteous acts have been made manifest."*

Revelation 15:5

"And after these things I saw, and the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:"

The word "*temple*" here is rendered from the Greek word "*naos*." This word alludes directly to the inner sanctuary of the Tabernacle, known as the Holy of Holies. Within this chamber of the tabernacle was kept the Ark of the Covenant which contained the tables of the law, called "the testimony." The image here is to the royal throne room of Heaven itself being opened up & what was about to come forth was coming forth from Jehovah Himself and will be supervised under His personal direction. God is angry and the doors of the inner sanctuary are thrown open to the view of John, thus revealing the gravity of God's intentions.

Revelation 15:6

"and there came out from the temple the seven angels that had the seven plagues, arrayed with (precious) stone, pure (and) bright, and girt about their breasts with golden girdles."

And there came out from the very holiness of God Himself, the plagues of judgment. Seven plagues carried by seven angels. As noted earlier, the number seven is representative of that which is complete. The seven seals in Revelation 5 and 6 reveal the wrath of God, seven trumpets announce and warn of the coming wrath of God, (Revelation 8), and the seven bowls execute the wrath of God. The doom of the City of Jerusalem and the Temple - the doom of the old religion is sealed. It will be methodically and absolutely trodden out under the feet of the Romans like treadingers pressing the juice out of grapes in a winepress.

The glorious array of the angels with their precious stones in golden girdles most likely signifies that these angels are coming forth from the presence of God almighty with a solemn mission to carry out; Adjectives "pure" and "bright" are representative of the purity and holiness of the judgments of wrath to come.

Revelation 15:7

"And one of the four living creatures gave unto the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever."

The four creatures here being the same ones mentioned in Revelation 4:6; 5:6-8; 5:14; 6:1-6; 7:11; 14:3, and later on in 19:4. The idea here being that in understanding the symbolism of John's Revelation, the figurative language is consistent and consideration of it all throughout can be used to help unravel the mysteries of this book.

The wrath of God Almighty's judgment is now given over to the angels for implementation. The plan is complete, God's will on the matter is settled. The time has come. The blood of the martyrs, just like the blood of Cain's brother Abel, is crying out from the ground, (cf. Genesis 4:10), and now the punishment has been dispatched to the angels for execution and is about to commence.

Revelation 15:8

"And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and none was able to enter into the temple, until the seven plagues of the seven angels should be finished."

The temple here is still indicative of the Holy of Holies. Looking at this from the view of the oppressed Christians, it is probable that the smoke is representative of God's anger. However, this is not always the case in the Old Testament. For example, Mt. Sinai in its entirety smoked and quaked from the presence of God when he descended to speak with Moses. The smoke could possibly be representative of God in action. Either view or both of literal and/or figurative interpretation is consistent with the theme of the scene being described by John.

None were able to enter into the temple until all was finished. There will be no intercessions. There will be no distractions. The execution of God's wrath on the Jewish Capitol is of a paramount priority, under personal supervision of God - Sitting On His Throne - the throne room itself thrown open wide for His view.

What a picture of comfort this must be to the living saints. God is in control. The oppressed Christians can't buy, they can't sell, they can't participate in any kind of transaction whatsoever. Their friends and families have been turned over to the state, tortured, maimed, sold into slavery and killed. They worship God in fear of their lives every day, often assembling in secret places out of the public eye. Since the Fire of Rome they have seen their brethren rounded up and fed to beasts in the Roman games for the enjoyment of the citizens of Rome. They have seen their brethren hung on posts in the street, doused with oil and lit aflame to serve as street lamps. They have seen their properties seized and their children abused. They have been regularly mistreated and routinely ostracized by the general populace who hate them and blame them for everything bad that happens. This message of divine intervention could not come at a better time. God is about to put a stop to this and nothing is going to stand in His way or detract Him from this mission.

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Foy Wallace's Interpretation of Chapter Fifteen From His Commentary:

VI. THE SEVEN ANGELS WITH THE LAST PLAGUES (Chapter 15)

With this chapter the successive order of the visional events were resumed, as connected with the end of chapter thirteen, where the prolepsis of chapter fourteen had broken the continuity of the visions by projecting the symbols into the final scenes of the judgments of God executed against the apostate city and the oppressors of the saints. In order to re-establish connection between chapters thirteen and fifteen, observe again that the first beast (of the sea) symbolized the Roman empire, personified in the ruling emperor; and the second beast (of the land) symbolized his Palestinian minions who compelled the inhabitants of Palestine to worship the image of the imperial beast, and caused all who refused to thus receive the mark of the imperial image-worship to be killed. In the course of these visional events the faithful saints were slain, and chapter thirteen ended with the full and complete roll of the martyred saints. The interposed prolepsis of chapter fourteen introduced a vision of the whole martyred number, symbolized by an hundred forty-four thousand "redeemed from the earth," and the visions were projected beyond the intervening chapters to the end. That chapter (14) therefore must be studied as an interlude preview of the final consummation of all events. But chapter fifteen reverted to the vision of events in the order of the sequence and succession that was interrupted at the end of chapter thirteen, thus reestablishing the orderly connection.

The contents of chapter fifteen may now be arranged as follows: (1) The sign of the seven angels–15:1-2. (2) The song of Moses and the Lamb–15:3-4. (3) The temple of the tabernacle of the testimony– 15:5-8.

Verse 1 (1) The sign of the seven angels

–15:1-2. 1. And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues: for in them is filled up the wrath of God

–15:1. The "sign in heaven" carried the same import as observed in previous comments on other visions and in the Lord's own preview of the destruction of Jerusalem in Matthew 24:31. What was here envisioned in heaven (the sphere of authorities) was carried out on earth (among the inhabitants of Palestine) with special reference to Judah and Jerusalem. The seven angels with the seven vials and plagues formed a visional recapitulation of the seven seals and trumpets of the first series of visions–the difference existed in the central figures of the visions. The first series surrounded Christ, the Lamb; the second series surrounded the church, his Bride. The second series, though repetitive, was also a progressive development of the events in an enlargement of judicial punishments inflicted on the empire-beast. The seven plagues in the hands of the seven angels were contained in seven vials, as mentioned in verse 7, and this chapter had the effect of an introduction to the pouring out of the plagues contained in the vials of the following chapter.

In reference to the seven vials, verse 1 stated that in them is filled up the wrath of God, which indicated the fulfillment of time. The function of the seven angels therefore was to execute the seven plagues in the series of cosmic woes to be poured out on the earth–the land of the Jews. The visions of these final plagues, or woes, anticipated the overthrow of apostate Jerusalem, referred to previously as the fall of the harlot Babylon. Later, the same seven angels were seen showing to John the new Jerusalem emerging as the spiritual Jerusalem in contrast with the old apostate Jerusalem.

Verse 2 - - 2. And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

–15:2. Here was the vision of a crystal sea, with the transparency of glass, signifying that the impending events were soon to be manifest. The mingling of fire in the crystal denoted the consuming judgment of God soon to descend upon the beast and his minions. Standing on the crystal sea were the host of martyrs "that had gotten victory over the beast, and over his image, and over the number of his name . . .

. . . having the harps of God," and they sang "the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb." The reference to the song of Moses indicated that the elements of this vision were formed from the deliverance of Israel and were a comparison with the Red Sea, which swallowed up Pharaoh and his hosts. The saints had "gotten victory" over the emperor-beast as Israel was victorious over Pharaoh; and as Israel sang the triumphant "song of Moses" standing by the sea; so, these saints also, standing on the sea, sang "the song of Moses and the Lamb."

It was Pharaoh there, and the emperor here; the victorious Israelites there, the triumphant saints here; it was oppressed Israel delivered from Egypt there, the persecuted saints "redeemed from the earth." The reference to the Egyptian Pharaoh in comparison with the Roman emperor was made clear by the mention of "the song of Moses, the servant of God" and "them that had gotten victory over the beast, over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name"—the language identifies Pharaoh Rameses and Nero Caesar.

The mention of the victorious host having the harps of God, as in chapter fourteen, could not be literal any more than the angels and martyred saints could be physical. The harps here, as in preceding visions, were the symbol of the perfect melodious harmony of the grand symphony of redeemed voices singing. "the song of Moses and the Lamb" in exultant victory, standing on the crystal sea; as Israel in the exodus sang "the song of Moses," standing by the sea. The analogy drawn enforced the relation between the oppression and deliverance of Israel in the Old Testament, and the persecution and victory of the church in the New Testament. The symbols and apocalypses were parallel, and must be so applied. Otherwise, the New Testament history of the early oppressions of the church loses force, and, the visions lose meaning, the symbols become enigmatic, the entire book becomes a dilemma, and its apocalyptic events anachronistic.

Verse 3 (2) The song of Moses and the Lamb

-15:3-4. 1. Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints!

-15:3. The song of Moses had long been incorporated in the temple services, which the temple worshippers sang in choruses. This visional victory song of the saints, as previously stated, was patterned after the Old Testament exodus song of Moses, led by Miriam; but here the phrase and the Lamb was added—the song of Moses and the Lamb. The rhetoric of the song enhances the supreme excellence and glory of the object of its praise—the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb of God.

The eulogies of the song are sublime, as should be all prayer to God. The supreme title Lord God Almighty expressed omnipotence; the tribute great and marvellous was exclamatory of matchless majesty; the attributes just and true, were the acknowledgment of submission to His righteous judgment; the coronation name, thou King of saints, included the saints of all ages, hence has been variously translated thou King of the ages; and it ascribed to Him eternal existence and the Sovereign of all saints, through whose power they were freed from the dominion of the imperial beast.

Verse 4 - - 2. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee, for thy judgments are made manifest.

-15:4. The interrogation, "Who shall not fear thee?" was expressive of complete and unalloyed adoration, short of the late irreverent familiarity. The refrain thou only art holy was the superlative holiness inherent only in God. The declaration all nations shall come and worship before thee was promissory of liberation from Roman image idolatry and the freedom of all men to worship God. The judicial declaration for thy judgments are manifest had reference to the meeting out of retributive justice to the oppressors of the saints. The song is a combination of many triumphant expressions of Old Testament psalmody of praise and adoration pertaining to Israel's deliverance from enemy nations and lord of dominion, and again represents a parallel of apocalypses of Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church.

Verse 5 (3) The temple of the tabernacle of the testimony

-15:5-8. 1. And after that I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony was open

-15:5. The phrase "after these things" referred to the things that occurred after the vision of the exultant song of triumph. The first part of this chapter served to announce the scene which was continued and completed in chapter sixteen. It was after these preliminary visions of the seven angels that the procession forming the final events began. The reference to the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was in comparison with the measuring of the temple in chapter eleven. The picture here portrayed was that of the temple transferred from Jerusalem to heaven and transformed from temporal to spiritual. The vision is based on all that the temple on mount Zion meant to the nation of Israel. "Who are the Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever" (Romans 9:4-5).

Thus, the tabernacle stood for the most precious things in old covenant history. It was appropriate for the seven angels with the vials of plagues to be poured out on the harlot Jerusalem, ready for destruction, to come from the transformed temple in heaven.

Verse 6 - - 2. And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles

-15:6. The attire of the seven angels for the execution of the plagues of judgment was described, as "clothed in pure and white linen" and as having "golden girdles." This linen was not ordinary cloth, but was represented in another figure as "arrayed with precious stone, pure and bright"—they were garments with the composition of solid precious jewels. The golden girdle was like that of the son of man in chapter one. It is the symbolism of the glory and power of the Lord himself, and it signified the unlimited exercise of power to execute the will of the Lamb and the judgments of God.

Verse 7 - - 3. And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth forever and ever

-15:7. The use of the article the before the four beasts indicated their identity with the creatures mentioned in chapter five. They should not be confused with the sea and land beasts, as applied to the persecutors. The word here has been properly translated creatures, or beings, as in chapter five, which called the signals for the horses and the riders in the visions of persecution. The vision of this chapter was the last scene in which the four beings appeared and it was an appropriate representation that these heavenly beings should act as the intermediaries between God and the seven angels of the vials in the role of this scene of plagues. They were special ministers of the Lamb to order the procession of events in imagery of the vials and the plagues.

Verse 8 - - 4. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled

-15:8. The vision of the cloud-filled temple filled with the smoke from the glory of God, and from his power was the symbol of the invisible presence of God. As recorded in Exodus 40:34 . . . none could enter the tabernacle during the manifestations of God's presence. So, in this vision no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled – that is, until the order of events resulting in the destruction of the old Jerusalem & old temple were finished.

After which the new Jerusalem, and the new temple would be open to all true worshipers; when the tabernacle of God with men would be accessible to all nations of men. But until this succession of events occurred the entrance of the temple was barred, and none could appear in intercession before God to avert the doom of destruction pronounced on Jerusalem, that once "faithful city turned harlot," and the fallen Babylon of apostasy.



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)
1. Blood (7:14-21)
9. Darkness (10:21-23)
8. Locusts (10:3-19)
9. Darkness (10:21-23)
2. Frogs (8:2-14)
7. Hail (9:18-34)
- Egyptians wail loudly because of loss of firstborn (12:30)
- Pharaoh hardens heart (7:22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 12, 34-35; 10:20, 27; 11:10)¹⁷

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)

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

¹⁷ Wilson, M. (2007). *Charts on the Book of Revelation: Literary, Historical, and Theological Perspectives* (p. 80). Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional.

JOHN'S OLIVET DISCOURSE

a look at the writings of John

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record in their gospels an event referred to as the Olivet Discourse (see Matt. 24, Luke 21, Mark 13), Jesus' longest recorded prophecy in the gospels. In it, Jesus declared the coming destruction of Jerusalem within a generation (forty years), which was fulfilled exactly by AD 70.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN does not include the Olivet Discourse

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are named the synoptic gospels because they are somewhat parallel eyewitness accounts of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In contrast, the gospel of John records many events that have no parallel in the synoptic gospels—for example, the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4 or the unpopular "eat my flesh, drink my blood" sermon in John 6. John's gospel is known as the more esoteric of the gospels, recording statements, sayings, encounters, and events that are much more mystical than the synoptic gospels; even a cursory reading makes this self-evident.



The Book of Revelation is John's version of the Olivet Discourse (Mark 13, Mt 24, Luke 21). Written in the AD 60's, it was much closer to fulfillment.

What the Book of Revelation says about the timing of its fulfillment

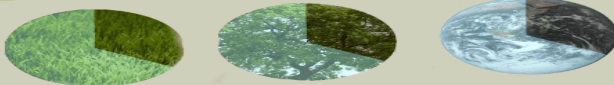


TIME TABLES

I am coming quickly (see Rev. 3:11)
 The third woe is coming quickly (see Rev. 11:14)
 The things which must shortly take place (Rev. 22:6)
 Behold, I am coming quickly (Rev. 22:7)
 For the time is near (see Rev. 22:10)
 Behold, I am coming quickly (see Rev. 22:12)
 Yes, I am coming quickly (see Rev. 22:20)

An important principle of biblical interpretation is stated by the scholar Gordon Fee, "A text cannot mean what it never could have meant to its author or his or her readers." In other words, we cannot simply look at the texts that say soon and conclude it couldn't be so because it was written two thousand years ago and we haven't identified anything in history that fits what we think it should look like! This should not be. Instead, we must diligently treat the text with respect. Our ignorance of history gives us no allowance for such a conclusion.

LOCAL EVENTS



For example, when Revelation writes about a third of the grass, a third of the trees, and a third of the earth (see Rev. 8), the modern reader imagines this on a global scale. Yet the original wording of the Greek manuscripts paints an extremely different picture.

"GE" VS "KOSMOS"

In the Greek, we must understand these two words regarding location.

"GE"



Used 67 times
 << in Revelation

"KOSMOS"



Used 3 times
 << in Revelation

(Rev 11:15; 13:8; 17:8)



"GE"

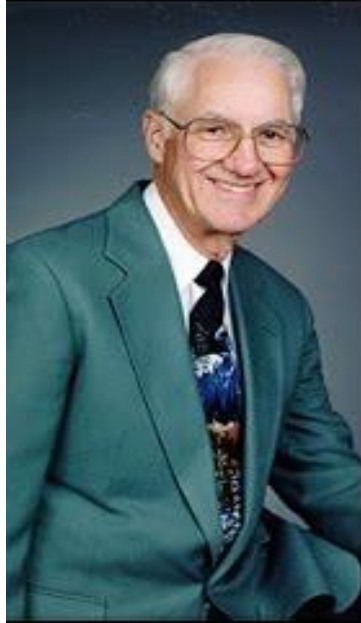
refers to a local inhabited civilization or the land of a particular nation.

"KOSMOS"

refers to the entire globe, the entirety of planet earth and the heavens.

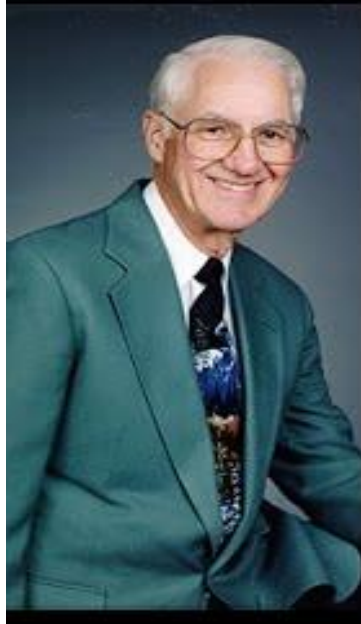
The apostle John often used this word, kosmos, in his other writings—a whopping fifty-seven times in his gospel and seventeen times in First John alone. Yet he chose not to use it in Revelation because he was not writing about a global event. This is an incredibly important point! From this simple study of these two words translated as "world," we see that the Book of Revelation was not written about a global catastrophe but a local catastrophe. The contents of the entire Book of Revelation refer to local (ge) events, not global (kosmos) events.

LET'S REVISIT/REVIEW - OGDEN VIDEO CLASSES - SECT. III



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REVELATION

16

7 ANGELS
WITH 7 PLAGUES IN
BOWLS
POURED OUT



ARTWORK FROM REVELATIONILLUSTRATED.COM

Source: The Book of Revelation by Foy E. Wallace

THE SEVEN VIALS OF WRATH (Chapter 16)

The visions of chapter sixteen carry the scenes of the execution of the seven plagues, and the pouring out of the woes, in the recapitulation of the events enfolded in the seven seals and trumpets of the first series, which ended with chapter eleven. The symbols of the plagues of this chapter envisioned the same successive and progressive developments of the events surrounding the war against the Jews and the destruction of Jerusalem; with additional visional scenes and intensified symbols of calamity and devastation; in the execution of the consuming judgment of God upon the beast, the false prophets, and the idolatrous worshipers of the imperial image.

The principle of the recapitulation of the first part of Revelation, from chapters one to eleven follows through this series. There was a consistent correspondence between the seals of the first series & vials of the second, but with the enlargement and intensification of the symbols of retributive judgment. An example of it was in the plague of sores-the subjects of the Roman beast received his mark by the worship of the imperial image, and God marked them in retribution with the noisome sores. The delineations of these penalties and punishments were concealed within visional folds, reserved for symbolic disclosure. The entire structure was metaphorical, which renders literalism impossible.

A preliminary survey of the chapter is essential to bringing the signs and symbols of the chapter into its apocalyptic focus.

THE SEVEN PLAGUES OF PENAL WOES (Chapter 16)

The introduction of an extensive excursus on the Destruction of Jerusalem, foretold in chapter fourteen of the prophecy of Zechariah, was the occasion for the interruption in the course of comments, and the reversed order of the verses in this chapter on the plagues and woes, the symbolic imagery of which reverts to a continuation of chapter sixteen.

There was a very certain continuity in the imagery of the first and second series of visions in the striking analogy between the seven trumpets of the first part and the seven vials of the second part – showing the symbolism of the same period and events in a recapitulation with an enlargement and intensification of the signs. For example, there was the darkening of the sun in the symbolism of the first part, but of intensified heat in the same symbolism of the second part. Both series were apocalypses of the crises of two cities—Jerusalem and Rome—one in siege and destruction, the other in political government and imperial authority, but they covered the same period of events. The object of the apocalypse was not the City of Rome, but the apostate and harlot Jerusalem. Rome was only collateral to the apocalyptic narrative as the power by which the symbolism was executed and accomplished. The affinity of events in the two series is apparent in the correspondence between the objects of the trumpets and the vials. The first vial like the first trumpet produced an effect upon the earth; the second alike caused an effect on the sea; the third in each symbol made bloody the fountains and the rivers; the fourth of both changed normal function of the sun; the fifth sign in each imagery operated on the seat of imperial power; the sixth in similarity dehydrated the Euphrates; and the seventh of both vial & trumpet transfused the air. All of these potent signs were descriptive of the order of events which was to remove the evil powers of Judaism & heathenism from the path of the church and clear the way for the expansion of the kingdom of God.

The teaching of both the old and new testaments concerning the kingdom of Christ is: that it contemplates the full length of time from his ascension to heaven after his resurrection to his descension from heaven at the end. "For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet" - 1st Cor. 15:25. The overthrow of Jerusalem and the temple was the final sign to the world that he was seated "on the right hand of power," as Jesus had declared in Matthew 26:64 to the high priest of the Jews; and as further announced to this Jewish official that he and his fellow officials of the Sanhedrin should thereafter see it. Me-thinks they did—at the destruction of their capital city and their national temple.

A comparison of the three reports clearly places the events in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the Jewish state. The two questions, as recorded by Matthew, read: "when shall these things be? and what are the signs of thy coming and the end of the world?" Mark's record says: "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?" Then Luke's record reads: "Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?" The answers of Jesus to these questions were the augurs of total destruction to the ears of men who had been taught that their temple and city would abide forever. Many of the figures of speech used in Matthew 24:1-51, in reference to the destruction of Jerusalem were used in Isaiah 13:1-22, in referring to the destruction of Babylon. Note Isaiah 13:10: "For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine." Similar language is used in reference to the destruction of Jerusalem, similar symbolic language was used. When it says that "the sun shall be darkened" and "the moon shall not give her light" and "the stars shall fall from heaven," people are wont to believe these expressions denote the second coming of Christ; but the same figures of speech were used in the Old Testament description of the destruction of Babylon, when Isaiah said of that event that the sun should be darkened and the moon should not give light. The reference is to the darkness that would settle over the Babylonian state in Isaiah 13:1-22, and the Jewish nation and the city of Jerusalem in Matthew 24:1-51. The language cannot be taken literally in either case, but as representing the end of the Babylonian nation and of the Jewish state. Therefore, Jesus disillusioned the disciples on both of their questions, showing them that he was prophesying the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the Jewish state, rather than of the second coming of Christ and the end of the world. When Matthew 24:1-51 is taken from millennialists, the argument for the imminent return of Christ based on signs of the times is destroyed.

The signs—verse by verse. 1. False teachers—verse 5. 2. Wars and rumors of wars—verse 6: "And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars."

Josephus verifies the fact that from every part of the empire wars followed in succession, and in waves of revolt, like the swells of the ocean, to the final dissolution of the empire. 3. **Famine and pestilence—verse 7: "For nations shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places."** In the days of Claudius Caesar, before the destruction of Jerusalem, there was an unparalleled famine—the greatest famine the world ever knew had occurred. The record of Matthew 24:1-51 is corroborated by the Spirit in Agabus, the prophet, as reported by Luke in Acts 11:28: "And there stood up one of them named Agabus & signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar." Again, F. Josephus testified that the famine actually occurred before destruction of Jerusalem, and the fulfillment is a matter of historical record. 4. **Earthquakes—verse 8: "All these are the beginning of sorrows."** That great earthquakes occurred during the reign of Nero is a historical fact, and the testimony of Jesus is added to that of Josephus of an unusual number of earthquakes occurring in various countries, before the destruction of Jerusalem. Many cities of Asia Minor were destroyed by earthquakes. 5. **Delivered to death—verse 9: "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all the nations for my name's sake."** Paul, Peter, and James, and James the Less were all put to death before the destruction of Jerusalem.

The end of the Jewish world—verse 14: "Then shall the end come." Here, at once, with one accord, the millennialist jumps to the conclusion that this "end" means the end of the world—"then shall the end come"—but the end of what? The end of Jerusalem; the destruction of the temple and the end of the Jewish state and the end of Judaism.

When they saw the sign of the standards and symbols of the Romans in the temple, they remembered that Jesus had warned them of that very thing, and at the news of the Roman approach they fled to Pella, the northern boundary of Perea.

It is a remarkable but historical fact that Cestius Gallius, the Roman general, for some unknown reason, retired when they first marched against the city, suspended the siege, ceased the attack and withdrew his armies for an interval of time after the Romans had occupied the temple, thus giving every believing Jew the opportunity to obey the Lord's specific instruction to flee the city. Josephus the eyewitness, himself an unbeliever, chronicles this fact, and admitted his inability to account for the cessation of the fighting at the time, after a siege had begun. Can we account for it? We can. The Lord was fighting against Jerusalem—Zechariah 14:2 : "For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city." It was the Lord besieging that city. God was bringing these things to pass against the Jewish state and nation. Therefore, the opportunity was offered for the disciples to escape the siege, as Jesus had forewarned, and the disciples took it. So - said Daniel; so - said Jesus; so - said Luke; so - said Josephus. And so it was – it was left for Titus, the Roman general, to execute the siege, after the faithful disciples had fled.

Verses 19-22: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since 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."

The eagles and the carcass—verses 27-28: "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together." "The coming" here refers to the approach of the Roman armies. The Jewish nation was the carcass which those Roman eagles were sent to devour. After the tribulation of these days – that is, after the things that occurred during the siege. The siege began August 10, A. D. 70, six hundred years after Nebuchadnezzar's siege and destruction of the first temple. All of the houses & underground chambers were filled with putrified corpses; famished people ate the flesh of human carcasses.

The signs in the heavens, the darkening sun and falling stars, refer to the falling of Jewish dignitaries, casting down of authorities and powers, long established, and signified the darkness that settled upon the Jewish state.

The sun of the Hebrew temple was darkened, the moon of the Jewish commonwealth was as blood, the stars of the Sanhedrin fell from their high seats of authority. Isaiah and Joel describe the ruin of both ancient Babylon & Jerusalem in similar description. (Isaiah 13:1-22; Joel 2:1-32).

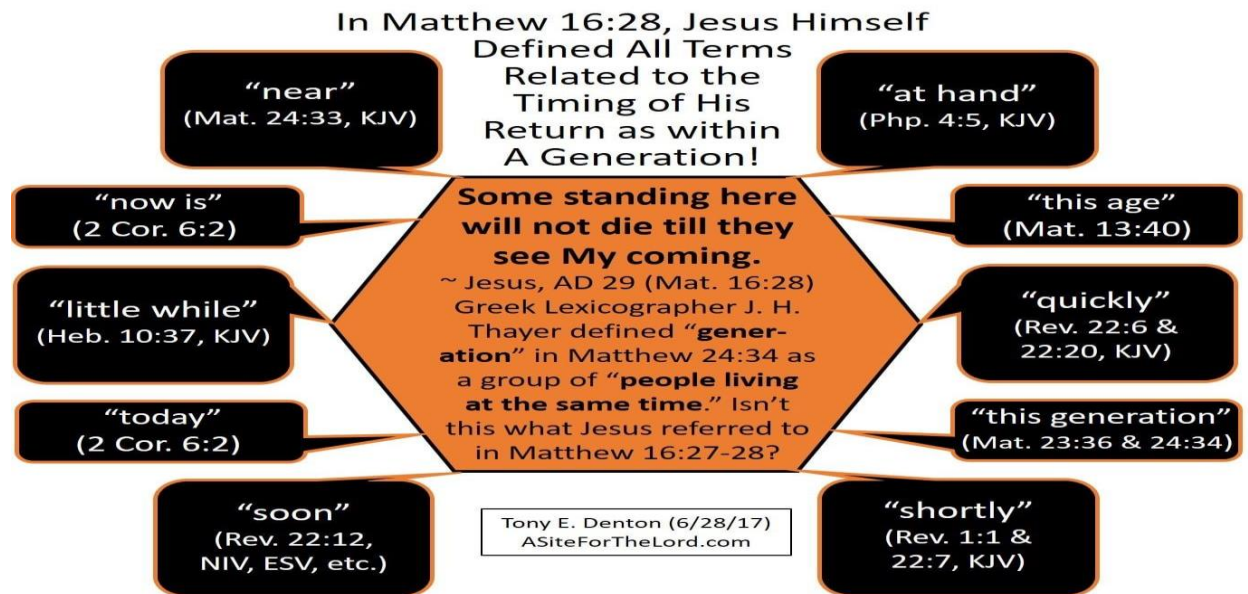
The coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven is not a reference to the second coming of Christ but to the coming foretold by Jesus to Caiaphas in Matthew 26:64: "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven." Jesus told Caiaphas that he would see it, he would be a living witness to this.

Sending forth his angels—verse 31: "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Here is the grand announcement of the world-wide success of the gospel, the universal expansion of Christianity after the destruction of Jerusalem. The angels of this verse were messengers, emissaries of the gospel. The gathering of the elect from the four winds meant that these messengers would carry the gospel to every nook and corner of the inhabited world. This is the history of what occurred. With the downfall of Judaism - the greatest foe of the church was removed, the path was cleared of the chief obstacle, resulting in the universal sweep of Christianity. The knowledge of God covered the earth as waters cover the sea. It is here that Luke's account says: "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (21:28). The providential means for the escape of the faithful was divinely prearranged and when they should see these things "begin to come to pass" they were told to "look up" & "lift up" their heads in full confidence that their redemption, their deliverance, was at hand. This redemption extended beyond the mere siege escape – it was a greater deliverance from the persecutions of the Jewish authorities and the oppositions of Judaism, brought to an end by the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Jewish state.

To say that the expression "it is near" refers to the end of the world, the end of time, or a "rapture" theory is contrary to the context of Matthew 24:1-51. When these signs appeared the Lord said, "Let them which are in Judea flee"-- and they did. "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh"-- and they did know it. If it meant the end of the world, why say "let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains"? And why say, "let not them that are in the country enter thereinto"--into Jerusalem? These sayings show clearly that the whole thing is a description of the destruction of Jerusalem. Reverting in verses 41 and 42 to these surroundings the Lord said that where two would be "in the field," or "grinding at the mill"--one would be taken and the other left--that is, the believing disciple would recognize the signs and take flight, while the unbelieving companion would remain and perish in the siege. The statement that all the tribes of the earth shall mourn, as has been previously explained, is a reference to the Jewish families scattered all over the Roman empire-- they would mourn the downfall of Jerusalem and the end of their Jewish commonwealth.

After having mentioned these signs, Jesus then said, "this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." Notice --"all these things"-- not some of them -- all of them would be fulfilled before that very generation passed. But we are told that "this generation" meant that race -- meaning only that the race of the Jews would not pass till all this was fulfilled. It's sheer nonsense to have Christ say that certain things would happen to the Jewish race, but the Jewish race would not pass away until what would happen to the Jewish race happened to it! No, Jesus said "this generation"-- the generation living then--would not pass "till all these things be fulfilled." The Lord's use of the same language after pronouncing the woes on the Pharisees in the previous chapter of Matthew shows clearly the reference was to their own time. There are nine woes that are pronounced upon these Jewish officials in Matthew 23:1-39, which are followed by verse 36: 'Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation.' Immediately following this statement is the pronouncement on Jerusalem in verse 37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," and the verdict of verse 38, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."

There is but one conclusion, and it is clear—all the woes of Matthew 23:1-39 and all the signs of Matthew 24:1-51 referred to that generation of time and span of life, and were all fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem, and immediately thereafter.



Verse 1 (1) A prologue to the plagues—16:1-14.

The voice of verse one is not that of an angel but of God himself. The seven angels were commanded to Go your ways—each had a special and separate work to perform, to pour out the vials of wrath. The seven vials corresponded with the cup of his indignation in 14:10, the contents of which were the components of the penal woes which were to descend on the subjects of God's wrath. It was during this period of divine wrath that no man was able to enter into the temple to appear in the presence of God for the prayer of intercession to avert destruction of old Jerusalem and the devastation of the old temple.

Verse 2 - 2. The subjects of the plagues were the adherents of the Roman empire in Palestine; and the judgments which commenced with verse two were commensurate with the Roman beasts and worshipers of his image who were the recipients of his mark. The significance of the seven plagues may now be summarized as follows: (1) The noisome sore upon the adherents of the imperial beast: "And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image"—16:2. The object of this plague was the people in Judea and other provinces of Palestine who had submitted to the imperial decree of the emperor of idolatry in the form of his image-worship, which was the mark of the beast. The effect of this plague was signified by a noxious malodorous sore, a stench in the nostrils, the symbol of the civic poison of idolatry; and it was grievous as a spiritual contagion, being inimical to the ultimate degree to Christianity. In this role the Roman emperor was the veritable embodiment of the antichrist of 1 John 2:18 and 1 John 4:3 and 2 John 1:7.

The mention of "the last time" by John in this connection was comparable to Paul's "present distress" 1 Corinthians 7:1-40, and similar allusions in other epistles in the same sort of reference to grievous times connected with the end of Jerusalem and of the Jewish state.

Verse 3 - 3. The plagues followed the pattern of the experiences of the Israelites in Egypt, as indicated in verses three through four; and Pharaoh Rameses, the oppressor of Israel, parallels Nero Caesar, the imperial persecutor of the church. It again presented the comparison of the Old Testament and New Testament people of God—Israel and the Church.

(2) The sea of dead blood which putrified the society of imperial idolatry: "And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea."—16:3. In accordance with the definitions of the symbols in the first section, the sea represented society in various descriptions- tossed and troubled, or placid and peaceful. Here the sea became as the blood of a dead man—signifying the complete dissolution of the emperor-beast and his subject.

(3) The conversion of the rivers and fountains of waters into blood: "And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood"

-16:4. The pollution of the fountains and streams of water resulted in epidemics of deadly disease. The sickening figure of total contamination of the water streams by the effluence of blood was symbolic of retribution for the blood of the martyrs. In chapter 6:10 the souls under the altar of martyrdom cried: How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge & avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? This plague symbol was the answer to the martyrs cry. It was the squaring of the account in this symbolic retribution of blood, the avenging of the martyrs. And verse six so declares: For they have shed the blood of the saints and prophets & thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. The statement "for they are worthy" means that they deserved the recompense of blood for the blood they had shed.

A similar pronouncement of judgment upon apostate Jerusalem was made by Jesus in Matthew 23:37: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chicks under her wings, and ye would not!" The plague meant that they were figuratively made to drink the blood which they had made to flow from the mass murder of the saints.

Verse 5 & 6 - - 4. Each apocalypse had a separate attending angel in the superintendence of the scene enacted, and each angel personified the vision he represented, as verses five to six exemplify, in the angels of waters of the sea, and of the altar of the martyrs; in each symbol the one represents the other.

Verse 7 - 5. The angel of the altar in verse seven reverted to the altar of martyrs in chapter 6:9-10 and was in the role of sending the judgment which the martyrs petitioned, and of satisfying their avenging cry.

(4) The smitten sun that scorched blasphemous men with fire: "And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire"

-16:8. This plague was the symbol of the punishment inflicted on the persecutors who had blasphemed God in the assumption of the powers and prerogatives of God by compelling worship of the emperor's image; and had thus branded the mark in the hands and on the foreheads of all who bowed in submission. This symbol portended the end of the activities of the emperor and his colleagues.

Verse 10 - 6. The power of the persecution was represented as broken in verse ten, when the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the throne of the beast—the seat of authority for action in Palestine, which came from the emperor. The kingdom of the beast was full of darkness in Palestine. The same metaphor was used by Isaiah (chapter 13:10) to describe the fall of ancient Babylon; and Jesus adopted the same figure of speech (Matthew 24:29) in foretelling the darkness that settled over the Jewish state in the fall of Jerusalem. The same use of the symbol was made here in verse ten.

(5) The vial of wrath poured upon the seat of the beast that darkened his kingdom: "And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain"

-16: 10. The king of the kingdom mentioned in this verse must be identified with the great red dragon of chapter 12:9, personified as the devil and Satan. The seat of the beast here was on the same principle of Satan's seat, or throne, in Pergamos; mentioned in chapter 2:13. It referred to his base of operations thru his imperial agents. His kingdom was darkened by the exposure of the deceptions of his lying wonders, which resulted in his ignominious end. Subjects of this Satanic beast, who repented not of their deeds of idolatrous worship of the emperor-image, by which they blasphemed the God of heaven, suffered the same consequences.

Verse 11 - 7. The realm of the persecutor's operations, by the wrath poured out of the vials, was subjected to the calamities narrated; and the minions of the emperor gnawed their tongues for pain—the symbol of retribution for the lies of deception and seduction their tongues had spoken; which was the method employed to brand the subjects of their deceit with the mark of emperor-worship. And in evidence of this entire allegiance to the beast-power verse 11 declared that these representatives of Rome blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

Verse 12 - 8. In the history of Israel the armies invading their lands had come from the river Euphrates, and that historical fact was used in verse twelve as the symbol of Judea being over-run from that quarter.

The drying of the river Euphrates that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared represented the removal of all barriers which hindered the progress of the powers to strike the final blow of the war against Judah and Jerusalem. It was related in symbolism to the feat of Cyrus in the military operation to divert the same river Euphrates for the capture of the old literal Babylon. This historical basis may be reasonably regarded as supplying the outline of this imagery.

(6) The smiting of the Euphrates which evaporated its waters: "And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared"

–16:12. It has been noted that the symbol of this verse was based on the history of Israel's enemies invading Judea from beyond the Euphrates in their western aggressions. The drying of the river by the pouring of the sixth vial symbolizes obliterating all deterrents to the hordes overrunning Judea and besieging Jerusalem. An allusion to the Israelites crossing over the emptied Jordan bed wasn't outside the imagery, in which application judgment was executed on the nation there victorious but here apostate.

The verses that follow from thirteen to sixteen describe the gathering armies for the final battle in overthrow of Jerusalem, with the spiritual overtones of the conflict between the forces of Judaism & heathenism on one side & the church on the other. The sixth plague was descriptive of the battle which destroyed this symbolic Babylon– the apostate harlot Jerusalem, causing great mourning for Jerusalem among the Jewish tribes everywhere.

Verse 13-14 - - 9. The incidents of verses thirteen and fourteen are an apocalypse of the prevailing conditions before and during the siege of Jerusalem – the symbolic description of the pervading influence of the seducers, deceivers, false prophets, and pseudo-signs, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect, as in Matthew 24:11-24, and verified in the histories of Josephus and Pliny.

These demoniac spirits of seduction which were like frogs came out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet. The frog has ever been a symbol of magical signs and that amphibious creature was here employed to signify the combined effort of the imperial minions to deceive and seduce the dwellers of Judea and Palestine. It was this same demoniac spirit of verse fourteen that inspired the kings of the earth (the provincial kings of Palestine) and of the whole world (the imperial rulers) to gather their armies for the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

All the evidence necessary to sustain the claim that this day of God referred to the destruction of Jerusalem is the comparison with the prophecy of Zechariah (chapter 14) on the destruction of Jerusalem. The chapter begins with reference to the day of the Lord, and the entire chapter was a description of the siege and devastation of the city and the employment of high metaphors of peace and blessing that followed. Zechariah Fourteen is almost universally utilized as "a second coming of Christ chapter" but it is a "destruction of Jerusalem chapter" instead. Verse 1: "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee." The symbolic "day of the Lord" here is the same expression precisely that is used in Isaiah 13:9 in reference to the destruction of Babylon.

If the destruction of Babylon could be called "the day of the Lord," why not the destruction of Jerusalem? Verse 2: "For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city." The historical accounts of the siege of Jerusalem by Josephus, Pliny, Horne and Clarke fulfill Zechariah's descriptions. Reference to "nations gathered for battle" is a description of besieged Jerusalem, the houses rifled and the women ravished. The same description is found in Isaiah 13:1-22, verses 15 and 16, concerning the fall & destruction of Babylon. The comparison is forceful. Verse 3: "Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle."

Factually, all the nations were represented in the Roman army, and God afterward fought against them by means of the Northern nations. Read Zechariah 9:14-15 : "And the Lord shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning; and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south. The Lord of hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling stones." The visitations are figurative, of course, but nevertheless significant of the fact that all the nations referred to "against" whom the Lord "fought" were destroyed . . . Verse 4: "And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south." The prophetic declaration that "his feet shall stand in that day on the mount of Olives which is before Jerusalem," does not refer to the second coming of Christ but rather to the siege of Jerusalem. Jesus Christ stood with his feet on the mount of Olives when he uttered the doom of the city. The Roman general stood on the mount of Olives when Jerusalem was besieged. The army legion's formations of the battle lines, entrenchments and redoubts, the circumvallations of the Romans, all enter into the graphic description & portrayal of the prophet that the mount should "cleave in the midst" and "toward the north" and "toward the south."

Zechariah 14 Verses 5-7: “. . . And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light." Obviously, these verses are metaphorical description of the mixture of divine mercy with justice. After the visitation there would be light—the diffusion of divine knowledge. This did follow the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Jewish state. Verses 8-9: "And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the Lord shall be King over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one." The only consistent application of this language is a spiritual fulfillment in the gospel of Christ and the church.

Who is ready to deny that the clause "in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one," refers to the present dispensation? There is one Lord, his name is one, and the Lord is "king over all the earth." It finds its fulfillment in the church of Christ where there is neither Jew nor Gentile, but all one in Christ, and one Lord over all. Verses 16-17: "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of the nations which came against Jerusalem, shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain."

If these verses are not figurative, if they are to be taken literally, then all nations and families must literally go up to Jerusalem and literally offer animal sacrifices and keep the Passover, restore Judaism with all of its literal ceremonies, for the fulfillment of that prophecy. That would be a complete re-establishment of old Judaism & everything characterizing it, all of which was taken away. But if these verses are not literal, then the application made of the whole chapter by the millennialists loses its force.

These last verses refer to the expansion of the blessings of the gospel dispensation after the destruction of Jerusalem. Upon all who received the gospel, its blessings descended as rain; but to those who rejected the gospel "upon them there was no rain" - being barred from its promises & privileges.

The simple truth is that as Isaiah 13:1-22 is a prophecy on the destruction of Babylon, Zechariah 14:1-21 is a prophecy on Jerusalem's destruction. It does not teach millennialism in "a sentence or a syllable."

Thus, the downfall of Babylon in Isaiah 13:1-22 & of Jerusalem in Zechariah 14:1-21, Matthew 24:1-51, and in Revelation were described with identical symbolism. The evidence's preponderant that the gathering for the battle of that great judgment day of God portended the overrunning of Judea and the onslaught against Jerusalem by the Roman armies.

(2) A parenthesis of beatitudes

-16:15. Among the portents of persecution and catastrophe of the apocalypse, there are to be found declarations of consummate bliss and blessedness in a series of beatitudes. [These apocalyptic beatitudes, seven in number, are referenced again in chapter 22 verse 14.] One of these scintillating assurances being mingled with ominous overtones is here in 16:15: "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."

These warning words of verse fifteen are the interposition of another parenthetical beatitude comparable to chapter 1:3 and 14:13. A blessing is pronounced on all that watch, for God would come in these events as a thief. The phrase as a thief does not indicate an element of surprise, but rather of preparedness. Jesus gave the signs of these events in Matthew 24:25: "Behold, I have told you before"; and in Verse 33, "so likewise ye, when he shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." This same event was the object of the Apostle Paul's exhortation to the Thessalonians in the first epistle chapter five, in reference to "the day of the Lord," saying they were "not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief"— that is, having knowledge of it, they would abide in preparation for the ominous events.

(3) The gathering forces of Armageddon

–16:16. The outpouring of the seventh vial into the air, verses sixteen and seventeen symbolized the sphere of life & influence in contradistinction with the earth as the place of nations, and with the heaven, which denoted the ruling authorities. In this context the great battle of Armageddon was envisioned: And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. The name Armageddon was derived from mount Megiddo, which was located in a valley now known as the plain of Esdraelon. It was the battlefield of nations in Jewish history.

It was in this valley of Megiddo that Deborah and Barak overthrew Sisera and annihilated the hosts of Midianite oppressors. (Judges 5:19) It was in "this valley of Jehoshaphat" where he triumphed over the ambushments of the combined armies of Ammon and Moab and "the fear of the Lord was on all the kingdoms of those countries, when they had heard that the Lord fought against the enemies of Israel." (2 Chronicles 20:22-30) In this valley (designated in later history as the plain of Esdraelon) the Jews and the Saracens and the Egyptians, the Druses and the Turks and the warriors of many hostile nations, pitched their battles; and thus the battlefield of mount Megiddo became a universal proverb.

Under the word Armageddon, the original Bible Dictionary of Philip Schaff states that it was "a name used figuratively in Revelation 16:16, and suggested by the great battlefield noted in the Old Testament & now known as the Plain of Esdraelon." This figure in the text of the apocalypse was employed not for the physical location but for the battle imagery.

The deepest affliction of Jerusalem could be symbolized in no stronger terms of mourning, as prophesied by Zechariah in chapter 12:11: "In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon." The personage designated Gog in connection with this battle imagery, was the king of a country that sustained relations of hostility to Israel. The names Gog and Magog were used identically and are associated in chapter 20:7-9 as a type of the enemies of Christ. It becomes evident that the symbolic adaptation of Armageddon rises above the physical slaughter that overwhelmed Jerusalem and Judah to the hostile forces of evil surrounding the church, personified as Gog and Magog.

THE BATTLE FIELD

For a further insight into the term Armageddon we notice the meaning as given in three of our authorized dictionaries. Webster gives the meaning of Armageddon as, "The place of a mighty battle against evil to be fought on the Great Day of God, used symbolically." It is further stated that it is "The place of a great battle to be fought out on the Great Day of God between the powers of good and evil, Rev. 16:16." Har-Magedon, in prophetic literature, is typical of the sorrows and triumphs of Israel. It also has reference to the battlefield of Megiddo, II Kings 23:29. Armageddon, meaning height of Megiddo.

Funk and Wagnalls Comprehensive Standard Dictionary gives the meaning as follows; "The Plain of Esdraelon, the scene of many battles." It can easily be seen that it had its literal fulfillment back in the Old Testament dispensation, and could not be Biblically literalized at any time, or period thereafter. It states further, "The Prophetic scene of the great battle at the end of the world," and cites to Rev. 16:16.

The Bible Dictionary gives it as "Mount of Holiness, and Truth." From the foregoing it is clear that it had its literal fulfillment in the Old Testament time, and does not have any literal significance for any later time, but rather is used symbolically to picture the great spiritual battles to be fought by Christ and His Church, against the devil and his wicked forces, marshaled in the guise of religion during the New Testament dispensation, and especially the closing, as pictured in Rev. 20:8-9.

Interpreting it spiritually in the New Testament harmonizes perfectly with the prophecy of Isaiah, 760 B. C. Here is the prophecy, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills & all nations shall flow into it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths, for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Isa. 2:2-3.

These scriptures have a spiritual meaning, describing the position, and location of the Church of God, His true Body. Spiritually, God's true church is high above all sin, the world, and false religions while here on this earth. Jesus in picturing the spiritual location of His people states, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid." Matt. 5:14. The Christians are living on a high spiritual plain. Yes, where the Saints are living now (spiritually speaking) will be encompassed by Gog and Magog, Rev. 20:8.

Armageddon (Mount of Holiness) of the New Testament is an antitype of the Megiddo of the Old Testament. Literal battles in the Old Testament are types of spiritual battles in the New Testament. Here (Mount of Holiness and Truth, the great battle field of the New Testament) shall the army of the redeemed put to flight the infernal host as mentioned in Rev. 20:8. Gog and Magog are the combined forces of false religions.

Armageddon is not as some have supposed, a battle fought with lead and steel, but a struggle between the powers of right and wrong. The true Biblical Church of God is a spiritual institution, and is not an army that fights literal battles. God's Word teaches, "Thou shalt not kill." Jesus said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." Matt. 5:44. According to God's Word Christians should not kill nor avenge themselves with those who do them wrong. Instead, they are to do the opposite. "Do violence to no man," Luke 3:14. The battles of the church are spiritual in their nature. Paul said under inspiration, "We wrestle not against flesh & blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Eph. 6:12. In II Cor. 10:4, we read, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." Millions have laid down their lives for Christ by being consecrated to endure. The history of the martyrs of the church began with Stephen. As he was dying, he prayed, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." Acts 7:60. This is the spirit, and history of Christianity through the centuries, which is in complete harmony with the teachings of Christ, and also indicates the proper attitude of a Christian toward his enemy.

The devil has used, and is still using various means trying to destroy the church, both spiritually, and literally. But God's people have never resorted to carnal warfare in the New Testament dispensation in order to fight the devil. Evil for evil would make both sides evil. God's way is, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." Romans 12:21. So the two armies, to fight the battle of Armageddon, which is a spiritual battle, are; on the one side, the Saints of the Most High; the other, the false religions of the earth marshaled by the devil.¹⁸

¹⁸ Chesnut, L. J. (2005). [*The Battle of Armageddon*](#). James L. Fleming.

THE MEANING OF ARMAGEDDON

For a Scriptural basis for this timely, and important study, we use a portion of the revelation God gave to John as recorded in Rev. 16:13-16. John the Revelator, under the Spirit of Prophetic revelation, uttered words that vitally concerns our day, and should be of deep concern to every christian. Let us read, "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which goeth forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon."

It will be necessary, and enlightening to get a proper background of the term "Armageddon." To do this we are compelled to go back in the Old Testament, and note the various forms and usage there.

The Old Testament meaning was literal. The original word has been variously formed and translated, which we will now consider. There were three terms used to describe its meaning, namely: 1. Har-megiddon, meaning Mount of Assembly. 2. Chormah-Gedehon, meaning, destruction of Army. 3. Mount-Megiddo, meaning place of troops. Here it is described as a mount, where troops (armies) gathered for battle.

This was a remarkable place, for here was the scene of the two greatest victories ever won by Ancient Israel. Here is where Barak conquered the Canaanites. This great battle is recorded in Judges the fourth and fifth chapters. On this same mount, Gideon overcame the Midianites, Judges seventh chapter. This is where Deborah sang her war song, Judges fifth chapter. It is also noted for two great disasters. The death of Saul, I Sam. 31, and Josiah, II Kings 23:29, hence it signifies in Revelation a place of great slaughter, the scene of a terrible retribution upon the wicked. Megiddo was a village in the hill country near Mount Tabor, on the plain of Esdraelon, six miles from Mount Carmel. This was known as a place of great overthrow and slaughter.

Revelation 16:16

"And they gathered them together into the place which is called in Hebrew, Har-Magedon" (ASV., Armageddon AV./). If one approaches this study with a literal interpretation, he begins his search to identify Armageddon. Peloubet's Bible Dictionary gives just about as clear and concise understanding as any I have read.

Armageddon (the hill or city of Megiddo) Rev. 16:16. The scene of the struggle of good and evil is suggested by the battle-field, the plain of Esdraelon, which was famous for two great victories, of Barak over the Canaanites and of Gideon over the Midianites & for two great disasters, the deaths of Saul and Josiah. Hence it signifies in Revelation a place of great slaughter, of a terrible retribution upon the wicked. The Revised Version gives the name as ar-Magedon, i.e., the hill (as or is the city) of Megiddo.[\(6\)](#)

The Layman's Bible Commentary has this to say: "There was no literal mountain of this name, but the reference is probably to the mountains that were near the town of Megiddo, or possibly to the large size of the mound of the city itself. This place stood at the upper entrance to the Plain of Esdraelon by Megiddo the Syrians, and later the Assyrians, must have traveled when they besieged Samaria (II Kings 6, 17) All down through history this region has been known as a bloody battleground and as a convenient pass for great armies. In a word, Megiddo, had come to stand, in Jewish and therefore in Christian thought, for great and decisive struggle. John uses it here only, and he does not have in mind any thought that at some particular date in time the forces of evil and the powers of good will literally fight it out at this spot. It rather stands for the great final overthrow of spiritual evil by the spiritual power of the Almighty God."

This is but an example if a literal interpretation is used & is intensified with each application of the supposed powers, nations & kings specified by the prognosticators. In most literal interpretations the suppositions are so expanded that one many search in vain to find any resemblance of fact.

Mr. Ray Summers expresses it well, "If one expects this to be a literal, material battle, he must expect the army to be headed by a committee of three frogs. Both figures are symbolical; neither is literal. There is no reason for making one literal & the other symbolical. The Armageddon in the book of Revelation has no location on the maps of the world; it is logical, not spatial. The battle is between righteousness and evil, the righteousness is the certain victor."[\(7\)](#) He also wrote, "The three frogs perhaps symbolize some form of evil propaganda since they came from the mouths of three beast, false prophet and dragon, slt). . . True religion has no worse enemies & Satan no better allies, than false propaganda." This is just as true today as in years past.

Jesus warned His disciples against false prophets (Matt. 24:24. Paul and Peter warn Christians to beware of false teachers (2 Thess. 2:9-10; 1 Tim. 4:1-4; 2 Pet. 2:1-2). Those who refuse the message will become victims of their false propaganda or doctrine. Beware! It is presented on T.V., Radio, upon the printed page, and in multitudes of pulpits.

Armageddon Of Revelation

John unmistakably uses figurative language in this text. The dragon, old Satan; the beast, political powers or governments; false prophet, religious propaganda or false religions; the harlot-Babylon, Satan and anti-Christ's seductive, pervertive and deceptive teaching; a person or place full of vice and immoral practices; and the three frogs out of the dragon's mouth are all figurative expressions. Figuratively, Armageddon is used to represent a war between good and evil, righteousness and unrighteousness. It is a spiritual conflict between those who accept the teaching of Christ (believers) and those lead by Satan's luring devices of fleshly, material designs. Although it is a spiritual conflict, yet Satan uses every force and material influence available - possessions, pleasure, emotional and selfish gratification. He began his battle against Christ (Matt. 4:1-11; Rev. 12:1-6) but has turned his powers against Christ's followers, the Christians. We must contend for and fight the good fight of faith (Jude 3). It is the flesh against the Spirit (Galatians 5:15-26).

Armageddon symbolically represents a battleground, wherever & whenever good or right is confronted with wrong/evil. How consoling is the revelation; the culminating facts in every picture, symbol and figure show the believers, God's people as winning the battle. Thus, Christians, thru much suffering & conflict, are more than conquerors. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 4-5).

In Revelation 16:16, "They gathered them together into the place which is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon" /ASV.). The beast, false prophet, the deceiver of those who bare the mark of the beast and those that worship his image are readied for battle. The battle which is waged against "him that sat on the horse" and his army results in the defeat of the beast, false prophet and dragon with all their allies /Rev. 19:19-21). The absolute victory over sin and the world comes at Christ's second coming and the final judgment (Rev. 20:11-15J. This is that final act of Christ pictured throughout the New Testament, His coming to judge all men and pronounce the destiny (Matt. 25:31-46; John 5:28; Rom. 2:5-13; 2 Cor. 5:10, 11; Thess. 1:7-10; Rev. 20:11-15). Thereafter, no place can be found in the New Testament for any existence upon this material earth. It shall disappear; John said that it had "fled away"; Peter said, the earth "shall melt with fervent heat" (Rev. 20:11; 2 Pet. 3, 7, 10-13). This is not a purification, it is destruction.

What Is Armageddon?

As noted earlier, the solitary biblical reference to “Armageddon” occurs near the end of Revelation 16. This awesome chapter records the pouring out of seven bowls of God’s wrath into the earth (v. 1). The bowls of wrath are in the form of plagues (sores, blood, fire, frogs), reminiscent of the Exodus plagues, and they are designed to be universal, strictly punitive, and final. Leon Morris says: “They point us to God’s overthrow of all that is evil” (p. 192). In connection with the sixth bowl, John writes in Revelation 16:13-16:

“And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, as it were frogs: for they are spirits of demons, working signs; which go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. (Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.) And they gathered them together into the place which is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon.”

Surely even the most inexperienced exegete ought to be able to discern the figures employed within this context. Are literal frogs literally going to come from the literal mouths of literal creatures to literally engage in battle on the literal plain of Megiddo? I would assume even modern millennialists do not believe that the battle of Armageddon will be fought by frogs.

Moreover, the plain of Megiddo is only about twenty miles long by fourteen miles wide, and that’s too small to accommodate a battle of the magnitude (hundreds of millions of soldiers) demanded by modern dispensational writers.

It needs to be recognized that in speaking of Armageddon, or the mountain of Megiddo, the apostle John is not alluding to a literal place. The use of geographical points to emphasize spiritual truths is a common biblical phenomenon. Consider, for example, the word “hell” (Grk. *gehenna*). The Greek *gehenna* relates to the Hebrew *gehinnom*, which was the Valley of Hinnom just south of Jerusalem.

Later, because of its idolatrous human sacrifice connection with pain, weeping, and burning (Hinnom became the city dump, continuously on fire), *gehenna* became a symbol for the final punishment of hell. Certainly, it would be absurd to contend that on the Day of Judgment, the wicked will be cast into the literal Valley of Hinnom near Jerusalem.

Similarly, and characteristically, John, in the Revelation, frequently uses places as symbols for concepts. So, Zion (14:1), or Jerusalem (21:2), are symbols of God's spiritual city, the church. Babylon signifies apostasy, and all that is opposed to God (14:8); Egypt and Sodom (11:8) represent oppression and wickedness; the Euphrates (16:12) was symbolic of the point of origin of (spiritual) Israel's enemies, etc. It is within such a reference frame that "mountain of Megiddo" likewise is used.

The history of Megiddo is quite interesting. **It is the earth's most famous battlefield.** J.L. Hurlbut declared that "more battles have been fought on this plain than on any other in the world". While some would identify the pouring out of God's wrath in Revelation 16 (including Armageddon) with the destruction of Jerusalem, or perhaps with the cessation of Roman persecution at the time of Constantine, it's more likely that Armageddon is used as a symbol of "the final overthrow of all the forces of evil by an almighty God" (Morris, p. 192). It is important to observe that Revelation 16 actually says nothing about the battle of Armageddon taking place at that point. There, the forces merely are gathered together, awaiting "the war of the great day of God, the Almighty" when He comes "as a thief" (16:14-15). Note: the great day of God is "the day of God's final judgment" (Arndt & Gingrich), at which time the earth will be destroyed (2 Pet. 3:12).

"And I saw the heaven opened; and behold a white horse, and he that sat thereon called Faithful and True; and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. And his eyes are a flame of fire, and upon his head are many diadems; and he hath a name written which no one knoweth but he himself. And he is arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and pure.

And out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty. And he hath on his garment and on his thigh a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.”

Concerning this description, the following observations are in order: First, the one coming from heaven is clearly Christ, the Word (John 1:1,14), and the white horse is a symbol of His victorious conquest. Second, He is coming to judge and make war. But judgment will take place at Christ’s Second Coming (Matthew 25:31ff); hence, Christ’s war against the enemies of Jehovah will occur then. Third, the Lord smites rebellious nations with a sharp sword that proceeds out of His mouth. Elsewhere, Paul shows that at the time of His “coming” (Grk. *parousia* — the technical term for the Lord’s final coming in judgment), Jesus Christ will slay His foes “with the breath of His mouth,” and bring them to naught (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

In summation, our argument is arranged logically as follows:

(1) The battle of Armageddon will occur when Christ comes to judge (Rev. 16:16; 19:11).

(2) But He will judge at His Second Coming.

(3) The battle of Armageddon will thus take place at the Second Coming of Christ.

We can then additionally reason:

(1) The Armageddon war will take place when Jesus destroys His enemies with the breath of His mouth.

(2) But such will occur at His Coming.

Foy Wallace Continues . . .

It was therefore symbolic of the battle against Christianity—the forces of Judaism on the one side and of heathenism on the other. But the Rider of the white horse was the Conqueror; the Son of man appearing on the white cloud was the Victor; the saints robed in white garments were the Overcomers; in all of the symbols and imagery of the visions and in surviving these persecutions, the church emerged in victory to make the kingdoms of this world (chapter 11:15) become the kingdoms of the Lord and his for Christ by the universal sway of the gospel. This is consistent with the repeated emphasis given in the early chapters of the apocalypse in the letters addressed to the seven churches, that the period through which they were passing was the tribulation era of the church.

Verse 17 (4) The voice from the throne

–16: 17. The great voice from the temple-throne that ordered the plagues, understood to be that of God Himself, now declared the end in verse seventeen—it is done—that is, the plagues had been accomplished, the mission of the seven angels had been fulfilled. The pouring out of the vial into the air symbolized the sphere of the influence of the wicked nations was destroyed by the wrath of God in the seventh vial—it was the destroying of them that destroy;

and is the same of apocalyptic characters as Isaiah 26:13-14, prophesying the decease of the wicked lords who had oppressed Israel: "O Lord our God, other lords have had dominion over us . . . they are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise; therefore, hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish." No clearer explanation could be made of the visions in Revelation in pouring out of the vials of wrath upon the nations that persecuted the Bride of Christ, the Lamb—his church.

(7) The last vial poured into the air, causing voices, thunders, lightnings & a great earthquake: "And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake; such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great"

–16:17-18. As defined before, the symbol of the air represented the sphere of life & influence of the wicked nations. In Ephesians 2:1 Satan was named the prince of the power of the air – not the actual exercise of power, but of influence – the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. In this symbol the great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne was not the voice of an angel, but of the Great God Himself. The great voice said: It is done. The time for the end of the judgments had come; the time for fall of the Harlot City & the time for the punishments to follow on both Jewish and imperial persecutors of the church; all which was signified by the distant rumbling of voices, thunders and lightnings.

The earthquake everywhere used in the apocalypse symbolized the shaking of nations; and the effects of the fall of Jerusalem were not limited to Judea and the Jews—the mighty influence of the terrible events had a solemn impact of worldwide significance. With the removal of Judaism from the path of the church the way was opened for the universal expansion of Christianity, and the Lord's words in Matthew 24:31 were fulfilled: "And he shall send his angels (emissaries) with a great sound of trumpet (proclaiming the gospel) & they shall gather together his elect (those converted by the gospel) from the four winds (every direction), from one end of heaven to the other (the remotest bounds of the habitation of men). And it was done.

(5) The fall of Jerusalem and citadels of oppression

– 16:18-21. The upheavals of verse eighteen in the visions of voices, and thunders, and lightnings . . . and a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the face of the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great, were the symbols of the fall of Jerusalem and the attending effects of the devastation of Judea, all of which resulted in the shaking of the nations of the empire itself; and though Jerusalem had fallen, thunders and lightnings and earthquakes were not to be over until the persecuting nations received the full measure of God's divine wrath from the cup of His indignation. History verifies the revolutionary reactions in governments symbolized by thunders and lightnings, culminating in wars between the nations of the empire in the coup d' e tat of the conflict for power between the rulers, as in the wars of Nero Caesar. There is no need of leaving the ten-epoch period of the persecutors signified in chapter 2:10 for the fulfillment of these symbols.

As was true of the signs in Matthew 24:34, it was true of these symbols also: This generation shall not pass away till all these be fulfilled. As the prophecy of Zechariah 14:4 foretold the city of Jerusalem as cleft in the midst before its fall, so verse nineteen sees that the great city was divided into three parts. It envisioned the partitioning of the city by the circumvallations of the Roman armies, as in Zechariah 14:1-21; and as suggested in comments by Adam Clarke on the Zechariah prophecy and verified by the history of Josephus. The further statement that the cities of the nation's fell signified the collapse of the citadels of oppression and the strongholds of evil influence in the operations of the beast and false prophet in their lying wonders and pseudo-signs of deception and seduction. The great Babylon that came in remembrance before God was the apostate Jerusalem, that faithful city turned harlot of Isaiah 1:21 designated in chapter 11:8 as the spiritual Sodom and Egypt where also our Lord was crucified. In the remembrance of her apostasies God gave unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath in divine retribution for her harlotry. In the process of this unrelenting succession of inexorable judgments, verse twenty declared that every island fled away, and the mountains weren't found—that is, all the seats of authority and power of the Jewish theocracy faded away and disappeared. The fall of Jerusalem and the demolition of the temple effected the complete abrogation of Judaism and the abolition of the Jewish state. In the ultimate dispensation of judgment on the city and the land of the Jews and their state, verse twenty-one stated that there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven & men blasphemed God because of the plague of hail.

This downpour of hail was preternatural—for the plague thereof was exceeding great – it was beyond normal evulsions from the elements; it was strange and inexplicable in its proportions. It signified the wrath of God which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation – described in the prolepsis of chapter 14:10. But the adherents of the satanic beast were not moved to repentance by any of these manifestations of divine judgment; rather, in complete allegiance to the evil powers they blasphemed God in steeped and stubborn resistance to His will.

Verses 19-21 The statement of verse nineteen that Jerusalem was divided into three parts, had a further significance than the partitioning of the city by the Romans as described by Zechariah 14:1-21. The apparent application of the symbol was to the three sources of Jerusalem's afflictions: pestilence, sword and exile.

The prophecy of Ezekiel on Jerusalem's siege and destruction described these three parts in the following words: "Thou shalt burn with fire (pestilence) a third part in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled: and thou shalt take a third part and smite about it with a knife (sword): and a third part thou shalt scatter in the wind (exile); and I will draw out a sword after them." There could be no closer relation between the fulfillment of a prophecy and an apocalypse than Ezekiel 5:2 and Revelation 16:19. Again the Old Testament & the New furnish accumulative evidence that the symbols of Revelation were fulfilled in the lives & experiences of the people to whom the apocalypse was addressed. - Foy E. Wallace, The Book of Revelation

Making War Against The Saints

(Revelation 17:3b-6 NKJV)

...And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. {6} I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.



Making War Against The Saints

(Revelation 17:16-17 NKJV)

"And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. {17} "For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.





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- *And those who dwell on the earth will wonder, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.*
(Revelation 17: 8)

Source: The Book of Revelation by Foy E. Wallace

THE HARLOT WOMAN ON THE SCARLET BEAST (Chapter 17)

The contents of this chapter comprised the announcement of the angel to reveal to John the judgment to have been passed upon the harlot city. Before performing the announcement, however, the angel carried John away into a wilderness for a visional description of this harlot. 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. The old Judaistic Jerusalem with all of her apostasies must have been removed in order for the New Jerusalem, the church – or kingdom of Christ – to have come into world-wide sway. Hence, symbolic Babylon the Harlot and figurative New Jerusalem, the Bride (the church), were the center of the remaining apocalypses. Later, John was transported in vision to a mountain where he was allowed to view the Bride, the wife of the Lamb (the church of Christ) – but before doing so, the first angel summoned the Seer in spirit to an appropriate surroundings to reveal the identity and character of Babylon, the great, the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth, and to visualize the judgment that was to come upon her – for the destruction of the Harlot must precede the victory of the Bride. The seventeenth and eighteenth chapters must be considered as one – for the announced judgment upon the Harlot by the angel at beginning of chapter seventeen was suspended by the vision of the Harlot; and yet another angel descended in chapter eighteen to explain the mystery of Babylon the great, and to reveal the judgment against her in the overthrow and destruction of the city which the Harlot represented. There are numerous reasons why the Harlot could not have been the city of Rome. It is stated in this chapter that the beast hated the Harlot. But the beast admittedly was the Roman Empire, and if Rome was the Harlot, the Roman Empire hated the city of Rome.

The beast being the empire, the Harlot was of necessity some other than Rome. First: The hatred of the beast for the Harlot harmonized with the animosity of both the Roman Empire and of Rome, its capitol city, toward Jerusalem. Second: The latter half of Revelation beginning with chapter twelve was recapitulatory of the first half ending with chapter eleven, under another and different set of symbols. In chapter 11:8 the names Sodom and Egypt were symbolically applied to apostate Jerusalem, and therefore identified by the descriptive clause where also our Lord was crucified. It was because of these apostasies and abominations that the symbolic name Babylon in chapter 14:8 was applied to the fallen city of Jerusalem. Third: There was no basis for a symbol or an analogy in which Rome could have been depicted as having become a harlot, for Rome never stood in the spiritual relation to God as a faithful city, turned to harlotry. The Harlot was a city once faithful to God, and only Jerusalem can fulfill the symbolic descriptions. Fourth: The apocalypse was not directly concerned with Rome, or the Roman Empire; rather, they were envisioned only as the instrument in execution of judgment on Jerusalem, which in her multiplied apostasies had come to be symbolized as the big mother of harlots and abominations of the earth, i. e. Judea and Palestine. All of this was in direct fulfillment of things Jesus foretold in the twenty-third and twenty-fourth chapters of Matthew and the twenty-first chapter of Luke concerning the apostasies and abominations which would bring doom to the city of Jerusalem. For example, read Matthew 23: 34 - 37:

"Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not !"

The words of Stephen in denunciation of Jerusalem's abominations in Acts 7:52-53 were predictive of this doom: "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers & murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it."

The culmination of the Lord's upbraidings and Stephen's denunciation of Jerusalem were reached in John's visions of Jerusalem as Sodom, Egypt and Babylon, with her abominations and harlotry. There are other such portents of the downfall and doom of Jerusalem in the discourses of Christ and in the apostolic epistles, all of which come within the scope of John's visions. In chapter seventeen two chief figures were introduced: First, the old Jerusalem as the Harlot; and the persecuting power of Rome as the beast upon which the Harlot sat. Corollary to these two symbolic characters were the two judgments, one against the woman, the other against the beast in the form of the announced destruction of both.

However, as the beast symbolized the Roman Empire, it was only as the persecuting instrument; hence, the destruction of the beast which should be accomplished was not the empire itself but the persecuting power which the beast embodied and personified.

Seeing that chapters seventeen and eighteen deal with Jerusalem as the Harlot, and the persecuting power of the beast as the Roman Empire, the verses of the two chapters fall into an orderly sequence. (1) The harlot sitting upon the waters—17:1-2. (2) The woman on the scarlet colored beast—17:3-8. (3) The great wonder comprehended—17:9-11. (4) The coordination of the ten kings—17:12-18: Verse 1 (1) The harlot sitting upon the waters—17:1-2. "And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters."

The term harlot has been used always in a figurative sense to denote wicked cities, as of Nineveh in Nahum 3:4; and of Jerusalem in Isaiah 1:21; and of Israel, when the nation became a harlot by the practice of idolatry in Revelation. So here apostate Jerusalem, in broken relation with God, was given the mystic name Babylon, the mother of harlots. From generations past the execration of Israel had increased from the time of prophet's reprobations in Isaiah 1:21 to the Lord's lamentations in Matthew 23:29-39. By the elders of Israel the official responsibility for crucifying the Christ was placed upon Jerusalem in Matthew 27:25.

The martyr Stephen laid upon Jerusalem with the criminal charges of "betrayers and murders" in Acts 7:52. The descriptions in Revelation, chapters 14:8; 17: 1-6; 18: 1-2 were but extensions of the same exposures in the continuing apostasies of Jerusalem. The vision of the harlot that sitteth upon many waters was based upon the fact and the history that Jerusalem depended on her affiliations with the Roman Empire and its tributaries for commerce, revenue and support. This statement has been considered an indication that the Harlot was Rome, sitting on the waters. But the same figure of speech was applied to Babylon in Jeremiah 51:13: "O thou that dwellest upon many waters." It was not a reference to a literal geographical location, but to commercial sources of revenue and support; and it was an impressive imagery of Jerusalem's dependence on affiliations with the heathen tributaries of Rome.

Verse 2 The reference in verse two to the harlot's fornication with the kings, and the wine of her fornication making drunk the inhabitants of the land were symbols of the extensions of Jerusalem's affiliations with foreign people, and the passion to be like the nations around them, as Israel demanded in 1 Samuel 8:5. These affiliations so enamored the inhabitants of Judah and of Jerusalem as to be characterized in the symbolism of being drunk with the wine of her fornication.

The apocalypse was consistently that of apostate Jerusalem. It described the iniquities of Israel from their national sin of demanding a king to be as other nations under Samuel, the course that carried them into exile; and that in the visions of Revelation brought their city and their national existence to destruction.

Verse 3 - - (2) The woman on the scarlet-colored beast

-17:3-8. "So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns." The color of the beast was derived from the Red Dragon of preceding chapters that instigated persecutions. The crimson color was also the symbol of sin: "Though your sins be as scarlet . . . though they be red like crimson" Isaiah 1:18. The adaptation of the color red was significant in this symbol of a beast full of the sins of blasphemy. The word blasphemy originally denoted every kind of railing, reviling, irreverence, and insulting reproaches against God, or any other detraction; hence, this beast was full of names of blasphemy – any or all blasphemy against the church that could be named in connection with or reference to every known form of heathen idolatry. The comments on the seven heads and ten horns which characterized the beast have been made in preceding chapters, this being the same beast, the Roman Empire and its tributaries, extended remarks here are unnecessary.

Verse 4 - The description in verse four, of the woman arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and bedecked with all adornments of gold, jewels and pearls, were highly extended symbols of the harlots sources of seduction; and the golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication were all descriptive of the lewd character of the harlot woman, and symbolic of the unfaithfulness of Jerusalem, "the faithful city become an harlot." It was a lurid picture of the spiritual condition of Jerusalem and all Judea.

Verse 5 - The name written on the woman's head, in verse five, was the inscription: **Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth.** The spiritual evils of the land of Judea with all the national apostasies of Judaism were her offspring. The prophet Hosea employed the same figure of whoredom, or harlotry, in his descriptions of Israel in chapters 1:2 and 2:1-5 of his book of prophecy. Stronger terms defining spiritual adulteries, fornications and harlotry, couldn't have been employed to set forth the spiritual luridness of Israel which brought on her exile & the same extreme analogies apply to the spiritual decadence of Jerusalem which culminated in destruction, devastation downfall and termination.

Verse 6 - The woman was envisioned as drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus, in verse six. This not only referred to the fact that Jerusalem had slain the prophets as said in Matthew 23:29-39; and been "betrayers and murderers," as charged by Stephen in Acts 7:52 and was the city "where also our Lord was crucified, as in Revelation 11:8; but it was her apostasies that had root caused the persecutions which had overwhelmed the land, and the Jerusalem was therefore responsible for the blood of the saints and martyrs symbolized throughout the apocalypse. When John saw this adorned harlot sitting on the beast, he wondered with great admiration. The word wonder here means that the meaning had not yet been revealed, as it was done in the visions that followed. The word admiration has the meaning of astonishment – that is, John wondered with great amazement as he viewed the decked and jeweled Harlot seated on the beast whose power would bring her to destruction.

Verse 7 - An angel cryptologist in verse seven appeared to decode the symbols which concealed in a mystery the vision of the beast upon which the woman sat. The enigmatic significance of the mystic symbolism which surrounded both the woman & the beast involved their respective destiny – the destruction of the woman (Jerusalem) and the perdition of the beast (the persecutor). The angel interpreter, proposing an explanation of the cryptic vision, repeated the wonder of the woman who is sitting on the seven heads and ten horns of the beast. It was a continued repetition in description of the Roman Empire, as previously shown, and of Jerusalem the apostate metropolis of Judaism.

Verse 8 - An element of the mystery in the code description of the beast, in verse eight, was in the unusual saying: the beast that thou sawest was, and is not and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. Prevailing in those days was "the Neronic myth" that Nero was dead, but was incarnated in Belial the idolatrous prince and head of the heathen world; and hence, the belief that he lived. The myth could've been basis of the symbol, which undoubtedly means the persecutor had apparently granted surcease of the persecutions, but it was only a lull—the beast that was, and is not, should again appear without warnings, ascending as it were from the unfathomable depths of diabolical abode. This was the same beast described in previous chapters as that appearing in heaven – contextually defined as the realm of political authorities and government, hence in visible personification. After his disappearance, or after a lull in persecution, he was returning from his invisible demonic habitat, as from nowhere, to revive the persecutions— hence, the beast was, and is not, and yet is. This verse is comparable to the code six hundred and sixty-six of chapter 13:18 and referred to the same composite beast – the Roman Empire, personified in the persecuting emperor.

The reappearance of the beast in the display of power again caused wonderment among the dwellers of the earth whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world – that is, all of the people of the heathen and Roman world who were not the people of God, and had never been so reckoned, held the worldly pomp and power of the Roman emperor in great admiration. But this inhibition of the presence and power of the persecuting beast was not for long. His reappearance as a persecutor was also characterized as a final disappearance when his defeat & destiny should be accomplished – he would eventually go into perdition. **It should be remembered that the destiny of the beast did not refer to the destruction of the empire itself but to the destruction of the persecuting power which the beast represented.** The symbols have the same force & application as Isaiah's description of the decease of the wicked lords of Babylon—referring not to literal demise of the Babylonian empire, but to the wicked dominion over the people of God. There is a continuous reinforcement of the parallels between the apocalypses of fortune of Old Testament Israel through exile to their return and the destruction of Babylonian lordship, represented by Isaiah, in chapter 66:22, as their "new heavens and the new earth"; and the apocalypses of Revelation dealing with persecutions of the New Testament church, the destruction of the old Jerusalem, and the symbolic "new heaven & new earth" of Revelation 21:1 – a delineation of the grandeurs and glories of the New Jerusalem.

Verse 9 - (3) The great wonder comprehended

–17:9-11. "And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings: fire are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition."

The mind which hath wisdom referred to the deep mystical import of these symbols which were here merely projected but not fully explained or interpreted – the full meaning is reserved for the following chapter. Everything in the visions revolves around the Jerusalem of the Jews, Rome being only collateral to the accomplishment of the visions. The reference to the seven mountains was not subject to a literal application any more than the literalizing of the woman. Mountains were ordinarily the symbols of seats - positions of political and governmental authority, where power was concentrated. And while that was true of the City Rome, surrounded literally by seven hills; it was true also that Jerusalem was the city where apostasy in the realm of religious power was concentrated; and Jerusalem was also surrounded by seven literal mountains: Zion, Acra, Moriah, Bezetha, Millo, Ophel and Antonio; all of which are mentioned in the history of Josephus in connection with the war against Jerusalem (Book 5, Section 5, 8). The application of these symbols to Jerusalem finds consistency in the context.

Verse 10 - The seven kings of verse ten were the imperial Caesars, of which Nero was sixth in succession from Julius. The seven mountains cannot be representative of the seven kings, since the text doesn't read they are seven kings, but "there are seven kings." The text further states that five are fallen, and one is and the other is not yet come. Though Julius Caesar was the head of the Roman Republic, it merged into the empire; and the Roman emperors derived the official title Caesar from Julius. There can be no reason in fact or history to justify omitting Julius from the count of the Caesars of Rome, and only the demands of a theory to provide a later date for Revelation has caused it to be done. The seven kings, five of which had fallen, followed the count from Julius Caesar, the first-then, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, the five which had fallen – and Nero, the sixth. He was referred to in the phrase and one is—that is, the reigning emperor. It is further stated that the other, or the seventh, is not yet. The five Caesars had passed before John wrote this apocalypse; and Nero, the sixth Caesar, was reigning at the time Revelation written.

The apocalypse belonged to the Neronic period. Omitting quite properly the subordinates, or mock rulers, Domitian was the seventh Caesar; and the text specifically stated that he had not come. It is difficult to account for a theory that fixes the chronology of Revelation in the latter part of the Domitian reign when he, the seventh, had not come. The rectification of the traditional chronological error attached to the Book of Revelation will automatically correct the "future prophecy" theories so full of misconcepts.

The text stated that the seventh king, or emperor, must continue a short space – that is, the persecutions would not end with Nero, but would continue to be prosecuted in reigns of short duration of the successive emperors.

Verse 11 - It is stated in verse eleven that the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seventh, and goeth into perdition. There is a repetition here of verse eight, to which the reader may refer, concerning was, is not, and yet is. But verse eleven affirms the affinity and continuity of the imperial beasts. From the sixth to the seventh the vision was extended, in verse ten; and verse eleven presents the eighth as having the same genus, the same spirit of the persecuting beast appearing in one emperor after another until their course was run. To the Smyrna church the Lord said: And ye shall have tribulation ten days. This undoubtedly referred to the time-period of the ten persecuting emperors from Nero to Diocletian, who vowed to obliterate the name Christian from the Roman Empire; and it fixes the period of these apocalyptic disclosures from Nero to Diocletian, the tenth emperor from Nero – thus assigning the date of Revelation's composition to the early part of Nero's reign, before the siege and destruction of Jerusalem; and its symbols to the Nero-Diocletian time period of persecution.

Verse 12 - (4) The coordination of the ten kings

-17:12-18: The ten kings of the beast in verse twelve had received no kingdom as yet; but receive power one hour with the beast. These mock rulers of the Roman tributaries had no independent rule; they were the contemporary subordinate rulers with the beast for one hour – that is, a temporary exercise of a delegated power in conjunction with Rome, but of short duration as persecutors; their power would continue no longer than the accomplishment of God's will in the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of Judaism.

Verse 13 - It is stated in verse thirteen that these ten kings had one mind. The overshadowing personage of Nero was pictured as standing behind; but the single aim and common purpose was the destruction of Jerusalem, the devastation of Judea to rid the empire of Judaism, and the subsequent war against Christianity in the full power and strength of the coalition of the kings with the emperor against the church. Jerusalem was destroyed, Judaism perished, but the church survived.

Verse 14 - The vision in the preceding chapters of the great red dragon's war against the Christ is continued in verse fourteen; but the Lamb would overcome all assailants and assaults against his church, for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings – over all kings and emperors of the earth - and because his followers are called, and chosen and faithful. Such fidelity cannot be extinguished by the trials of persecution.

Verse 15 - It is repeated in verse fifteen that the waters upon which the Harlot sat were the peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues, which represented, as previously explained, Jerusalem's affiliations with the heathen world, and the intermingling with nations and people of all parts of the empire. This became a source of corruption and apostasy.

Verse 16 - It is declared in verse sixteen that the kings of the empire, represented by the ten horns, hated the Harlot. This is solid proof that the harlot city was not Rome – assuredly the Roman kings did not hate the capital city of the Roman Empire. But they did hate Jerusalem and coordinated their efforts with the emperor to reduce it to the condition here described: make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh and burn her with fire. The Lord's account of the siege of Jerusalem together with the history of Josephus were a graphic fulfillment of these apocalyptic pronouncements on apostate Jerusalem, the faithful city become a harlot.

Verse 17 - The accord of these kings with the emperor was described in verse seventeen as being in God's plan to fulfill his words, spoken by his prophets, and by the Lord Jesus Christ himself, concerning destruction of the once faithful but then harlot city of Jerusalem.

Verse 18 - With verse eighteen the chapter closes with a significant declaration: And the woman which thou sawest is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth. It is this passage that has been the basis of the interpretation & theory that Rome was the city that reigned over the kings of the earth, and was therefore the harlot city. But the conclusion does not follow. In Revelation 11:8 Jerusalem is called the great city under the symbols of Sodom and Egypt, hence the term "great city" has been a mystic designation for Jerusalem. In the history of Josephus, Volume 7 of Wars, Section 8, 7, the historical term "that great city" was applied to Jerusalem. This was both the historical and symbolic designation for Jerusalem. There are no such terms and titles employed to designate Rome. The appellation for Jerusalem comports further with the reference to the city as Babylon, the Great in chapter 11:8, symbolically called Sodom and/or Egypt, but identified as being Jerusalem by the statement where also our Lord was crucified. The last statement of verse eighteen "which reigneth over the kings of the earth" did not refer to the empire of the Caesars, nor the city of the emperors.

The word reign here denoted a dominion. The earth, as defined at the beginning of the visions and later repeated, referred to the land of Judea, inclusive of Palestine. The city of Jerusalem was the royal city where the kings of Judah reigned. The phrase the kings of the earth was used in the sense of Acts 4:26-27: "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast annointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and people of Israel, were gathered together." These "kings of the earth" were of Judah, and Jerusalem was the capital city of the land, standing in the same relation to these "kings of the earth" as Rome sustained to the emperors. The second psalm represents Jerusalem as ruling with an iron rod over "the kings of the earth" who had set themselves against the Lord's annointed One. In the Wars, Book 3, Section 3, 5, Josephus adds "the royal city Jerusalem was supreme, and presided over all neighboring country as the head does over the body."

There is every contextual reason to apply the language of verse eighteen, "that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth," to Jerusalem in relation to the kings of Judah, as figuratively set forth in the second psalm, and quoted in fulfillment in the gospel of Matthew. Beside these scriptural applications, it must be true in ordinary logic & common consistency that the beast being the Roman empire, the harlot city which the beast hated couldn't have been the city of Rome. The entire vision is centered on the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, demolition of the Jewish temple and the end of theocratic Judaism and of the Jewish state; and the devastation of the land of Judea, the homeland of the Jews. The persecution of the church was a consequence of such catastrophe, being considered by the Romans as a sect of the Jews. But the Roman empire and Rome, the city, were only collateral to the visions of Revelation as the instrument of the power of destruction and of persecution!

Making War Against The Saints

(Revelation 17:3b-6 NKJV)

...And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. {6} I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.



Making War Against The Saints

(Revelation 17:16-17 NKJV)

"And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. {17} "For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.





her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more:

18:12 The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner

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Benson Commentary

[Luke 23:28-29](#). *But Jesus turning, said, &c.* — Jesus, who ever felt the woes of others more than he did his own, forgetting his distress at the very time that it lay heaviest upon him, turned about, and with a benevolence and tenderness truly divine, said to them, *Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, &c.* — Not that they were to be blamed for weeping for him, but commended rather: those hearts were hard indeed, that were not affected with such sufferings of such a person; but he bids them weep not only for him, but also and especially for themselves, and for their children, namely, because of the destruction that was coming upon Jerusalem, which some of them would probably live to see, and share in the calamities thereof; or at least their children would, for whom it behooved them to be solicitous. *For the days are coming in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, &c.* — As if he had said, “The calamities about to fall on you and your children are most terrible, and call for the bitterest lamentations; for in those days of vengeance you will vehemently wish that you had not given birth to a generation whose wickedness has rendered them objects of the divine wrath to a degree that never was experienced in the world before. And the thoughts of those calamities afflict my soul far more than the feeling of my own sufferings.” These words sufficiently imply that the days of distress and misery were coming, and would fall on them and on their children; which indeed they did in a most awful manner; though at that time there was not any appearance of such an immediate ruin: nor would the wisest politician have inferred it from the present state of affairs. The prediction was especially fulfilled during that grievous famine which so miserably afflicted Jerusalem during the siege. For, as Josephus reports, (*Bell., Luke 5:10*), mothers snatched the food from their infants out of their very mouths: and again, in another place, (*Bell., Luke 5:12*) the houses were full of women and children, who perished by famine.

But Josephus relates a still more horrid story, which our Lord, with his spirit of prophecy, had probably in view. He says, (*Bell., Luke 6:3*) “There was one Mary, the daughter of Eleazer, illustrious for her family and riches. She, having been stripped and plundered of all her substance and provisions by the soldiers, out of necessity and fury killed her own sucking child, and having boiled him, devoured half of him, and covering up the rest, preserved it for another time. The soldiers soon came, allured by the smell of victuals, and threatened to kill her immediately if she would not produce what she had dressed. But she replied, that she had preserved a good part for them, and uncovered the relict of her son. Dread and astonishment seized them, and they stood stupified at the sight. ‘But this,’ said she, ‘is my own son, and this my work. Eat, for even I have eaten. Be not you more tender than a woman, nor more compassionate than a mother. But, if you have a religious abhorrence of my victim, I truly have eaten half; and let the rest remain for me.’ They went away trembling, fearful to do this one thing; and hardly left this food for the mother. The whole city was struck with horrors” says the historian, “at this wickedness; and they were pronounced blessed, who died before they had heard or seen such great evils.”

Jesus said in LUKE 23:29

29. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say,





Jesus referred to this time when he said in Mt 24:28 "For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together." Jesus died so all could be saved and He never wanted any one to be lost, but the cruel wicked course of the followers of Satan leave Him no alternative but to destroy them. The Bible seeks to warn transgressor that the wages of sin is death! Those who continue on in the course of rebellion and defiance of God's Law will end up Buzzard Bait!



Source: The Book of Revelation by Foy E. Wallace

FINAL PROCLAMATION OF DOOM ON JERUSALEM

(Chapter 18) The approaching fall of the City of Jerusalem, under the symbol of Babylon was envisioned in this chapter. It pictured the overthrow of Judaism and of the Jewish state as having been actually accomplished when in fact it was an apocalyptic forecast of an event still future, described in the details of past occurrence.

Verse 1 (1) The angel's announcement

–18: 1-3. This is another instance of a proleptic utterance by an angel, as the following verses of the chapter outline the successive stages of the fall and the desolation of the Babylon–Jerusalem. The proclamation of doom was delivered by an angel having great power, a power commensurate with the magnitude of the proclamation and which signified the authority to pronounce a final doom. As a result of the proclamation the earth (land of Judea) was lightened with glory, as the heavens are aglow with lightnings attending the thunders. This was symbolic of the awe and terror of the appalling events impending.

Verse 2 - The dirge of fallen Babylon in verse two, was an extension of the same vision in chapter 14:8 & was substantially the same lamentation over the fall of the ancient Babylon recorded in Isaiah 21:9 : "Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground." The Babylon of this chapter was symbolic of Jerusalem, and the voice of verse two was crying a threnody—a dirge of lamentation—on the day of doom for the once faithful but apostate city. The latter part of the verse describes Jerusalem as the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

The severance of all commercial affiliations by the siege of Jerusalem and the devastation of Judea, had reduced the city to a haunt, symbolized by the demoniac habitation of evil spirits, devils and vultures. The visions of the overthrow of Tyre and Babylon in the Old Testament were combined in these same symbols.

Verse 3 - The repetition in verse three of the Babylon harlot's winecup, representing her multiplied forms of seduction. The reference to the kings of the earth was used in the sense of the rulers and authorities of Judea and Palestine; and the reference to the nations was a designation for the heathen. They were all *particeps criminis*, having drunk of the harlot's seductive wine-cup of abominations. The language was symbolic of Jerusalem's heathen affiliations. Thus, the proud capital of the Jews, once the dwelling place of God and the depository of the Oracles and center of Judaism, by apostasy had come to destruction and was reduced to a haunt of the demon-world of heathenism, the habitat of the diabolical agents of the satanic beast.

Verse 4 - - (2) The call to the faithful

-18:4-8. The voice from heaven introducing verse four was a call to the faithful saints to depart from the doomed city before the calamity struck. It is manifestly parallel with the Lord's exhortation in Matthew 24:15-16 for his faithful disciples to flee Jerusalem when the signs of the impending destruction appeared. The same call was spiritually applied by Paul to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 6:14-18), beseeching them to cut all the ties that would bind them to heathenism or in any way maintain affiliation with the heathen world and its temple of Belial. Its derived or applied meaning was to abandon all that both Judaism & heathenism represented.

Verse 5-6 The enormity of Jerusalem's sins which reached unto heaven are underlined in verses five & six in the exercise of the prerogatives that belongs only to God -"Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord"—

He remembered her iniquities, and rendered due reward double unto double, according to her works. Again, it was Lord's answer to the altar cry of martyrs in chapter 6:10, "how long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth."

Verse 7 - 8 -- The description of the proud, and presumptuous city of David, which for centuries had enjoyed the admiration expressed in verse seven, to sit as queen, employed symbols of glory. The old city declared that she was no widow and would see no sorrow (of widowhood), for she was the Jerusalem of the Israel which was wedded to the God of the Jews. But verse eight bluntly decreed that destruction would come upon her in one day, as suddenly as the Lord's statement in Matthew 24:16-18: "Then let them which be in Judea flee . . . let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes." Hence, the expression one day symbolized the suddenness of the impending judgment against Jerusalem and the shortness of time for the faithful to respond to the call to come out of her. The extended application, as in 2 Corinthians 6:17, meant to come out of the evils & errors of Jerusalem's apostasies & heathendom's idolatries. The last line of verse eight, for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her, meant that God's word was inexorable, and without change of purpose he would destroy the apostate city.

Verse 9-10 - - (3) The three-fold threnody over the ruined city – 18:9-19. These verses form the threnody of kings, merchants and seamen—their song of lamentation, as a dirge over Jerusalem, the fallen city. They were represented in verses nine and ten as having thrived on her harlotries, but cut off from the lucrative revenues of her commerce they were envisioned as standing afar off, offering no help but bewailing the plight of besieged Jerusalem: Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.



Verse 11 - The statement of verse eleven, that the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her was parallel with chapter 1:7: "Behold, he cometh with the clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." This coming referred to the destruction of Jerusalem, as in Zechariah 14:1-21; and the declaration that every eye shall see him referred to the universal knowledge of what was happening to Jerusalem; and all kindreds (tribes) of the earth shall wail denoted the mourning of all Jewish families in all parts of the world over the destruction that had befallen their beloved city.

Verses 12-14. The rulers, merchants and mariners of Palestine bewailed the calamity for no man buys their merchandise anymore. The valuables of the merchandise in which this trade consisted were listed in verses 12 through 14. The description of gold, purple and spice were symbols of the flow of commerce which characterized Jerusalem's prosperity. But with the severance of all trade, deprived of all commerce, the authorities of Judea, the merchants and the shippers, once associated with Jerusalem in all of her luxury and wantonness, then stood aloof as witnesses of the destruction, deploring the devastation; but only to bewail her plight.

Verse 15-16. The extensive traffic in thirty articles specified by the writer John represented the affiliations of the Jewish capital with all the heathen world. Included in this commercial revenue was the traffic in slaves, and souls of men--meaning the lives of men. There was no source of revenue from the heathen world not included in the coalition between Jerusalem and the merchants of the earth, as described in verses fifteen and sixteen.

Verses 17-19. In continuation of this resplendent description verses 17 through 19 recorded the lamentations of the merchant--men because the luxuries and revenues in which they had shared had come to nought and were no more at all. In unison they cried: What city is like unto this great city . . . alas, alas, that great city . . . she is made desolate. Therefore, the traffickers of the heathen world lamented the ignominious end of the once glorious city of Jerusalem.

(4) The anthem of rejoicing over the fall of Apostate Jerusalem

–18:20-24. This last section of the chapter, verses twenty to twenty-four, represented John's own rhapsody of rejoicing over the avenging judgment of God on Jerusalem, the once faithful city which had turned harlot. In contrast with the wailing of the associates in the harlotries of the city, John was joined in vision to the witnesses and apostles and saints who had been victims of Jerusalem's murderous wantonness—a united chorus celebrating the end of the abominations of Jerusalem & the obstructions of Judaism. The Lord foretold this fulfillment in Matthew 23:29-38: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold, I have sent unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." This anticipated fulfillment of the Lord's predictions received and written by John in the Neronic period and represented the Lord's words, "fill ye up then the measure of your fathers." **In the symbols of this chapter verse twenty-one, the angel casts a great millstone into the sea as a sign of irretrievable doom for Jerusalem.**

The same symbolism was adopted in Jeremiah 51:63⁶⁴ to signify the end of old Babylon: "And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates: And thou shalt say, Thus, shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her and they shall be weary. Thus far are the words of Jeremiah." Verse 23-24 It is appropriate that the end of the symbolic Babylon, Jerusalem should be signified by the same imagery. The symbols meant the total disappearance of both the literal and the figurative Babylons.

Verse twenty-three includes the symbols of the crafts of prosperity and of merriment, all of which were to be no more; and verse twenty-four reverted to Jerusalem's sins in the guiltiness of the blood of prophets, and of saints, and all that were slain upon the earth (Matthew 23:29-39). In the avenging judgment on Jerusalem the guilt of the blood of these slain ones found retribution. It is needless to go out of the Neronic period or away from Jerusalem to find the facts of history that meet all the demands of these apocalypses. They do not fit Rome, nor any other city than Jerusalem; where the prophets, apostles and saints were slain. The usual interpretation to bring the apocalypse down through the ages to stage again the historical pageantry of the Roman empire, in the effort to find a future fulfillment, takes all the force out of the words of Christ in Matthew 23:1-39; Matthew 24:1-51, and robs the apocalypse of its immediate message. Apostate Jerusalem was the object of the visions of Revelation & all things else in the book were collateral to implementation of the symbols. The readers should not fail to consider that all these visions were recorded before the events occurred, therefore bearing a pre-destruction of Jerusalem date; and Revelation takes its place alongside the Lord's own forecast of Matthew 24:1-51, Mark 13:1-37, and Luke 21:1-38, some thirty-seven years before the siege of Jerusalem, the Revelation itself bearing the date of the early part of the Neronic reign, several years prior to A. D. 70, when Jerusalem was besieged and later desolated.

It is evident that the visions of Revelation belong to the ten days period of Roman emperors from Nero to Diocletian, the period of the persecution of the church resulting from the destruction of Jerusalem. It isn't a sane interpretation of the apocalyptic symbols to pass over the corresponding events of history then in process - the current events and contemporary kings of Rome and Judah - in order to link the fulfillment of these symbols to future events which, if they should come to pass, could not provide a more perfect similitude between the symbol and the event that fulfills it than was present in the events of the history surrounding Jerusalem and Judah; and which followed in immediate rapid succession the fall of Jerusalem, Judaism and the Jewish state.

The theories of futurism would revive kingdoms that have perished, and their kings who have turned to dust; and after several thousands of years in an ultra-special sort of resurrection stage a historical pageant to parade them all before the world again in order to meet the demands of a future fulfillment of Revelation. It's not compatible with the announced purpose of the book nor character of its symbols, the fulfillment of which was accomplished in corresponding events of that period and in the experiences of the churches then living. Jerusalem had filled up the measure of its sin of slain prophets and servants of God and the rejection of the Son of God, the Savior of man. It had therefore to expiate the guilt incurred by Israel and officially accepted by the officials of the nation: His blood be upon our heads and upon the heads of our children. With this vision the judgment on Jerusalem was completed and sealed.

The Background of the Conflict

Woman

(Revelation 12:1-2 NKJV)

Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.

The Background of the Conflict

Woman

Satan

(Revelation 12:3-4 NKJV)

And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. {4} His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.

The Background of the Conflict

Woman



Male Child

Satan

(Revelation 12:5 NKJV)

She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.

Making War Against The Saints

(Revelation 17:16-17 NKJV)

"And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. {17} "For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.



Making War Against The Saints

(Revelation 17:3b-6 NKJV)

...And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. {6} I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.



BOOK OF REVELATION

Chapter 19 (An interval between 2nd and 3rd dooms)

The Lord God omnipotent reigneth (v. 6; 16)



- **Great voice of much people in Heaven (1-5)**
 - a. Alleluia; Salvation, and glory.. unto the Lord our God: (v.1)
 - b. Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever. (v.2; 3)
 - c. Alleluia: Four and twenty elders..worshipped.. saying, Amen;(v.4)
 - d. Alleluia:The Lord our God omnipotent reigneth (v.6)
- **The marriage of the Lamb and supper (v.7- 9)**
 - a. Blessed are those called for the marriage supper (v.9)
- **Heaven opened and White horse and one sits on it (v.11: 16)**
 - a. Who sits on the white horse? (v.11- 16) **"LORD OF LORDS"**
- **Angel stand in the sun and invites (v.17; 21)**
 - a. The supper of the great God? (v. 17- 21)
 - b. Beast and false prophet, cast alive to the lake of fire (v. 20)



**"And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God."
(Revelation 19:9)**

Source: The Book of Revelation by Foy E. Wallace

THE CHORUS ETERNAL AND VISION OF VICTORY!

Revelation 19 - - Verse 1-2 (1) The heavenly acapella chorus

-19: 1-6. The great catastrophe of Revelation, the fall of symbolic Babylon, Jerusalem, also called Sodom and Egypt, bringing an end to Judaism, was envisioned as having occurred. The harps and harpers ceased, giving place to a great voice of much people rejoicing over the vindication of divine justice, in answer to the cry of the souls of the slain under the altar, who as a martyred host responded in the alleluia (hallelujah) of the heavenly chorus. The word alleluia, in verse one, meant praise ye the Lord. In this equivalent it is used first in Psalms 104:35; thereafter it is used repeatedly to introduce & end the chapters in the Psalms. The word alleluia itself is used only in the nineteenth chapter of Revelation, verses 1, 3, 4, 6, which lends special significance to the chorus of the heavenly multitude praising God for Salvation from enemies, and righteous judgments on Jerusalem; and for avenging the blood of the martyrs. This was the reason for the ascription of special praise, as indicated in verse two.

Verses 1-21 THE VISION OF VICTORY (Chapter 19)

There is a striking analogy between these scenes of the church emerging in victory from the period of persecution, described by John in this 19th chapter, and the deliverance of Israel from Babylonian exile, described by Ezekiel in the closing section of his prophecy from the thirty-sixth to the thirty-ninth chapters. The nation of Israel was comforted, and their release was described in terms of a figurative resurrection; and return to their homeland was pictured as a "new heaven & a new earth." (Isaiah 66)

The closing chapters of Revelation from the chapter nineteen to twenty-two follow the course of Ezekiel's apocalypse of Israel returning from the seventy years of exile, but here the church was seen emerging from the period of persecution. The symbols are similar, and the parallel is evident.

Verse 3 - It was not the general or usual form of worship and praise, but a special hallelujah for true and righteous retribution on the harlot woman—apostate Jerusalem – and her affiliates. The words of verse 3 decreed that this judgment was a pronouncement of final doom on Jerusalem. And her smoke rose up forever and ever. This was God's declaration that the old Jerusalem would never be restored. It is parallel to the Lord's declaration in Luke 21:24 : "And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" – which meant that Jerusalem was permanently trodden down; for the times of the Gentiles and the fulness of the Gentiles were commensurate with the entire gospel period. A comparison of the preposition until with such passages as Luke 16:16; Galatians 3:19; Galatians 4:2; Hebrews 9:10 will exemplify that until God signified termination.

Verse 4 - Among the heavenly worshippers were listed the four and twenty elders of verse four, a symbol based on the twelve patriarchs and the twelve apostles, representative of the whole and true Israel of God – the church; as discussed in chapters 5, 8, 14, and 11:18. The song of praise was an anthem of victory for the whole church.

Verse 5-6 - - The voice from the throne, in verses five and six, here proclaimed in mighty volume that the Lord God omnipotent (Almighty) reigneth; which was manifested in the destructions of the Harlot woman, and defeat of the persecuting agencies of the Roman beast. The universal aspect of this joyful victory was expressed in the refrain: Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great—all classes of men who were servants of God were bidden to rejoice.

The greatness of the heavenly multitude joined in chorus as one voice, verse six, was not only a scene of awe and veneration, but was impressive of the magnitude of the significance attached to the end of Jerusalem and the Jewish state, and the removal of Judaism as the greatest obstacle to the expansion of Christianity from the path of the church. With the Harlot City, and the system of Judaism which she represented destroyed; there remained only the execution of judgment against political minions who had shared in her spiritual fornications and abominations.

(2) The marriage supper of the Lamb

-19:7-10. The symbolism expressed in the marriage of the Lamb of verse seven, signified the blessed union of the church with Christ, the Head. But the use of the symbol here did not signify that the church had not been thus related to Christ before this apocalypse. The apostle, in Romans 7:4, represented the marital union of Christ and the church as bringing forth the fruit of wedlock in spiritual offspring. If the marriage did not exist the fruit would be illegitimate. The marriage union of Christ and the church is not a single act or thing. Every union of a believer with Christ in baptism is marriage to Christ, and is representative of the whole relation. This marriage occurs every time one is baptized into Christ, and it is therefore always in process and is continuous. The accentuation on the marriage to Christ in this context was due to the interference of the persecutions with gospel evangelization. Now, that the persecutors were overcome, conversions to Christ would again prevail; hence, the renewed symbol of marriage. As the marriage itself is continuous, so must be the marriage supper, and it symbolized the continuous fellowship of all who are united to Christ; and it is as continuous as the baptism of believers and of the church itself. This part of the song of victory was based on the renewal of the interrupted fellowship of Christians by the afflictions and the tribulations of persecution.

Verse 8 The figurative clause his wife hath made herself ready was the symbol of victory over the evil forces of opposition –the verse declares that she was already his wife, and envisions the spiritual relation as a complete process, not as a single thing. That the Lamb's wife should be arrayed in fine linen, clean & white was explained to be the righteousness of the saints, the purity of the New Jerusalem church in contrast with the iniquities of the harlot Jerusalem, which had gone up in the smoke of destruction forever. This attire of clean and white vestures was a beautiful symbol of the character of all who are truly joined in union with Christ. They were the ones called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb, the equal in number of all who were in the married relation with Christ.

This metaphor comparable to the illustration of the wedding garment in the parable of Matthew 22:11-13, which was necessary to entrance into the feast; without which the intruder would have been cast out. The guests of the marriage feast were themselves the Bride in the parable, and parallel with they which are called unto the marriage supper in verse nine of this chapter. They were equal in number with the church itself.

Verse 9 - The angelic admonition in verse nine for John to write was addressed personally to him, by the voice from the throne, not by an angel, and indicated the distinguished honor of being' the recipient of the revelation of these things of such tremendous significance. Having unfolded the visions in two parts, the closing scene of the second part put the emphasis on the state of blessed union with Christ of all who had overcome the trials and tribulations attending the fall of the harlot Babylon. Angels could have no higher or holier relation.

The epilogue, these are the true sayings of God, meant that they were not mere words of John in visional narration, or of the angels; but they were the very words of God to the Seer; the directly inspired words of God. In this connection it was twice repeated that, He saith unto me. The equivalent of these words occurs several hundred times in the Old Testament, and is repeatedly affirmed in the New Testament.

The positive affirmation of this verbal inspiration is affirmed throughout all the scriptures; but has been marred and mutilated by the sacrilegious pseudo-translations of the perverted new Bible versions. They have been advertised as new translations, but they are in fact no translations. They ruin Revelation as they do all other portions of the verbally inspired word of God. The words of the angel had impressed John as a message direct from God; and verse ten stated that he fell at his feet to worship him. In bodily prostration John was about to worship the angel. But the angel refused the homage, saying, See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God. This testimony of Jesus had reference to the message of Revelation; and being a fellow servant with thy brethren was an expression of personal humility as expressed by John himself in chapter 1:9.

Verse 10 - The closing statement of this section, in verse ten, is: For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. The word spirit here doesn't signify the Holy Spirit, but rather the inner spirit, the vital element, the life and soul-the essence of the apocalypse was the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ to his servant John by his servants, the angels.

(3) The vision of Christ the conqueror

-19:11-16. After the symbolic Babylon, the Sodom-Egypt, apostate harlot-Jerusalem had been utterly overthrown; the temple demolished and Judaism removed; and the Jewish state terminated; all that Jerusalem represented no longer existent – then the visions of Revelation turned to the 'victory of the church over heathenism. The visions of this conflict were presented in the language of high symbols, and there is danger of literalism in their application. In verses eleven thru fourteen, a name was given to the Rider of the white horse; he was called Faithful and True. He was the Christ himself, leading the procession of triumph, with a heavenly army consisting of the legion of martyrs and overcomers of persecution, to wage war against Caesar-worship and heathenism.

With him in this glorious war of Christ against idolatry were the chosen faithful who shared the triumph of the procession of victory. He was identified as the same Rider of the white horse in chapter 6:2; then going forth to conquer, now in victory procession over the imperial persecutors; to judge and make war against all heathenism. This war was to be waged by the sharp sword which proceeded out of his mouth – that is, a war on these heathen minions by the word of God, by the two-edged sword of Hebrews 4:12 & sword of the Spirit of Ephesians 6:17. His descriptions were put in symbols of a royal and ruling conqueror, which compared with the array of the Son of man in the midst of the seven Asian churches in chapter 1:13-16. The vestures of the Rider were dipped in blood, an imagery of the battle with the persecuting beasts who had slain the martyrs and had shed the blood of the saints. With the heavenly army Christ, the Rider, subsequent to the extermination of Judaism, was seen marching against the strongholds of heathenism.

Verse 12 - In verse twelve it is stated that the Conqueror had yet another name – a name written which no man knew, but he himself – which in turn indicated the things of God & Christ unrevealed to me. It compares with the statement of Jesus in Matthew 11:27: "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son & he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Jesus Christ alone has "a name above every name," which signifies a power over heaven and earth that no one can know but Himself – the sole owner of the name and the one possessor of the inherent power of the undefined and unrevealed name.

Verse 13 - In verse thirteen, the Rider was called by a third name – The Word of God. The Word wasn't a name without significance. The same John of the apocalypse referred to the Son of God as "the Word" in the gospel of John 1:1-14. The word is the vehicle of conveying thoughts – and Jesus Christ was the full & complete expression of God's will to man; the beginning and the end of all revelation; hence, his title The Word.

The name *The Word Of God*, signifies the armament of the warfare in which he was in this vision to engage—it was the conflict of Christianity with heathenism, and the truth was the weapon against all error.

Verse 14 - In verse fourteen the armies that followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were the overcomers of the tribulation—redeemed from the period of persecution.

In verse fifteen it was declared that the Rider would smite the nations and rule them with a rod of iron. The process of this smiting was indicated in God's commission to Jeremiah, chapter 1:10: "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant." In the Revelation text the phrases, smite the nations and rule them with an iron, were symbolic of the impact of the gospel on the heathen world. This inherent power & force of Christianity was prophesied in the second psalm, chapter 2:13:

"Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying . . . Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us."

Verse 15 - The psalm prophecy is quoted by the Apostle Peter in Acts 4: 25 &26 with this application of the effect of preaching Christ to the heathen world. The ruling with a rod of iron referred to the inexorable character of the law of Christ—the invincible word of God. The treading of the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of God was the symbol of the execution of the inflexible judgment of retribution. And in the book of Revelation it was Almighty God, the supreme Judge of all men, who should formulate the sentence and render judgment against the heathen nations.

Verse 16 - In verse sixteen a fourth name was inscribed on the Rider—King of Kings & Lord of Lords. This was the highest title to be conferred. It symbolized the position and power over all kings and rulers of all rank in the heathen world, all of whom must yield to the invincible Word of God. This stage of the vision was in repetition of chapter 11:15: The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ. It was the sublime apocalypse of the conquering Lord, and his victorious church. The conquest of "the kingdoms of this world" was spiritual, not literal; and it was to be accomplished by the spread of the gospel and expansion of Christianity over the heathen world, as stated in Matthew 24:31 and as prophesied in the second Psalm. The names and insignia attached to the Rider comport with the Psalm prophecy and all the divine offices of the Christ Rider. His insignia were: the white horse, the diadems, the blood-dipped garments, the flaming eyes, and inscribed name, unknown to men. His divine works were: to judge, to wage war, to smite with a verbal sword, to tread the winepress of God's wrath, and to rule with the inflexible iron rod of the inexorable law of the Christ.

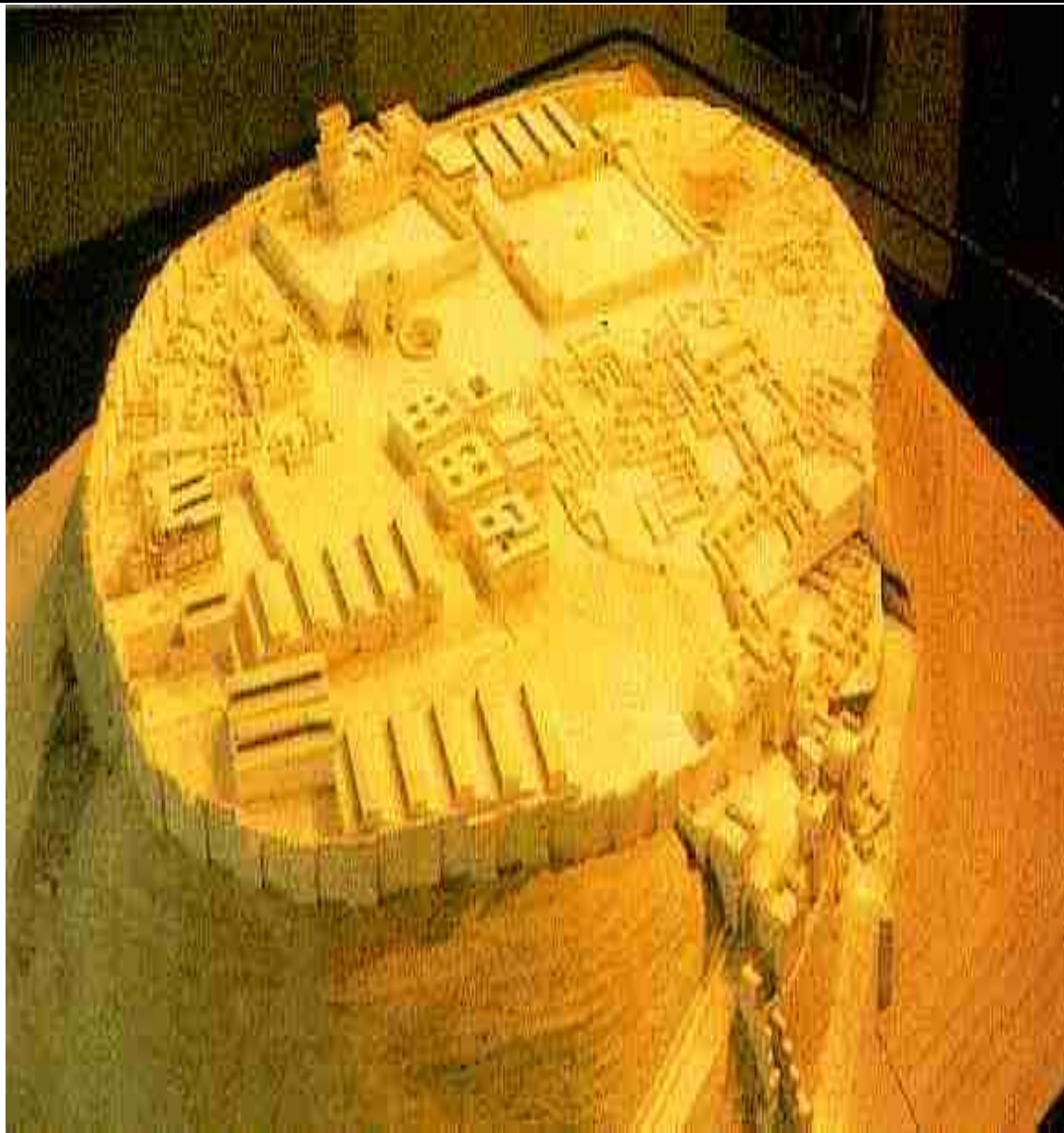
(4) The great sacrificial Supper

—19:17-18. These verses represent a feast on the flesh of kings consumed by the birds of prey and was one of the most highly metaphorical sections of the entire series of visions. In Matthew 24:28, Jesus said: "For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together." This deadly forecast was the Lord's illustration of the siege of Jerusalem, which was the carcass; and the Romans were the eagles, whose armies would swoop on Jerusalem to destroy and devour it. But in this vision the metaphor was reversed. The rulers of the persecuting powers, with all their combined forces opposing Christ and his church, were the victims of this supper of the Great God. The sacrifice of animals was the common method for which to celebrate victories; such as when king Saul, without warrant, had presumptuously planned in celebration of victory over Amalek, as recorded in 1 Samuel 15:15; 1 Samuel 15:21.



Jesus referred to this time when he said in Mt 24:28 "For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together." Jesus died so all could be saved and He never wanted any one to be lost, but the cruel wicked course of the followers of Satan leave Him no alternative but to destroy them. The Bible seeks to warn transgressor that the wages of sin is death! Those who continue on in the course of rebellion and defiance of God's Law will end up Buzzard Bait!

Here in this vision the eating of the flesh of kings, as the victims of the sacrificial supper, was symbolic of the victory of the saints over all the persecuting powers of the heathen governments, including all Roman tributaries which were the minions of the composite Roman beast. This symbolic representation was repetition of the previous figurative descriptions of the fearful visitations of divine wrath on the wicked persecutors, which no kings or rulers of nations could withstand. The same metaphorical representation of the celebration of the return of Israel from exile, subsequent to the fall of Babylon, was employed by Ezekiel in chapter 39: 17-20: "And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord God; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. Thus, ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord God." It is apparent that this sacrificial supper in Revelation was the vision of celebration for the triumph of the church over forces of heathenism. The inclusion in the metaphor of the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great meant that no class or condition of men in the heathen society which formed a part of the forces of persecution and of opposition to the church, were exempt from retribution; but were alike victims of this symbolic celebration of the victory over heathenism in the sacrificial supper of the great God.



A model of the ancient city of Megiddo, showing its impressive defensive wall built by King Solomon (1 Kin. 9:15).¹⁹

¹⁹ Youngblood, R. F., Bruce, F. F., & Harrison, R. K., Thomas Nelson Publishers (Eds.). (1995). In [Nelson's new illustrated Bible dictionary](#). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc.

Keil and Delitzsch Biblical Commentary

Ezekiel 39: 17-20 – Total Destruction of Gog & His Hosts

To show how terrible the judgment upon Gog will be, Ezekiel depicts in three special ways the total destruction of his powerful forces. In the first place, the burning of all weapons of the fallen foe will furnish the inhabitants of the land of Israel with wood for firing for seven years, so that there will be no necessity for them to fetch fuel from the field or from the forest ([Ezekiel 39:9](#) & [Ezekiel 39:10](#)). But Hvernick is wrong in supposing that the reason for burning the weapons is that, according to [Isaiah 9:5](#), war weapons are irreconcilable with the character of the Messianic times of peace. This is not referred to here; but the motive is the complete annihilation of the enemy, the removal of every trace of him. The prophet therefore crowds the words together for the purpose of enumerating every kind of weapon that was combustible, even to the hand-staves which men were accustomed to carry (cf. [Numbers 22:27](#)). The quantity of the weapons will be so great, that they will supply the Israelites with all the fuel they need for seven years. The number seven in the seven years as well as in the seven months of burying ([Ezekiel 39:11](#)) is symbolical, stamping the overthrow as a punishment inflicted by God, the completion of a divine judgment. **With the gathering of the weapons for burning there is associated the plundering of the fallen foe ([Ezekiel 39:10](#)), by which the Israelites do to the enemy what he intended to do to them ([Ezekiel 38:12](#)), and people of God obtain possession of their foes wealth ([Jeremiah 30:16](#)).**

In the second place, God will assign a large burying-place for the army of Gog in a valley of Israel, which is to be named in consequence "the multitude of Gog;" just as a city in that region will also be called Hamonah due to this event. The Israelites will bury the fallen of Gog there for seven months long.

In the third place, God will provide the birds of prey and beasts of prey with an abundant meal from this slaughter. This cannot be understood as signifying that only what remain of the corpses, and have not been cleared away in the manner depicted in [Ezekiel 39:11-16](#), will become the prey of wild beasts; but the beasts of prey will make their meal of the corpses before it is possible to bury them, since the burying cannot be effected immediately or all at once. The several features in the picture, of the manner in which the enemies are to be destroyed till the last trace of them is gone, are not arranged in chronological order, but according to the subject-matter; and the thought that the slaughtered foes are to become the prey of wild beasts is mentioned last as being the more striking, because it is in this that their ignominious destruction culminates. To give due prominence to this thought, the birds and beasts of prey are summoned by God to gather together to the meal prepared for them. The picture given of it as a sacrificial meal is based upon [Isaiah 34:6](#) and [Jeremiah 46:10](#). In harmony with this picture the slaughtered foes are designated as fattened sacrificial beasts, rams, lambs, he-goats, bullocks; on which Grotius has correctly remarked, that "these names of animals, which were generally employed in the sacrifices, are to be understood as signifying different orders of men, chiefs, generals, soldiers, as the Chaldee also observes."

Foy E. Wallace Revelation Chapter 19 Verse 18 Commentary Continues . . .

The vision of the angel standing in the sun, of verse seventeen, indicated not only the glory of this messenger of Christ, but the central station from which to summon the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven. The word heaven in the previous visions has designated the ruling authorities of the earth, or place of the nations. The reference to the fowls in the mid-heaven indicated that birds of prey, symbolizing this awesome picture of visitation of divine wrath, were flying in the midst of these evil authorities ready to descend on the carrion of the pagan persecuting powers, these defeated forces of heathenism. The foregoing descriptions were designed to symbolize that no class or condition, high or low, in the heathen world could stand against the spiritual forces of Christ, the Conqueror and Rider of the white horse—and from this imagery of spiritual victory over all the forces of heathenism, the vision turns to the scene of judgment and final banishment of the Roman beast and his subordinate beast, the religious false prophet, who had beguiled the Empire's people into the emperor-image worship, and who was the original source of the spiritual war over evil - delineated in the apocalypse.

(5) The complete destruction of the persecuting power of the Roman beast and his subordinate false prophet

– 19:19-21. The fact that these visions anticipated events before, during and after the destruction of Jerusalem, should be observed and retained in the mind, as the considerations advance from one stage and scene to another. The apocalyptic scene of verses nineteen to twenty-one reverted to the spiritual battle between the heavenly armies of the Rider, and the armies of the Roman beast – the heathen persecutor. It was after the destruction of Jerusalem; and after the evil forces of heathenism were diverted from the scene of Jerusalem and Judaism to converge on the church. But the vision saw the triumph of Christianity. It was declared in verse twenty that the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet . . . with which he deceived them that received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image.

This beast was the original first sea-beast of chapter 13—personified in the emperor, the source of authority for all the persecutions. The false prophet was identical with the second land-beast, of Judea and Palestine, described in chapter 13, as the subordinate of the imperial beast who seduced the inhabitants of Judea to worship the emperor. As previously postulated, the “mark of the beast” was submission to the decree for emperor worship and acceptance of the image of the emperor as deity and the worship of the Roman image in acts of idolatry for the emperor.

After accomplishing the destruction of Jerusalem and the obliteration of the Jewish state, the vision represents the beast as having lost the battle against the church. The invincible spiritual forces of Christianity prevailed against all powers of heathenism, and both the beast and his satellite false prophet were taken; that is, captured and consigned to the bottomless pit of banishment, symbolized by the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

The object of this vision was to symbolize the war of righteousness led by Christ Himself, the Head of the church, against the wickedness of heathenism. It described the progress of the persecution of the church, after the fall of Jerusalem, through the period of tribulation of chapter 2:10; and of the hour of trial in chapter 3:10; in the deadly conflict with the heathenism of the Roman world.

Verse 20-21 The apocalypse of these last verses of chapter nineteen follows the same pattern in visions of the defeat of the hosts opposing Christ. The second Psalm decreed that thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel, and the apocalypse declared that they were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. One of these passages cannot be considered more or less literal than the other – both were figurative expressions which signified the utter end of the persecuting authorities of heathenism against Christianity. The phrase cast alive into a lake of fire was equivalent to burned alive & it symbolized complete destruction.

The signal triumph of the cause of truth represented by the burning alive of the beast and the false prophet didn't symbolize the destruction of the Roman Empire, but of the persecutions waged by the emperors, which the beasts represented. The lake of fire was not literal any more than the beast was literal. Neither was subject to literal application – both were figurative. The beast symbolized the persecuting power of the Roman emperor; and casting him into a lake of fire signified the complete defeat of the heathen powers he represented in the war against the church and it was accomplished by the sword that proceeded out the mouth of Jesus Christ, the Rider of the white horse. The sword wasn't a literal steel blade; it was the Word of God, the weapon by which the church won the victories over heathenism and idolatry; and which is even yet the only righteous weapon in the warfare of the truth against error.

The last passage of this chapter verse twenty-one, was the brief vision of the defeat of the remnant which had been slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse. This remnant symbolized those enemies of Christ other than the persecuting beasts. It represented all forms of error & evil & doctrines of antichrist that stood in the way of the church. They were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse; and the text identified the sword by the modifying phrase: which sword proceeded out of his mouth – the Word of God. By his word all forms of heathenism were exposed and the enemies of his cause, in the battle imagery, were slain, or defeated.

They were figuratively slain, by a figurative sword: which sword proceeded out of his mouth—that is, by the teaching of the truth and the spread of the gospel. To complete the visional and the metaphorical picture, chapter nineteen ends with verse twenty-one in the final statement: And all the fowls were filled with their flesh. As the birds devour the carrion, the truth consumes every form of error inimical to the cause of Jesus Christ. The Lord foretold that this result would follow the destruction of Jerusalem in Matthew 24 & verse 31: "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." The equivalent declaration of the apocalypse is in chapter 11:15: "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." The kingdom is everlasting; the inheritance is eternal; and thus the reign is forever and ever.

These parallels between the Lord's account of these events in advance of their occurrences, and the visions of John in anticipation of the same series of events, have formulated accumulative evidence throughout the Bible book, that the apocalypses of Revelation were but the extension of the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew—the Lord's own forecast of the events preceding and subsequent to the destruction of Jerusalem.

Ezekiel 16—The Harlot Wife of Yahweh

A. Israel rescued and adorned [16:1–14]

1. Jerusalem's humble beginning (1–5)

a. **Cause Jerusalem to know her abominations:** This word of the Lord through Ezekiel concerns Jerusalem and the depths of her wickedness. Throughout this chapter, **Jerusalem** is used as an accurate representative of the people Israel as a whole.

i. "Ezekiel was charged by God to declare his message to Jerusalem as representative of all Judah, and even the entire nation." (Feinberg)

b. **Your birth and your nativity are from the land of Canaan:** This was true in the prior sense of God's promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:1–3) and when Israel as a nation came back to the land in the days of Joshua. The land of Israel was occupied by Canaanite tribes such as the **Amorite** and the **Hittite** tribes.

i. "Amorite and Hittite were general names for the people of Canaan who occupied the land before Abraham.... Being the most powerful of the nations in Canaan, they represented them all." (Feinberg)

ii. **Are from the land of Canaan:** "The statement is heavy with sarcasm, however, for the term 'Canaanite' was a byword for moral decadence." (Taylor)

iii. **Your mother a Hittite:** "Sometimes the ill nature of a father is corrected in the child by the sweetness of the mother, but you Jews were not so happy, your mother was as bad every whit as your father." (Poole)

c. **On the day you were born:** God used a vivid description to show how humble and poor Israel's beginnings were. There was none to care for her at birth; all other nations were against her from the beginning (**no eye pitied you**). Israel was hated from birth (**you yourself were loathed on the day you were born**). If not for the care of their covenant God, they would have perished.

i. **You were not rubbed with salt:** "In salting the child the skin is rubbed with salt to make it firm and clean." (Feinberg)

ii. "Cutting the cord, washing, rubbing down with salt, and clothing the newborn were also customary legal acts of legitimation. In the neglect and abandonment of the infant in the open field, the parent legally relinquished all rights to and responsibilities for the child." (Block)

iii. **Thrown out into the open field:** "This is an allusion to the custom of some heathen and barbarous nations, who exposed those children in the open fields to be devoured by wild beasts who had any kind of deformity, or whom they could not support." (Clarke)

iv. **Thrown out into the open field** shows how lost and vulnerable they were without God. “Cast out into the open field, left in a wilderness where it is not likely that any should pass by, thrown where the cold can smite by night and the heat can blast by day, left where the wild beast goeth about, seeking whom he may devour-such is the estate of human nature: unclothed, unarmed, helpless, exposed to all manner of ravenous destroyers.” (Spurgeon)

2. God’s favor transforms Jerusalem (6–7)

a. **When I passed by you and saw you struggling**: Continuing the illustration from the previous verses, God took note of Israel in their humble, hated state. They would have perished (**struggling in your own blood**) if not for God’s grace-filled intervention.

i. In Deuteronomy 7:7–8, God explained the reason He set His attention on Israel to rescue them: *The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers.*

ii. It wasn’t because Israel was so amazing or so holy. They were weak, poor, struggling, and near death. But God **passed by** and took notice.

b. **I said to you in your blood, “Live!”** When all their circumstances and all the other nations said *die* to Israel, God said **live**. He brought life to them and **made** them **thrive like a plant in the field**.

i. “He pronounces the sentence of life upon the child, otherwise sentenced to certain death. His passion is reflected in the emphatic twofold declaration, *In your blood, live!*” (Block)

c. **You grew, matured, and became very beautiful**: Under God’s care Israel became larger, stronger, and more mature. They became **very beautiful** and came into young adulthood (**your breasts were formed, your hair grew**).

i. According to Block, **your hair grew** refers to the metaphorical young woman’s pubic hair. “With the passing of the age of innocence and the arrival of sexual maturity, nakedness assumes moral overtones. Whereas the earlier nakedness had made the foundling vulnerable to the elements and marauding animals, now she stands exposed to dangers of a different sort.” (Block)

d. **But you were naked and bare**: Israel grew and matured, but had not become so self sufficient that they no longer needed God.

i. “The foundling became a beautiful young woman, yet it is stated that she was naked and bare. The implication may be that she was without wealth and without the benefits of culture and civilization, as the world sees them.” (Feinberg)

3. God’s loving covenant with Jerusalem (8)

a. **I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness**: In the figure used by the Lord to describe Israel and his relationship to them, they were grown yet still greatly neglected and

needy. They needed God's protection (**spread My wing**) and His provision (**covered your nakedness**), and God gave them both.

i. **Spread My wing over you:** "The phrase in v. 8 describes the symbolic act whereby the husband took his wife under his protection (Ruth 3:9)." (Wright)

b. **I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you:** Above protecting and providing for Israel, God entered into **covenant** relationship with them. It was a covenant marriage, and God could say, "**you became Mine.**"

i. "In earthly inter-relationships, the marriage relationship is the highest in sanctity, because it is the highest in the experience of Love. By this figure, then, God sets forth for us what His heart feels for us, and what He desires from us in return. His love is of the strongest and tenderest, and He looks for a return of that love in uttermost loyalty." (Morgan)

4. God's care and generosity adorns Jerusalem (9–14)

a. **I washed you in water:** God described His care and adornment of Israel. He cleaned them and **anointed** them with fragrant **oil**. He **clothed** them in fine clothes and **sandals of badger skin**. God **adorned** them with all kinds of jewelry, and even put **a beautiful crown** on Israel's head.

i. **Covered you with silk:** "The word for 'silk' in verse 10 is a Hebrew word which does not occur elsewhere. The clothing was costly." (Feinberg)

ii. **Embroidered cloth ... badger skin ... fine linen:** "These expressions occur elsewhere most frequently in the descriptions of the tabernacle, its curtains, and the priestly vestments. References to the luxury leather of which her sandals are made (*tahas*) occur only in contexts involving the tabernacle." (Block)

iii. "The *badgers' skin* (AV) is the same as the material used in the covering of the tabernacle (Num. 4:6ff.). The various translations give *sealskin* (RV), *porpoise skin* (RV mg.), *leather* (RSV). 'Badger' is certainly not right, because the skin had to be both suitable for shoes and also large enough for one of them to cover the ark. The likeliest candidate is the dugong, a seal-like animal of the order Siremia, which is found in the Red Sea; its skin is used by the bedouin for making sandals." (Taylor)

b. **You ate pastry of fine flour, honey, and oil:** God provided richly for Israel's every need.

i. "Furthermore, her special food, *solet* and *semen*, 'fine flour' and 'oil,' figured prominently in the sacred offerings. In short, Jerusalem, the bride of Yahweh, is clothed with the garments that 'clothe' the sanctuary and is fed with the 'food' of its offerings." (Block)

c. **You were exceedingly beautiful, and succeeded to royalty:** Because of God's generous love and care, Israel excelled in beauty and was raised to royal status. They became famous among the nations, and it was all because of God's **splendor** that He had **bestowed** upon them. It was not of themselves.

- i. "During the reign of King David and during Solomon's early years, Jerusalem was indeed a queenly city and Israel a prosperous kingdom. As long as Israel, Jehovah's wife, obeyed His Word and kept His covenant, He blessed her abundantly just as He promised. He gave her healthy children, fruitful flocks and herds, abundant harvests, and protection from disease, disaster, and invasion." (Wiersbe)
- ii. "Incredibly, the charge that Ezekiel would later level at the king of Tyre applied to this poor foundling: 'Your heart was lifted up on account of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom on account of your splendor.'" (Block)
- iii. From a new covenant perspective, it is staggering to think and to believe that we have even more in Jesus Christ than Israel had when they were blessed under the old covenant. Every aspect of God's blessing to Israel under the old covenant (washing, anointing, clothing, providing, adorning, crowning, and so forth) is given in great measure and glory in the new covenant.
- iv. F. B. Meyer described how we should react to God's amazing gifts towards us: "Let us dare to believe that it is so. Accept and value your position. In Christ, we are more than tolerated; we are loved. We are more than forgiven; we are arrayed in fair garments. The King greatly delights in us. In His eyes, and because His beauty is upon us, we are all fair."

B. Israel the proud harlot [16:15–26]

1. Jerusalem acts like a harlot (15–19)

- a. **You trusted in your own beauty:** This pride was the root of Israel's decline. They forgot that they were nothing when God found them, and that He had bestowed their beauty upon them. Brought to beauty by God's blessing, they **trusted** in the blessing God gave instead of in God Himself.
 - i. Ezekiel 16:15–35 is one of the strongest denunciations of Israel's sin found in the entire Bible. "Rebukes of Israel's sin by the prophets of Israel are many and well known, but none is so vivid, vehement, sordid and piercing as these words." (Feinberg)
 - ii. "God had warned Israel not to forget him when she came into all the benefits that he would give her in the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 6:10–12). This exhortation was soon forgotten by the nation's leaders." (Alexander)
 - iii. To deserve such a strong rebuke, Israel began by forgetting an important principle: everything good they were and all the good they had were the gift of God's grace to them. Many centuries later the Apostle Paul wrote of this same principle for Christians: *For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?* (1 Corinthians 4:7)
 - iv. If it was possible for blessed Israel to trust in her own beauty, so it is possible for the disciple of Jesus. F. B. Meyer spoke of the Christian's proper attitude: "Let us not presume. We have nought of our own. When the temptation tries us to pride ourselves on our

goodness; to arrogate to ourselves a special position because of our superiority to others; to assume that we can be independent of our immortal Lover—then let us remember what we were.”

b. Played the harlot because of your fame: God gave Israel a place of status and royalty among the nations, but they used that **fame** to seek after the idols of the pagan nations. They ran after pagan idols like a harlot runs after customers (**poured out your harlotry on everyone passing by**).

i. “It is an ill sign in any of us when God’s blessings are themselves made into idols. If thou beginnest to worship thy wealth, thy health, thy children, thy learning, or anything that God has given thee, this is exceedingly provoking to the Most High; it is a breach of the marriage covenant between thy soul and God.” (Spurgeon)

ii. **Played the harlot:** “The verb [**harlot**, root *znh*] and other derivatives occur twenty-one times in this description of Jerusalem’s unrestrained nymphomaniacal adventures with her lovers.” (Block)

iii. “The Christian reader may, not surprisingly, feel nauseated at the indelicate realism of Ezekiel’s language, but Ezekiel meant it that way. He was telling of ugly sins and he made the parable fit the facts.” (Taylor)

iv. “Although the root *naap* [adultery] is more fitting to describe Israel’s covenantal infidelity, *znh* [harlotry] offers a more forceful rhetorical tool. The innocent young woman, graciously elevated to the status of queen, has become a whore.” (Block)

c. You took some of your garments and adorned multicolored high places: Israel took the very blessings God adorned her with and she used those blessings to adorn the places of pagan idolatry. The **gold** and **silver** God gave them was used in sexually charged idol worship (**male images and played the harlot with them**).

i. **Multicolored high places:** “The *gaily decked shrines* (RSV) indicate the colourful hangings of the tents that were set up at the high places (see note on 6:3), which were seen by Ezekiel to be places for feasting, fornication, idolatry and child-sacrifice.” (Taylor)

ii. **Male images:** “*Priapi* are here meant, which were carried about in the ceremonies of Osiris, Bacchus, and Adonis; and were something like the *lingam* among the Hindoos ... This was done at the worship of Bacchus in Egypt: and they who wish to see more may consult *Herodotus* lib. ii, c. 48, 49. In this *phallic* worship the women were principally concerned.” (Clarke)

2. Jerusalem sacrifices their sons and daughters to idols (20–22)

a. These you sacrificed to them to be devoured: Israel became so degenerate in her devotion to idols that she offered her own **sons** and **daughters** and **sacrificed** them to the pagan idols such as the detestable Molech.

i. **To be devoured:** “Instead of presenting her children to Yahweh, her husband, this woman presented them *as food* to the pagan images that she had made! The expression *le ekol* (lit. ‘for eating’) portrays the children as idols’ diet.” (Block)

b. **By causing them to pass through the fire:** Their idolatry went so far that they actually participated in the Canaanite cult of child sacrifice. Even King Ahaz (2 Kings 16:3) and King Manasseh (2 Kings 21:6) took part in this horrific practice. The pagan god (or, *demon*, more accurately) Molech was worshipped by heating a metal statue representing the god until it was red hot, then placing a living infant on the outstretched hands of the statue, while beating drums drowned out the screams of the child until it burned to death.

i. Sadly, even a man as great as Solomon at least sanctioned the worship of Molech and built a temple to this idol (1 Kings 11:7). One of the great crimes of the northern tribes of Israel was their worship of Molech, leading to the Assyrian captivity (2 Kings 17:17). King Manasseh of Judah gave his son to Molech (2 Kings 21:6). Up to the days of King Josiah of Judah, Molech worship continued, because he destroyed a place of worship to that idol (2 Kings 23:10).

ii. There is little or none archaeological evidence for child sacrifice among the Israelites of this period. This means that either the practice was very rare or diligently covered up. This may be God’s way of saying that even if the practice was rare, it was an abomination to Him.

c. **You did not remember the days of your youth:** Israel’s haughty pride was rooted in their failure to **remember**. They no longer remembered their poor and humble beginning, and how all the protection, provision, and adornment they enjoyed was the blessing and gift of God.

3. Jerusalem’s great wickedness (23–26)

a. **Woe, woe to you!** This was God’s sorrowful lament over wicked Israel. God’s protest came from great depth of feeling.

i. “The repeated woe is partly threat and partly lament.” (Feinberg)

b. **You also built for yourself a shrine, and made a high place for yourself in every street:** As they grew worse in wickedness, Israel began to multiply their idolatry. It became widespread and common over the entire land.

i. **Made a high place:** “*Gab*, a *stew* or *brothel*.... So my old MS. Bible, a *bordel house*. ‘Thou hast builded thy stewes and bordell houses in every place.’ -*Coverdale’s Bible*, 1535. *Bordel* is an *Italian* word: how it got so early into our language I know not. Our modern word *brothel* is a corruption of it.” (Clarke)

c. **You offered yourself to everyone who passed by:** Israel’s unfaithfulness to God was not only in every place, but seemingly also to every pagan god, even the gods of **the Egyptians**. They did it all to **provoke** God to **anger**.

i. **You offered yourself:** Literally, this is *you opened your feet*. It was an indelicate way of saying “you spread your legs for everyone.” Ezekiel used this shocking language to jolt his jaded listeners.

ii. **Your very fleshly neighbors:** This is more shocking language. “The prophet describes this lover in obscenely physical terms: *your neighbors with the huge organs*.” (Block) There are several places in the Old Testament where the penis is euphemistically referred to as *flesh*: Ezekiel 23:20; 44:7, 9; Genesis 17:11, 14, 23, 24, 25; Exodus 28:42; and Leviticus 15:2–19.

C. The depths of the sin of Israel the harlot [16:27–34]

1. Foreign lovers turn upon Jerusalem the harlot (27–29)

a. **Therefore, I stretched out My hand against you:** After a long time and great provocation, God began to act against Israel. He **diminished** their provision and gave them to their enemies the Philistines (**gave you up to the will of those who hate you**). Israel’s idolatry was so great it made the **Philistines** blush.

i. **Diminished your allotment:** “God’s reaction was that he was provoked to anger (26), for which his appointed punishment was to diminish her *allotted portion* (27), which refers to loss of territory by enemy annexation. We know from the Taylor Prism that Sennacherib did just that in 701 BC.” (Taylor)

b. **You also played the harlot with the Assyrians:** Their idolatry became worse, multiplying so far they not only went after the gods of the **Assyrians** and the Babylonians (**as far as the land of the trader, Chaldea**), they also formed political alliances with those nations. The temptation was not only to idolatry, but also to reliance upon and alliances with foreign nations.

i. “In time and when it suited her pleasure, she turned to the Assyrians. The historical books recount the pro-Assyrian policy of both Ahaz and Manasseh (see 2 Kings 16:7 ff.; Hosea 5:13; 8:9; Amos 5:26).” (Feinberg)

2. Degenerate Jerusalem (30)

a. **How degenerate is your heart!** God saw that the problem with Israel went far deeper than their actions. Their **heart** had become proud and dissatisfied with their covenant God. This decline was truly **degenerate**.

b. **The deeds of a brazen harlot:** Israel’s decline began in the **heart**, but it did not end there. In their wickedness and idolatry they **did the deeds** of unashamed prostitutes.

3. Jerusalem worse than a harlot (31–34)

a. **Yet you were not like a harlot, because you scorned payment:** Israel practiced their idolatry every place (**at the head of every road and a high place in every street**), yet in one way they

were significantly worse than a literal **harlot**—they received *no benefit of any kind* from their idolatry, still they persisted in it.

i. “In Ezek. 16:30–34 in a piece of fine sarcasm Ezekiel portrays Israel literally as a nymphomaniac whose promiscuous lust has caused her to reverse the usual order involved in prostitution. She has hired rather than been hired by her clients.” (Vawter and Hoppe)

b. **You are an adulterous wife, who takes strangers:** The sense is that the harlot does it for pay, but the **adulterous wife** for free, merely for the thrill of transgression and a combination of weakness and hardness of heart.

i. Israel as the **adulterous wife** is the theme of Ezekiel predecessor, the prophet Hosea—as well as many other prophets.

c. **Men make payments to all harlots, but you made payments to all your lovers:** Israel was like the adulterous wife who not only gives herself away for free, but buys lavish gifts for her illicit lovers.

d. **No one solicited you to be a harlot:** In her metaphorical harlotry, Israel had no pimp. She was not forced or persuaded to do what she did; it came from her degenerate heart (Ezekiel 16:30). Even though it cost her (**you gave payment**), she still continued unfaithful to her God.

i. “But is the church today any less guilty? Members of local churches commit the same sins we read about in the newspapers, but the news doesn’t always get to the headlines. Congregations are being torn apart because of professed Christians who are involved in lawsuits, divorces, immorality, family feuds, crooked business deals, financial scandals, and a host of other activities that belong to the world.” (Wiersbe)

D. God’s message to Israel the harlot [16:35–43]

1. Judgment announced against Jerusalem the harlot (35–39)

a. **O harlot, hear the word of the LORD:** God didn’t address Israel by a noble name. Their degenerate heart deserved a shocking address.

i. **O harlot:** “A name good enough for such an odious housewife, the shame of her sex. He is not worthy of an honest name whose deeds are not honest.” (Trapp)

ii. **Because your filthiness was poured out:** Block believes this refers to “the female genital fluid produced at sexual arousal.” But most commentators believe this is a reference to the issue of a venereal disease: “Thy filthiness issuing from thee by reason of thine overly frequent and excessive adulteries. He meaneth the infamous fluxes of whores, saith Diodat.” (Trapp) It is properly translated in our version *filthiness, poisonous filth*. Does it not refer to that *venereal virus* which is engendered by promiscuous connexions?” (Clarke)

b. I will gather all your lovers with whom you took pleasure, all those you loved, and all those you hated: The LORD spoke as the one who knows human nature. He knew that when people run after illicit lovers—either literally or spiritually—some they may love, but others they will hate.

i. “Appropriately, it is Israel’s ‘lovers’ who will execute God’s vengeance upon her. By that they add to the depth of her shame. They show how cheaply they had valued what she had to offer them and the real contempt in which they held her.” (Vawter and Hoppe)

ii. “For these reasons God would gather all her lovers—those she had loved, i.e., the Egyptians, and those she had hated, i.e., the Chaldeans. These would come against Jerusalem from every direction.” (Smith)

c. I will gather them from all around against you and will uncover your nakedness to them: God promised to humble—even to humiliate—Israel before her pagan neighbors. The beauty and adornment she had traded upon before the nations would be stripped away, and they would see what Israel was without God.

i. This wasn’t shame for the sake of shame; this was for the sake of repentance and restoration.

ii. “Jerusalem had bared her body to all passersby. Now God provides her with all the exposure she wants, and more. If she wants to be a public spectacle, he offers his aid. Naked he had found her; naked he would leave her. The hell that awaited her was not the creation of some demonic force or external power, but of her own making.” (Block)

d. I will judge you as women who break wedlock or shed blood are judged: God would bring the punishment of death upon Israel. He would not kill the nations completely, but reign death upon them in judgment. God promised to bring this judgment with passion: **I will bring blood upon you in fury and jealousy.**

i. “The first step in her retributive judgment at the hands of the Lord would be public exposure before both her lovers and her enemies. Public exposure of profligate women and stoning of them were well-known customs in ancient Israel.” (Feinberg)

e. I will also give you into their hand: God promised that the judgment to come upon Israel would come through the very lovers she gave herself to. The neighboring nations, and their gods by proxy, would conquer and humiliate stubborn Israel.

i. **They shall also strip you:** “It is opprobrium to a man to be stripped, more to a woman; this Jewish adulteress shall be stripped, that her nakedness appear.” (Poole)

2. Describing the coming judgment against Jerusalem the harlot (40-43)

a. **They shall also bring up an assembly against you:** The armies of the nations surrounding Israel would come against her in a divinely appointed judgment. The judgment would be complete, with the **stones** of attack, the **swords** of war, and the **fire** of destruction.

b. **I will make you cease playing the harlot, and you shall no longer hire lovers:** The judgment God would bring upon them would be something of a cure of Israel's gross idolatry. After this judgment and exile, they would never have the same problem with the idols of the nations.

c. **So I will lay to rest My fury against you:** God's judgment against and anger towards Israel was not to last forever. When their hearts were turned away from their gross idolatry, God would change His disposition toward them.

d. **Because you did not remember the days of your youth:** God repeats the idea from Ezekiel 16:22. Their self-destructive pride was based in their failure to remember that all the good they had was a blessing and gift from God.

i. "In order that she might remember him once again, God would bring this discipline on her. Though mankind may forget God, his love prevents him from forgetting his own. God takes his commitments in personal relationships seriously." (Alexander)²⁰

²⁰ Guzik, D. (2017). [Ezekiel](#) (Eze 16). Santa Barbara, CA: David Guzik.



Jesus referred to this time when he said in Mt 24:28 "For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together." Jesus died so all could be saved and He never wanted any one to be lost, but the cruel wicked course of the followers of Satan leave Him no alternative but to destroy them. The Bible seeks to warn transgressor that the wages of sin is death! Those who continue on in the course of rebellion and defiance of God's Law will end up Buzzard Bait!

Ezekiel 17—The Parable of the Two Eagles and the Vine

A. The parable of the two eagles and the vine [17:1–10]

1. A riddle and a parable (1–2)

a. **Son of man, pose a riddle, and speak a parable:** Ezekiel the prophet was told to speak forth a saying that would be something of a **riddle** and something of a **parable**. It was a **riddle** in that the meaning was a bit of a puzzle to understanding; it was a **parable** in that it told a story illustrating spiritual and material truth.

i. “It is a riddle in that its meaning needs to be explained; there is a deeper meaning which underlies the figurative form, for something in its presentation is obscure. It is a parable in that it is an allegory.” (Feinberg)

ii. “Riddles exercise the wit, and parables help the memory, and excite both attention and affection.” (Trapp)

iii. “The manner in which plants and animals relate in the story, carrying on as if they were humans, would have amused any audience, and undoubtedly contributed to the prophet’s reputation as a ‘spinner of riddles’ (Ezekiel 20:49).” (Block)

b. **To the house of Israel:** Once again God referred to what was primarily the kingdom and tribe of Judah as the **house of Israel** as a whole. The parable describes the events between the time of King Jehoiachin’s exile (597 BC, when also Nebuchadnezzar placed Zedekiah on the throne of Judah) and the year Zedekiah revolted against Babylon, because he trusted in the promise of Egypt’s help (588 BC).

i. “In the allegory of foundling in the previous chapter Ezekiel was dealing with the spiritual and moral malady of Israel. In this message he was concerned with her political folly and wickedness.” (Morgan)

2. The first eagle of the parable (3–6)

a. **A great eagle:** The parable concerns a large and majestic **eagle** that **came to Lebanon** and took the **highest branch** from a **cedar tree**. The eagle then **carried it to a land of trade**.

i. “It is interesting to note that often the eagle was used symbolically in the OT to represent God’s punitive power (Deut 28:49) and the speed with which a conqueror advanced (Isa 46:11; Jer 48:40; 49:22).” (Alexander)

b. **He took some of the seed of the land:** Then the eagle used some of the **seed** from the land of the cedar tree, and he **planted it in a fertile field**, where it **became a spreading vine**, spreading **forth branches**.

3. The second eagle of the parable (7-8)

a. **There was another great eagle:** The second **eagle** appears suddenly, and the vine previously mentioned **bent its roots** and **stretched its branches** toward the second eagle.

i. “What strikes the listener/reader is this bird’s passivity. In contrast to the first eagle, this bird takes no actions; he is simply there.” (Block)

b. **That he might water it:** The vine did this in the hope that the second eagle would care for the vine, protect it, and give it the right conditions for growth and prosperity—which *it already had under the first eagle*. The hoped for result was that it would **become a majestic vine**.

i. “In the absence of any explanation for the vine’s action, the audience is left to reflect on the vine’s ingratitude and stupidity.” (Block)

4. God’s observations upon this vine (9-10)

a. **Will it thrive?** God asked the question, revealing the fate of the vine. The rhetorical questions show that it would not **thrive**; that the first eagle would **pull up its roots, cut off its fruit, and leave it to wither**.

i. “The critical issue is, Will the vine survive after it has turned away from the first eagle and oriented itself toward the second?” (Block)

b. **Will it not utterly wither when the east wind touches it:** Though the vine stretched out root and branches to the second eagle, the second eagle would not be able to shelter it against the coming storm. The vine would perish.

i. “The redirection of the vine’s branches toward the second eagle (instead of having them spread out low on the ground) and its roots upward (instead of going deeper into the fertile and well-watered soil) had rendered the plant extremely vulnerable to the wind’s withering force.” (Block)

ii. “The vine was still Jehovah’s, and the eagles were also within His power.... Therefore the transplanting of the vine was of no avail.” (Morgan)²¹

²¹ Guzik, D. (2017). [Ezekiel](#) (Eze 17). Santa Barbara, CA: David Guzik.

“IT WAS WELL KNOWN TO THE ROMANS THAT CHRISTIANITY DERIVED FROM JUDAISM. ACCORDING TO SULPICIUS SEVERUS, PROBABLY DEPENDING ON THE ROMAN HISTORIAN TACITUS, TITUS THOUGHT THAT IN DESTROYING THE TEMPLE HE WAS AT THE SAME TIME DEALING A DEATHBLOW TO CHRISTIANITY.

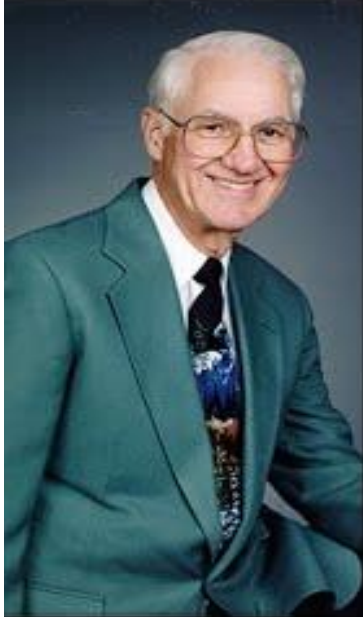
WHEN THE SEVENTH ANGEL EMPTIES HIS BOWL INTO THE AIR, A LOUD VOICE ISSUES FROM THE TEMPLE, FROM THE THRONE OF GOD, CRYING, ‘IT IS DONE!’ THESE ARE THE SAME WORDS AS THE CRY OF JESUS FROM THE CROSS. THE DOMINION OF EVIL IS AT AN END, AND DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY.”

- HUGH J. SCHONFIELD, THE BIBLE WAS RIGHT

“. . . NOW WHEN TITUS WAS COME INTO THIS [UPPER] CITY, HE ADMIRERD NOT ONLY SOME OTHER PLACES OF STRENGTH IN IT, BUT PARTICULARLY THOSE STRONG TOWERS WHICH THOSE TYRANTS IN THEIR MAD CONDUCT HAD RELINQUISHED; FOR WHEN HE SAW THEIR SOLID ALTITUDE AND THE LARGENESS OF THEIR SEVERAL STONES, AND THE EXACTNESS OF THEIR JOINTS, AS ALSO HOW GREAT WAS THEIR BREADTH, AND EXTENSIVE THEIR LENGTH, HE EXPRESSED HIMSELF AFTER THIS MANNER:

‘WE HAVE CERTAINLY HAD GOD FOR OUR ASSISTANT IN THIS WAR, AND IT WAS NO OTHER THAN GOD WHO EJECTED THE JEWS OUT OF THESE FORTIFICATIONS; FOR WHAT COULD THE HANDS OF MEN OR ANY MACHINES DO TOWARDS OVERTHROWING THESE TOWERS?’

AT WHICH TIME HE HAD MANY SUCH DISCOURSES TO FRIENDS; AND HE LEFT THESE TOWERS AS A MONUMENT OF HIS GOOD FORTUNE, WHICH HAD PROVED HIS AUXILIARIES & ENABLED HIM TO TAKE WHAT COULDN’T OTHERWISE HAVE BEEN TAKEN BY HIM.” THE WORKS OF JOSEPHUS WAR OF THE JEWS BOOK 6 CHAPTER 9



REVELATION

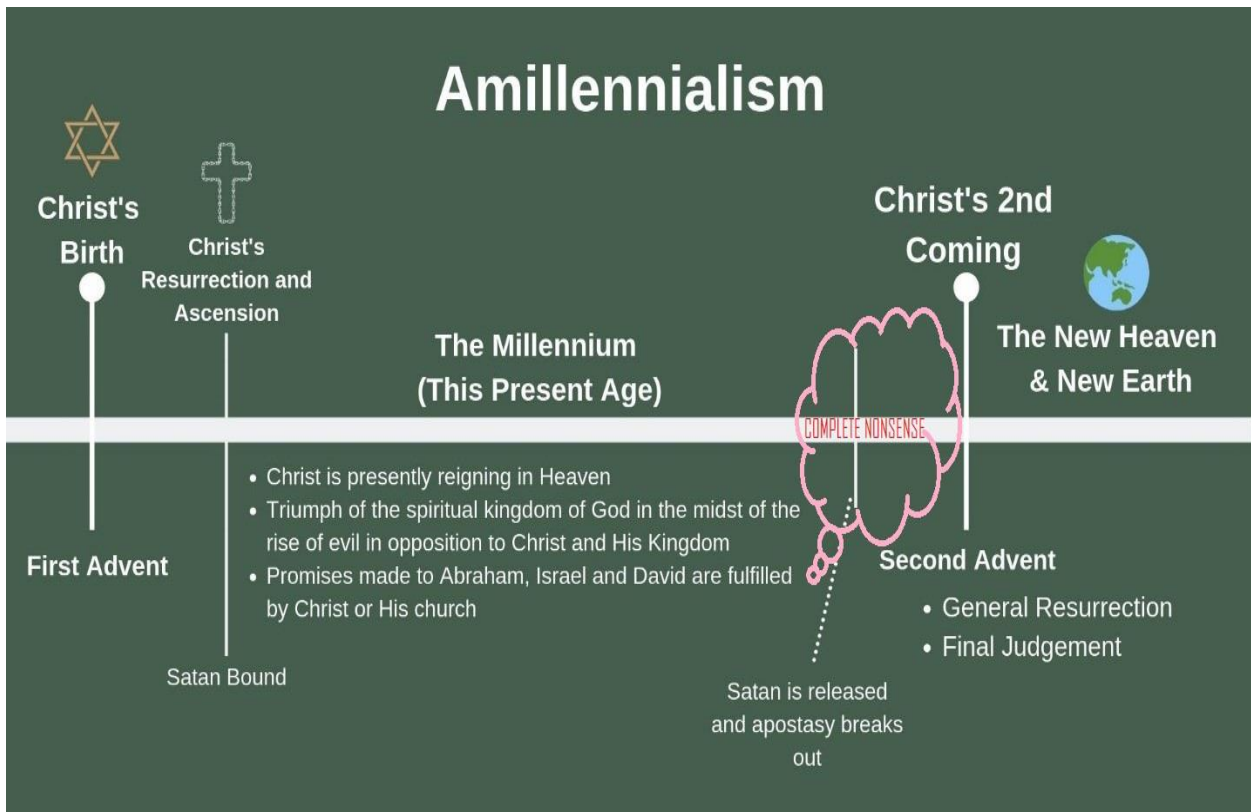
Taught by Art Ogden

9th Class

May 16, 1987

Revelation 20 & 21

ALL MILLENNIAL THEORIES ARE MISTAKEN!



The Chronology of Revelation 19–20: Recapitulatory or Sequential?

The Significance of the Question

The question to be considered here concerns the temporal relationship between Revelation 19 and Revelation 20. Do the events recorded in Revelation 20:1–6 follow the events described in Revelation 19:11–21 (the *sequential* view), or does Revelation 20:1 recapitulate and take the reader back to the beginning of the New Testament era (the *recapitulatory* view)?

The Sequential View:

The events of 20:1–6 *follow* those of 19:11–21.

The Recapitulatory View:

The events of 20:1–6 *precede* those of 19:11–21.

As if events of Revelation 20:1–6 follow [Christ's Second Coming](#) in Revelation 19:

Millennial View	Recapitulatory	Sequential
Amillennialism	X	
Postmillennialism	X	
Premillennialism		X ²²

²² Waymeyer, M. (2004). [Revelation 20 and the Millennial Debate](#) (pp. 61–62). The Woodlands, TX: Kress Christian Publications.

**ALL MILLENNIAL THEORIES ARE MISTAKEN
ABOUT A FUTURE RELEASE OF SATAN!
THIS HAPPENED BETWEEN TESTAMENTS!**



Book Chapter Verse Expository: REVELATION 20: 1 – 3

1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he seized the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Tempter and Satan, who deceived the whole world, and bound him a thousand years, 3 And cast him into the bottomless pit and shut him up and set a seal over him, that he should no more deceive the nations until the thousand years should be past; after that he will be loosed for a short time. [Aramaic Eastern Text]

1 And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. 2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. 3 He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations any more until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.” – NIV or New International Version

G. K. Beale in his recent work as an installment in the New International Greek Testament Commentary Series entitled *NIGTC: The Book of Revelation* exposts extensively on Verses 1 – 3 in the chapter subsection under the heading:

THE MILLENNIUM IS INAUGURATED DURING THE CHURCH AGE BY GOD’S CURTAILMENT OF SATAN’S ABILITY TO DECEIVE THE NATIONS AND TO ANNIHILATE THE CHURCH AND BY THE RESURRECTION OF BELIEVERS’ SOULS TO HEAVEN TO REIGN THERE WITH CHRIST (20: 1 – 6)

On page 973 – “It is important to remember the genre of Revelation in our approach to 20: 1 – 6, especially the programmatic nature of 01: 01, which states the general symbolic nature of the communication from the mediating angel to John. Further, the repeated introductory “I saw” (or similar expressions) throughout the book introduces symbolic visions (e.g., 4:1ff, 12:1-3, 13:1-3, 14:1, 17:1-3). Since “I saw” introduces both 20:1-3 and 20:4-6, we can assume that there are at least three levels of communication in verses 1 – 6: (1) a visionary level, which consists of the actual visionary experience that John had in seeing resurrected people and the other objects of his vision, (2) a referential level, which consists of the particular historical identification of the resurrected people and the other objects seen in the vision, and (3) a symbolic level, which consists of what the symbols in the vision connote about their historical referents.”

On page 974 – “First, ‘and’ throughout the whole Apocalypse can indicate either historical sequence or visionary sequence. More often than not it indicates visionary sequence as a transitional device either between major literary segments or between smaller units of material within the larger segments. Where historical sequence is indicated, the conjunction is typically found within the larger segments as a transition between verses or even phrases. Each overall context must determine which use is in mind.”

On pages 984, 985 – “In light of the preceding, the descending angel in 20:1 introduces a vision in vv 1 – 6 going back before the time of the final judgment in history, which was just narrated in 19: 11 – 21... The angel ‘binds’ the devil with the chain for ‘a thousand years.’ Just as the first creation appears to have been preceded by a battle between the sea monster and God, so the creation of the new heavens and earth must be preceded by such a battle...”

But exactly how is the binding to be defined? In light of 1:18 and 3:7-8 it can be said that Satan no longer has authority over the realm of the dead as he did prior to Jesus’ resurrection...But the ‘binding’ of Satan in Mark 3:27 does not restrict all his activities but highlights that Jesus is sovereign over him and his demonic forces. Therefore, context, and not the metaphor by itself, must determine what degree of restriction is intended. That Satan is ‘cast out’ by Christ’s death does not restrict Satan in every other way. Rather, it keeps him from preventing ‘all people’ throughout the earth being drawn to Jesus (John 12: 31, 32). ‘Sealing’ may connote an absolute incarceration, but could just as well connote the general idea of ‘authority over,’ which is its primary meaning.”

On page 986 – “God’s seal on Christians does not protect them in every sense but only in a spiritual, salvific manner, since they suffer from persecution in various physical ways. Conversely, God’s seal on Satan prevents him from harming the salvific security of the true church, though he can harm it physically.

If our understanding of the disjunctive temporal relation of 20: 1 – 6 to 19: 11 – 21 and our view of the ‘keys’ is correct, then Christ’s work of restraining the devil’s ability to ‘deceive’ is not complete curtailment of all the devil’s activities but only a restraint on his deceiving activities 9: 1-10 and 20: 1-3 are synchronous and portray those whom Satan is permitted to deceive and those whom he is not permitted to deceive.”

On page 987 – “It is wrong to picture the devil being ‘cast out of the earth’ in some spatial sense, so that he is no longer present on earth. This would be to take ‘abyss’ in an overly literalistic manner. Rather, like ‘heaven’ throughout the Apocalypse, it represents a spiritual dimension existing alongside and in the midst of the earthly, not above or below. The abyss is one of the various metaphors representing the spiritual sphere in which the devil and his accomplices operate.”

*On pages 988, 989 – “Included also in the restraint on the devil’s deceiving activity is that he is not able to delude and mount hostile attack against the covenant community during the age after Christ’s resurrection in the way that he formerly did.” That Satan’s binding is not complete in every respect is consistent with the name ‘the ancient serpent’ in 20:2 in connection with deception in 20:3, which is an allusion to Genesis 3:1, 14. There the serpent claimed that God’s command to Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:16-17 was not true (Genesis 3:4-5). The serpent’s deception led to Adam and Eve’s fall. *This deceptive attack against humanity’s first representatives destroyed the first covenant community and prevented humanity from carrying out its commission to subdue the ends of the earth for the Lord. Now, the last representative of humanity, the last Adam, has come to reverse the effects of that first fall in order to enable the covenant community among humanity to fulfill its created purpose to subdue the earth for God. Thus, the binding of ‘the ancient serpent’ is intended to restrain him so that he can’t accomplish the deceptive purposes that he formerly accomplished during ancient times in Eden.**

Indeed, after the Fall, the serpent and his agents do on a worldwide scale what the devil began to do in the garden. In the OT age Satan was able to delude the majority of Israel so that they were not able to fulfill their commission to be a salvific light to the nations. As a result, the good news of God’s kingdom was not heralded to the pagan nations, and the nations remained in spiritual darkness. Also, because of Israel’s sin Israel remained in subjection to Satanic oppression from foreign nations attempting to exterminate ancient Israel. This attempted extermination was climaxed by Satan’s attack on Christ, who summed up the community of true Israel in himself. Satan appeared finally successful when his agents put Christ to death, but the resurrection demonstrated that Satan had failed.

All who subsequently identify with Christ as true Israel begin to fulfill the commission to be a light to the nations, so that Satan's veil of deception over the nations is lifted. This means the devil will not be able to stop the spread of the preaching of the gospel or its expanding reception (= the church) during the age preceding Christ's return. So Christ commands his followers to 'make disciples of all the nations' (Matthew 28:19). The gospel will 'be preached in the whole world for a witness to all nations, and then the end will come' (Matthew 24:14) ... This accords with 2 Thess. 2: 6 -12, where Satan is said to be 'already at work' in a mysterious way, but nevertheless restrained."

.....

JAMIESON, FAUSSET, & BROWN ON REVELATION 20: 1 – 3:

"As 'seven' mystically implies universality, so a 'thousand' implies perfection, whether to good or evil. Thousand symbolizes that *the world is perfectly leavened* and pervaded by the divine...Satan's binding at this juncture is not arbitrary, but is the necessary consequence of the events (ch. 19:20); just as Satan's being cast out of heaven, where he had previously been the accuser of the brethren..."

COFFMAN COMMENTARY @ REVELATION 20: 1 – 3:

Verse One – *Having the key of the abyss...* "In all the places where 'abyss' is used, the word signifies the present abode of Satan and his angels, not the place of final punishment. The 'key' here indicates that, 'Power was given to this angel over Satan during the time of the world's existence.'

And a great chain, in his hand... The Greek text here is literally 'upon his hand,' and this corresponds to the word of God being 'upon the hand' of the angel in Revelation 10: 2. Thus, the great chain is seen to be the Word of God.

Verse Two – *And bound for a thousand years...* 'This means during the entire gospel age.' The effective binding of Satan took place in the events of the Incarnation. Satan had already been thrown out of heaven (Revelation 12:7-9); Therefore, it is some more restricted phase of Satan's binding that is revealed here.

Just How Is Satan Bound? **He is bound in that he cannot destroy the Bible; he cannot tempt a child of God more than he is able to bear; God makes a way of escape with every temptation. The period of Satan's binding is co-extensive in every particular with the times when people are being saved by obeying the gospel. Again, to paraphrase Christ's question, 'How could Christ save anyone at any time when Satan was not bound?'**

Until the thousand years should be finished... The gospel age will finally close; and when the last person to accept the Son of God shall have done so, the age will end."

EARLY DATE BOOK COMMENTARIES ON VERSES 1 – 3:

Brother Foy E. Wallace (1966) in *The Book of Revelation* – "In the vision Satan returned from his prowling to his diabolical abode in ignominious and complete defeat. His abysmal abode was shut by the angel with the key to the bottomless pit that he held; which angel also set a seal upon him, as an authoritative act, such as the seal of state stamped on the documents signed by officials of government. The purpose of this satanic imprisonment was that he should 'deceive the nations no more' – that is, in the idolatry of Caesar-worship, a repetition of the previous symbols of the mark and image of the beast in the heathen emperor-worship."

Brother Arthur M. Ogden (1985) in *The Avenging of the Apostles & Prophets* –

"What is the meaning of this, and what significance does it have for us today?"

Much unnecessary speculation has grown out of these verses. We must remember to understand each text in the light of its context. The spiritual war between Christ and Satan has been raging. We have observed Satan's helpers being destroyed. One of these helpers is the Roman Empire. It has ruled the world by the power of Satan (13:2). Rome fought gloriously against the Christ, but in the end was broken to pieces and destroyed (Daniel 2:44). It would appear natural that Satan should turn his abilities again to the development of another powerful helper like the Roman Empire, but he is not permitted to do so because God binds him, putting a seal upon him, forbidding him to deceive the nations any more until a thousand years are accomplished.

This period of time is not intended to be a literal, exact, period of time. It does indicate a long period of time, however, and if we compute the beginning of the thousand years with the fall of Rome (the chronological position it holds in the Apocalypse), the period has already been longer than 1,000 years...

Many have interpreted this binding of Satan as a complete imprisonment causing cessation of all his powers. This is to ignore the context and reality. Satan is still alive and doing very well. His influence is abundantly evidenced in the world. The fact is, Satan's binding must be considered as limited to the specific purpose stated in the context. He is bound 'that he should deceive the nations no more.' Satan deceived Rome into warring against Christ and His saints, but he is bound to prevent him from deceiving other nations as he did Rome."

"First, 'and' throughout the whole Apocalypse can indicate either historical sequence or visionary sequence. More often than not it indicates visionary sequence as a transitional device either between major literary segments or between smaller units of material within the larger segments. Where historical sequence is indicated, the conjunction is typically found within the larger segments as a transition between verses or even phrases. Each overall context must determine which use is in mind." (NIGTC Revelation)

BROTHER DAVID HERSEY IN HIS *THE FALL OF SATAN (REVELATION 20)* ARTICLE CORRECTS TRANSITION SEQUENCE VISIONARY TO HISTORICAL CHAPTER 19 - 20:

"It is vitally important to keep in mind that the events pictured in Revelation do not always follow a linear chronological timeline. The visions of John have painted a story of victory over persecution since the beginning. These visions have been laid out in non-chronological fashion all along. The opening of the seven seals and the bowls of wrath were not in chronological order. Many of the natural disasters and events God utilized were overlapping and running contemporary with one another. It should not come as any surprise to anyone at this time that the events in Revelation 20 are not laid out in chronological fashion. By now the reader should be of this fact and should recognize immediately that there is a grand overall picture being illustrated in this vision. Any attempt to interpret Revelation 20 in a systematic sequential fashion is immediately frustrating and should be dismissed outright.

The reader should step back and take a broad view of the vision and consider it in light of the whole story of Satan, his fall and ultimate total destruction in eternal punishment. Focusing on the elements we know, and can identify and then harmonizing the rest into one grand vision. Revelation 20 is a big picture of the ultimate falling of Satan and the forces of evil which draw on events from before the coming of Christ all the way to the end of the Christian age to the final judgment.

Verse Two & Satan Bound – “And we now jump backwards in time to an event that took place before the coming of Jesus Christ on earth. **This is the figurative picture of Satan being bound after what he did in the garden of Eden.** Satan had restrictions placed upon his activities since that transgression. He had to get divine permission from God in order to afflict Job and Satan followed the directives given him by God to the letter. Satan operated only within the parameters God gave him concerning Job. Satan was not nor has ever been unbound on the earth to do as he would without restriction. As soon as Satan demonstrated his rebellious nature, he had restrictions placed upon him. This is the binding we see in John’s vision here.” [Satan No Longer Has Heavenly Access per Luke 10: 18]

Verse Three & Satan Loosed – “The number (10) for ‘completeness’ multiplied by itself 3 times would therefore mean a complete period of time sufficient to accomplish God’s purpose. The thousand years that Satan’s activities were restricted is therefore a figurative symbol for a period of time from the initial binding of Satan (2nd Peter 2:4) until the period of time where he was loosed for a short period.

Consider the plight of Job on a worldwide scale. Were Satan to be unleashed without restriction upon the earth at any time, the results would be immediate worldwide devastation, destruction and Chaos the likes of which we could not even imagine.” [NOTE: Not the 2nd Coming Compared to Antediluvian World’s Inhumanity of Man to Man as described in Genesis 6: 1-13 & Luke 17: 26.]

World Power Was Satan's To Offer – “After this perfect period of time Satan is allowed to operate in a more direct fashion on the earth than previously. Not without restriction by any means. During the temptation of Jesus by Satan, he made a statement to Jesus which has a direct bearing on this. “And the devil said to Him, ‘All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it’.” (Luke 4: 6)

Satan Tempted Twice Face to Face – “Satan was able to come face to face and tempt Jesus directly. Satan does not do that now. And there is no record of him ever tempting anyone face to face beyond the garden. Satan had to get special permission from God to afflict Job in the way he did and there is no indication that Job ever met Satan face to face. In fact, it is evident from Job's complaints that neither he or his companions knew Satan was directly involved in the matter. There is no indication that Job ever knew of the meeting between God and Satan concerning him.”

Involuntary Possession Is No Longer – “Evil Spirits were also allowed to possess people during this period of time. The scriptures contain many examples of evil spirits being cast from people. This is not something we see throughout Biblical times. There was a period of time Biblically where the forces of evil were allowed to operate directly on mankind. This [Satan Face-to-Face] and the presence of evil spirits was a temporary arrangement and happened in the years directly before and after Christ's life on earth. **The losing of Satan has been done.** This event is in our past and has been fulfilled and today the degree of freedom that Satan and his evil followers enjoyed for a period of time is over. Satan and the forces of evil are still in operation on earth today but not in the way they were during the time of Christ on earth.”

Seven Necessary Implications

Prophecy Vision vs. Historical Vision: Although, Chapter 19 ends with prophecy; **For the First Century Audience Addressed to Have Understood the Imagery - Chapter 20: 1 - 2 would have to start the Story of Satan in Historic Vision -**

Post-Eden Abyss Bound & Restricted for an indefinite period verses 1 & 2; The author is writing concurrent in verse 3 of the “Little While” Release of Satan – a period that had its beginnings between the Testaments and would end with the generational fulfillment of those prophesied in the Book of Revelation; Because things were going to get worse before they got better – in verse four the Story of Satan shifts to the End in a Prophetic Vision of the Hellfire Lake, vindication of the saints, and Christ’s ultimate victory. Satan’s Short Period Unbound as in the Garden began during the 400 years of God’s Silence between the Testament – High pointed in Garden Face-to-Face Reenactment by Christ’s Desert Temptation – Culminated After the Destruction of Jerusalem and the Death of The Last Apostle.

God’s Perfect Will vs. His Permissive Will: God’s Perfect Decretive Eternal Will includes His Redemptive Plans for The Human Race, His *Specific Plans for both Physical & Spiritual Israel* and His *Intermediate & Ultimate Plans for the Fallen Angels & their Leader* – the Archangel Satan. These three threads of story line converge together in these first three verses of Revelation Chapter 20 – one at the story’s start – one at mid-story – one at the end of their story.

Homer Hailey in his book *God’s Judgement & Punishments: Individuals & Nations* presents a Providential Panorama of *God at the center and always in control* - playing neighboring nations and foreign empires to His long-term objectives - in the short term to either punish or reward His Chosen people—but always to mold them stronger and to terraform the spiritual soil for the coming of His Son in Messianic Mission. Judeo-Christianity is not of a Monotheistic Good/Evil Dualism – both religions believe God’s Power Absolute & Satan’s Being Different Degrees of Relative throughout history as God Has Periodically Permitted - Consistent with His Predetermined Plans. Satan was *permitted*, “let loose,” for a short interval of human history – at least a generation before Christ’s Birth and until after the actual physical deaths of His Apostles. During this time interval, The Devil was *permitted* to revisit the Garden Temptation with Our Savior as the Second Adam after Jesus had been Forty Days in the Desert Wilderness. Satan was *permitted* to test the faith of the First Century Christians of Jerusalem causing many to flee the city. Satan was *permitted* to persecute the fleeing Diaspora Christians relocated in the churches of Asia Minor - almost to the point of near extinction.

Moreover, Satan was *permitted* during PAX ROMANA – to choreograph Outrage at a Temple Tax Seizure/Multiple Statue Desecrations of Self-Deified Emperor Caligula/Pro-Hasmonean Zionist Zealots all together into a Temporary Insanity Josephus captioned *The Jewish Wars*. However, the pivotal point activating the Jewish Revolt was Satan convincing the Jews that they would win against Rome. Josephus says the Reason Above All Other was a Soothsayer or Oracle Message received stating “At about that time, one from their country would become (Messianic) Ruler of the Habitable World.” The Deceiving Serpent had brought together at once – The End of Physical Israel, The Separation of Spiritual Israel, & By His Last *Permission* Blinding the Pagan “Etnos” (Ephesians 2: 11-13) Hindering the Spread of The Gospel. **Therefore, Evil as a Force & Evil as a Person are now of such limitation during the present Gospel Age – that practically all those events and actions remaining - not consequential, of loving chastisement or for indirect achievement of a secondary virtue and previously categorized as pointless pain or gratuitous suffering - can be attributed to Man’s Inhumanity to Man!**

Prince of This World vs. Prince of The Air: [Ephesians 2:2] The term “the power of the air” refers to the atmosphere around the earth. Why this mention of “the air” as a place where Satan is may mean no more than the air is where Satan dwells as chief ruler, prince of demons, and evil spirits; The air is the place such spirits live, and Satan is the prince of all such spirits whose abode is the air. The Jews of Paul’s day believed that the air was Satan’s Sphere of domination and what Paul is teaching was matter of fact by this statement. [Ephesians 6: 12] Although an equally descriptive title during Satan’s Short Release & Equally Accurate During the Mountaintop Temptation of Earthly Kingdoms at Jesus Feet - In my opinion, given Satan’s lesser latitude manipulating military and political authorities today – ***Prince of the Air better reflects Satan’s most recent demotion & limited activity.***

As Prince of the Air he still has some power to influence the circumstances of an individual’s life although the Bible portrays that power as bringing suffering, corruption, destruction and death along with fleeting success. The pleasures of sin endure for only a season. [Hebrews 11: 25]

Millennialism Impacts Christian Watchfulness. The *Olivet Discourse* is easiest understood by observing that the Apostles were asking the typical ethno-centric question of the end of the world as they knew it (TEOTWAWKI) but truth be told - they were asking two questions – one of the destruction of the temple along with the city of Jerusalem - and the other as regards the end of the world. The fact that Christ gave His answer in two-part – the pivotal passage at Matthew 24: 34 – is of greatest illumination to our subject today. If we consider that Matthew 24: 3 – 34 parallels the events described in Revelation 20: 1, 2 to the End of that Age and Matthew 24: 34 – Matthew 25: 13 parallel events afterwards and until the End of Satan’s Story or End of the World - we can then observe the following contrasts: Events Local Versus Events Global; “This Generation” Versus “The Days of Your Fathers”; “That Day” Versus “Those Days”; and Signs Versus Suddenness.

Signs Versus Suddenness: Brother Larry Ray Hafley writes – “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 beginnings of sorrows’ (Matthew 24: 6 – 8). Further He told them of ‘the abomination of desolation’ (Roman Eagle Standard), 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 and the consequent Judgment were to be without warning (Matthew 24: 42, 43, 50; 25: 13). Compare ‘then know’ with ‘know not’ (Luke 21: 20; Matthew 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 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 Thessalonians 5: 2 – 4; 2nd Peter 3; 10).

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 shall ever be' if the end of the world and the (final) judgment were being studied. The same argument can be made from the next verse (Matthew 24:22). Those days evidently will 'be [made] 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.

Finally, Matthew 25 supplements Matthew 24: 36–51. The judgment of Matthew 25 involves and includes 'all nations' (Matthew 25: 32). It is the final judgment (Matthew 25: 34, 41, 46). The ten virgins parable says, 'be prepared,' 'watch.' The parable of the talents stresses the necessity of diligence and faithfulness (Matthew 25: 21, 23, 26 linking @Matthew 24: 42 – 51).

Final Thoughts. In my opinion, for members of the churches of Christ - whether late date or early date adherent is in priority of lesser importance than inclusion among those Revelation Prophecies Fulfilled – this Historic Timeline of Satan's Short Release. I believe – if we don't – it will diminish both our watchful purpose & Eschatological Expectation. - DLB (me)



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**When is
Satan
bound
(20:1-3)?**

[From David Hersey @ Church of Christ Articles:](#)

The Fall of Satan (Rest of [Revelation 20](#) Commentary)

[Revelation 20:4](#)

“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and (I saw) the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”

Now we see some of the direct results for the duration of Satan being loosed for a “little time.” Satan wasted no time in trying to exterminate Christ’s church from the earth by force. Many Christians died for the testimony of Jesus Christ. Mention is made of those who received not the mark of the beast. This is a picture of those who overcame Satan while his restrictions were loosed for a little time. These are the martyrs spoken of under the alter in [Revelation 6:9](#) & then pictured again in [Revelation 19](#), rejoicing that God’s judgment had at last come.

Who is this that sat upon the thrones and given judgment? Paul answers this question in his letter to the Christians in Corinth, “Or know ye not that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world is judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more, things that pertain to this life?” ([1 Corinthians 6:2-3](#)).

[Revelation 20:5](#)

“The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished. This is the first resurrection.”

The first resurrection is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Several people were raised from the dead during the Biblical times but Jesus Christ is the first one resurrected who would live forever, never again to die. There are only two resurrections mentioned in scripture which will do this. The first one has already come to pass. The second one is yet to come ([John 5:28-29](#)).

Notice that the first resurrection is tied directly with those who were before dead until the thousand years should be finished. Again, one cannot look at this series of visions in a systematic chronological order. The thousand years is nothing more than a period of time sufficient for God to accomplish a purpose.

Satan was cast into a bottomless pit and then loosed for a little while after a period of time represented figuratively as a thousand years. [Revelation 20:5](#) pinpoints this time of the loosing as an interval inclusive of the first resurrection. Satan was loosed at the time of the first resurrection. Verse 6 gives us further insight into this first resurrection which helps us to positively identify what it is.

[Revelation 20:6](#)

“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: over these the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Over these the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ. Those who participate in the resurrection of Jesus Christ are priests of God and of Christ. How do we participate in the resurrection of Jesus Christ? “Having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead” ([Colossians 2:12](#)). When we are baptized we are buried in a symbolic way with Jesus Christ when He was buried.

In [Romans 6:4](#) Paul wrote that we are buried with Him through baptism into His death and then he goes on to say, “that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with (him) in the likeness of his death, we shall be also (in the likeness) of his resurrection” ([Romans 6:4-5](#)).

Christians have a participatory part in the resurrection of Jesus Christ at baptism. And upon these, the second death hath no power. What is the second death? “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” ([Hebrews 9:27](#)). The second death is the judgment of the unrighteous who will die the spiritual death which is eternal separation from God in everlasting punishment. This death has no power over faithful Christians who have participated in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Peter wrote of Christians being priests in [1 Peter 2:5](#), “ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” and then again in verse 9, “But ye are an 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 marvelous light”

John writes by inspiration that these Christians will reign with Jesus Christ for a thousand years. Well, if this were a literal time period then how do we explain that it has been about 2000 years since this letter was written? Earth is still here. There are still Christians on earth and there have been considerably more than a thousand years pass since the first resurrection. So, then what does this time period represented as a 1000 years really mean? The number 10 symbolized completeness. The number three symbolized the perfect divine. Multiples of numbers represented in the minds of the early Christians the same things on a larger scale.

Completeness multiplied by itself 3 times which symbolized the perfect divine would therefore mean a complete period of time sufficient to accomplish God's purpose.

Revelation 20:7

“And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison”

It cannot be stated enough that to try and interpret John's Revelation visions in a linear step by step chronological fashion will result in some confusing results. This is by no means the only time in the apocalypse that John's visions revert back to an earlier period of time. There are two periods of time represented as a thousand years. There is the time period that Satan was bound before he is loosed and there is another time period that the priests of God who participated in the first resurrection reign with Christ. These two are not the same time period yet both are represented as a thousand years.

We have two time periods here to deal with. So, the question now is, which one is it? Verse 8 helps us answer this question.

Revelation 20:8

“and shall come forth to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather together to the war: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.”

Of great significance in understanding this is in the words, “the war.” What war? This the age-old war between good and evil that Christians of the time were engaged in. To them this war was an ongoing struggle that built up to the battle that was introduced in chapter 16, and that was fought in chapter 19. Revelation was written to the first century Christians and applies directly to their plight and we must never lose sight of that fact if we are to make sense of it in any way. But we also must recognize that it was written to them with an application for all Christians. The war that the Christians were engaged in at the time is still going on today.

The immediate context of verse 8 speaks to Satan's deception of the nations of the first century and soon thereafter and the rising of them all in opposition to Christianity. All of this came to head in the battle of Armageddon which saw the destruction of their earthly enemies. But Satan has not been completely destroyed. He and his evil forces lost that battle & Christianity prevailed, but they are still fighting the war. The broader application is that we must recognize that while Satan's plans to exterminate the church in the early years of its existence failed, he is still at work today.

The battle in Revelation for the first century has been fought. The war which all Christians are engaged in with the forces of evil still rages today and will continue for as long as earth remains. John's vision here has a dual purpose. It provides comfort for the afflicted Christians who first read it living during the described events and it also provides a prophetic picture of the ultimate downfall and destruction of Satan yet to come and will happen at the end of the second time period represented in this context as a thousand years.

In the Old Testament, Gog was the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal ([Ezekiel 38:2](#); [39:1-16](#)). His territory was known as the land of Magog, and he was the chief of those northern hordes who were to make a final onslaught upon Israel. According to the Prophet Ezekiel's account Gog's army included Persia, Cush, Put, Gomer (Cimmerians), and Togarmah, from the extreme North. They are represented as a vast mixed horde from the far-off parts of the North, the limits of the horizon, completely armed and equipped for war. They were to come upon the mountains of Israel and cover the land like a cloud. Their purpose is plunder, for the people of Israel are rich and dwell in towns and villages without walls. Gog's coming, which had been prophesied by the prophets of Israel, shall be accompanied by a manifestation of the person of God and great convulsions in Nature. A panic shall seize the hosts of Gog, rain, hail, pestilence, fire and brimstone shall consume them.

Their bodies shall be food for the birds ([Ezekiel 39:4](#)), their weapons shall serve as firewood for seven years ([Ezekiel 39:9](#)), and their bones shall be buried East of the sea in a place called Hamon-Gog and thus not defile the holy land with their corpses ([Ezekiel 39:11-12](#)).

The fulfillment of this prophecy can be seen in the language of the Book of Revelation concerning the downfall of Christian enemies. Israel in the prophecy of Ezekiel can be correlated with the church which is spiritual Israel after Christ's resurrection. The war Gog was said to be amassing against Israel is very similar in nature to the war against the Christians perpetuated by Satan and carried out by the enemies of Christianity during the days of the Roman Empire.

In [Revelation 20:7](#) Satan is loosed in some fashion and goes to the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to muster his hosts for the final struggle against God and the Christians. In Ezekiel the invasion of Gog occurs during the Messianic age which fits perfectly with the account in Revelation. In Ezekiel, Gog and Magog are gathered under the direction of God for their destruction while in Revelation they are gathered by Satan whose abilities and actions are governed by God. In both cases the number is vast, the destruction is by divine direction, and is complete and final. I see the prophecy of Gog and Magog as realizing its fulfillment in the destruction of the enemies of Christianity in Revelation. If not, there are certainly enough similarities that First Century Christians then living under both Roman state and Jewish religious persecution would recognize their same situation in the language the prophecy of Ezekiel and make the application to themselves.

Another thing of great significance here is that the prophecy surrounding Gog and Magog finding its fulfillment in Revelation - tie the loosing of Satan inseparably with the Messianic age. Of this there cannot be any question. The advocates of Premillennial doctrine are here dealt a death blow to their beliefs.

Revelation 20:9-10

“And they went up over the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

The beast and the false prophet are directly mentioned here. This vision is primarily focused on the Christians living during the great persecution. But notice that the beast and false prophet were already in torment and Satan was cast into the lake with them. That is where Satan and the beast and the false prophet are to this day. And they are being tormented day and night and this torment is neverending. It will go on forever and ever.

Satan and his earthly allies covered the breadth of the earth and had the saints, and the beloved city completely surrounded. It looked like there was no hope for them when God intervened. Divine fire did not literally come down from heaven and devour Satan and his allies. The vision here is one of a swift overthrow of the enemies of righteousness. The enemies of the Christians were directly overthrown by other conquering nations, but God makes it plain here that this was all done under His supervision and by His intervention under His authority.

The camp of the saints and the beloved city mentioned in the vision is Christ's people who collectively make up His church. There are many congregations of the Lord's church as evidenced in His address to seven of them in the beginning of the Revelation. But collectively there is only one camp, one city.

This vision speaks to the unity of God's people in Christ. There are many groups of Christians but only one body; one camp; and one city. Today, we call this one body, this one camp, this one city the church of Christ. It may bear other similar names on the surface but this does not change the fact that it is the body which belongs to Christ; the church of Christ and there is only one, ([Ephesians 4:4](#)).

Revelation 20:11

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.”

They can run but they cannot hide. When God’s judgment comes, nobody who rejected Him in life will be able to flee. There will be no place left for them to hide. The earth and all that is in it will be destroyed.

Revelation 20:12

“And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is (the book) of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

And now John’s vision takes yet another leap in the timeline to great day of the Lord and the end of all things and the final judgment. The doors of Hades, also known as the realm of the dead shall be opened up and all the dead shall come forth to the final judgment. Everyone who dies, like the rich man and Lazarus are judged in some fashion at that time. There is a separation in the Hadean realm between the saved & the lost. Those who are in the Hadean realm know what their eternal destiny is going to be. The great day of the Lord where the final judgment will take place is to be a time of universal recognition of the glory and majesty of God by all who lived at one time. The saved will be separated from the lost and the lost will receive their final sentence while the saved will be take their place at the right hand of Jesus on High and will be glorified in the sight of all along with God in His throne. The lost will then be cast into eternal punishment and the redeemed shall go to their reward in Heaven with God the Father.

Revelation 20:13

“And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.”

Everyone who has died and are in Hades will be at the judgment. The first resurrection was mentioned earlier and represented the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the second and final resurrection of all the rest, both the just and the unjust mentioned in [Acts 24:15](#). And everyone of them shall be judged according to their works. This is very reminiscent of Jesus' words in [John 5:28-29](#) where he taught, “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.”

Revelation 20:14

“And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, (even) the lake of fire.”

Earlier, those who were said to have a part in the first resurrection would not suffer from the second death. Here the second death is identified for the readers. It is the death which results in the total & eternal separation from God into torment & punishment which will never end. The second death is the permanent one for which there will be no relief, there will be no resurrection and no end. Those who would inherit eternal life must be a participant in the first resurrection in order to be protected from the horrors of the second death. The lake of fire here is one representative of Hell, the final and eternal destination of all the unjust.

Revelation 20:15

“And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.”

The book of life mentioned here was mentioned previously in verse 12. This is a book of great significance in the coming judgment. Those who are not written in this book of life will suffer the lake of fire. This book directly mentioned eight times in the King James Version of the New Testament with seven of them being in Revelation alone. In the Old Testament God said to Moses that whosoever sinned against Him would be blotted out of His book ([Exodus 32:32](#)). Paul mentioned the book of life directly in his letter to the Philippians when he said that his “fellow-laborers” were written therein, ([Philippians 4:3](#)).

We should not look at this as a literal book that God keeps in personal possession. Let us recall that God lives in a spiritual realm where nothing of the physical as we perceive it exists. The figure of this book is merely a way for us to realize that there is a means of record keeping in place of which we are all a part of. Either we are found within the register of life or we are not. There are no in-betweens or degrees of inclusion/exclusion from this spiritual register. One is either included or they are not. Those who are included will have life, those who are not will be cast into the fire.

Christians can have our names blotted out of this book, ([Exodus 32:32](#), [Revelation 3:5](#)) and God told Moses who would be blotted out in [Exodus 32:33](#), “Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.” and Jesus in [Revelation 3:5](#) is quoted as saying that those who overcome the Jerusalem City and Roman State persecution will not be blotted out of the book of Life. The inference here is that those who do not overcome will be blotted from this book. And [Revelation 20:15](#) gives us the fate of those who find that their names have been blotted from this spiritual register represented as a “book”.

[Revelation 22:19](#)

“And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

KJV

It has been said in a summary of the New Testament that the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John reveal Jesus Christ. The book of Acts teaches us how to get “into Christ” and the general epistles teach us how to live “in Christ.” Revelation is a book of instruction on how to overcome and die “in Christ.” Revelation chapter 20 closes with a pretty sobering picture of those who fail to overcome. This is necessary in order for the complete picture to be painted. We must know the whole council of God and one of the primary purposes of the book of Revelation was to teach Christians how to overcome and not have their names blotted out of God’s book of life. Revelation was not written to lost people. It was written to Christians living under a State Endorsed & Established Religion Sponsored continuous and comprehensive persecution without historic comparison and we must realize that if those 1st Century Christians had to overcome and remain faithful, then all Christians do the same for all the remaining time left on earth. God is no respecter of persons.

[Revelation 20](#) is a vision of the ultimate fall of Satan. Now all of the enemies of the Christians have been dealt with and we are given a vision of the end where Satan who’s still at work influencing and deceiving will be finally put down forever and will receive the just punishment for his massive crimes against God and against humanity. Those who don’t wish to share in his fate are given a word of warning in the closing elements of the vision. We do not want to spend our eternity in the lake of fire with Satan and sharing in his punishment.

Chapter Twenty Interpretative Approach of Author: “As for the order of the scenes, I have taken a non-chronological view of this vision, choosing to look at it as if John were describing a whole picture, like a painting, to his readers without regard to the order in which the various elements of this painting were placed in the picture by the artist. One never describes a painting to another individual in the order that everything within it was painted. I [David Hersey] have taken those elements of the picture which I feel are positively identified and molded the rest of the picture around those events to complete the overall vision.”

Revelation 20 Paraphrase

And I saw an angel come down from heaven and his hands was a key to the abyss and he had a great chain in his hand. And he captured the dragon, that old serpent, who is the Devil, who is also called Satan and bound him for a period of time according to God's purpose. And then he threw Satan alive into the abyss and shut him in & put a seal on him so that he couldn't deceive the nations until God's purpose for man required it and then Satan was loosed for a short period of time.

And looking back, I saw thrones, and the ones who sat upon them, and I saw that judgment was given unto them. And I also saw the souls of them that were slain for their witnessing of Jesus Christ, and for their proclaiming of the word of God. These are they who had not worshipped the beast, neither his graven images and had not received his mark upon their foreheads, or held it in their hands. And they lived and reigned with Jesus Christ for all of time.

Those who lived on the earth but were unsaved were condemned already and had no hope for life without the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Blessed and holy are they who have participated in the resurrection of Jesus Christ for the condemnation of the lost has no power over them. They are the priests of God and rule with Christ according to God's eternal purpose.

But according to God's purpose, Satan was permitted a measure of freedom for a period of time. And he went out to deceive all the nations of the earth and gather his innumerable host of allies together in opposition of the righteous. And Satan and his allies went the breadth of the earth and surrounded the saints of God and the church to destroy them but God overthrew and defeated them. And Satan who deceived the whole earth was taken and thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are and he will be punished continually forever and ever.

And then I saw in my vision a great white throne and He who sat upon it. And all who the unrighteous in league with Satan on earth and in heaven were unable to escape could find no place of refuge. And then I saw all of the dead who ever lived standing before God and his books were opened and revealed. And with them was the book of life and all were judged out of the things recorded in those books according to their righteous deeds.

Everybody who had ever lived and died from the sea and to the four corners of the earth were resurrected from Hades and they were judged according to their deeds. Those who were found dead outside Christ were cast into the lake of fire which is the second and final death. Whosoever wasn't written in God's book of life were cast into the lake of fire forever.



Heaven, Home of the Soul (Revelation 21)

The visions of the little book which John was told to take and eat began in chapter 11 where we saw a vision of the church in great distress. In chapter 12 the scene jumped abruptly back in time to the birth of Jesus Christ. Then we saw the efforts of the dragon to destroy Jesus and the thwarting of those plans. Then in chapter 13 we see the beast and his false prophet rise up and try to destroy the church. Then we see the various ways God used to try and bring the persecuting powers to repentance and then ultimately the great war between evil and good. We then saw the destruction of the harlot city, the beast and the false prophet & then the final destruction of Satan, the judgment of human kind & then the punishment of the wicked. What's left now is a vision of the reward for perseverance.

Throughout the Revelation, the faithful are exhorted to overcome the forces of evil. Do not give in, do not partake with them, do not bow down to the images set up by the false prophet, do not worship the beast and do not give up. We have seen the consequences for failure and we have seen the warnings and the visions of the punishment that awaits the wicked. Now it's time to see the prize. Now it's time to get a glimpse of the reward that awaits the steadfast souls who overcame and did remain faithful despite the odds.

To Christians, chapter 21 and part of chapter 22 is portrayal of the glorious home of the faithful soul beyond the final judgment.

Throughout the Christian age this vision has comforted the hearts of countless Christians during the times of trial, persecution, tragedy and the deaths of loved ones. Chapter 21 is a vision of what all Christians strive for. Christians are described in scripture as being pilgrims in a foreign land with their citizenship in heaven. Here is the reward that awaits the diligent and the faithful. Here is their nation, their country, their destination, their hope and home. Revelation 21 is a vision of the Christian's spiritual home described in terms we can identify with.

As beautiful as it is described and as glorious a place as John describes it, there is no better word for it than the word, "home". **This is something the faithful Christian has never really had.** This is what faithful Christians have looked ahead to and yearned for all their lives. This is what faithful Christians have been promised and hope for; the final destination, the goal, the prize, the reward for a life of faith faithfully lived. This is heaven, the home of the soul.

Revelation 21:1

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more."

Here we have the stage set for this vision in the very first line. The earth has passed away, the sea is no more. Isaiah wrote in 65:17, *"For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind."* In 2nd Peter 3:13, it is written, *"But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens & a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."* The idea of a new heaven and new earth is given in scripture in numerous places. This denotes a new place to live. A new home for the soul which is better than the old one and permanent. The old has passed away to be replaced by the new. Some falsely teach that this is speaking of a new physical earth. This isn't the case because Peter wrote that the earth nor the heavens we are familiar with will no longer exist (2 Peter 3:10-12).

The Hebrew writer taught that only once more will He who speaks from heaven shake the earth and the skies above and when He does, all the things which are made, meaning the creation, will be removed, leaving only what can't be shaken in its place. He then goes on to say that what can't be shaken and will not be removed is the Kingdom of God. His spiritual kingdom which is not physical (Hebrews 12:25-28).

What is left after the first earth and first heaven passes is the spiritual realm. The text of the verse affirms this with the words "*and the sea is no more*". Proponents of the new physical earth belief are going to have to explain how this new physical earth is going to exist without the oceans which are said to be no more. The new heaven the new earth are not physical by any means. They are going to be the spiritual home of the soul for the overcomers.

"and the sea is no more"

The King James Version renders this "*and there was no more sea*". In Revelation 4 we read of John's vision of the four great beasts before the throne of God. These four great beasts represented God's people from all over the earth. The four great beasts were a figure for the church which in scripture is the spiritual kingdom of God. The [crystal sea](#), mentioned in Revelation 15:2 was a figure for the barrier between God and His people. Christians on earth walk by faith, and not by site. While scripture teaches that we have fellowship with God (1 Corinthians 1:9, 1 John 1:6), but this fellowship is maintained through a barrier. Christians on earth are not allowed direct access to God the Father. But in heaven, home of the soul, Christians will no longer have a barrier between them and their God. The figure of "*no more sea*" is representative of a place where all the redeemed shall have direct access and face to face fellowship with God. The glass sea being gone is the absence of the barrier between God and His people which exists in the church on earth.

Another thing to consider is that the greater beast of chapter 13 came from the sea. With the absence of the sea, there will be no more source for danger to come from. This is a place of absolute eternal safety and security.

"And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven of God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband."

The old order of things had its holy city, so also does the coming one. The old Jerusalem has long since passed and was a physical place of not only the righteous children of God, but also of tears, and mourning of death. In the new Jerusalem, there will be no more death or tears of any kind. Coming down out of heaven means that it is of divine origin. And so it is, Jesus in John 14:2-3 was quoted as saying "*I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, (there) ye may be also.*" This is a vision, described in earthly terms, of the place Jesus went to prepare for His saints.

The imagery of the bride adorned for her husband is familiar terminology from Ephesians 5 verse 27, "*that he might present the church to himself a glorious (church), not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*" This is a picture of the presenting of the body of the saved to the Lord by Himself, having previously given Himself to it similar to the groom giving himself for his bride. There is a dual imagery here of both the church on earth and of Heaven, but the primary focus is on heaven as will be seen in verse 3 where God Himself is said to dwell with his people. The vision here's of the church, including all the saved who lived before the cross, being in her final glory beyond judgment in her eternal home with God

Revelation 21:3

"And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, The tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, (and be) their God"

No more is God with His people in Spirit as He was before. No more do we walk by faith and not by sight. No longer is God invisible. In this new Jerusalem, God Himself, in totality, will be with the saved. This is a place where the redeemed come into the actual presence of God Himself forever. This is Heaven, the home of the Soul.

Revelation 21:4

"and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away."

On earth, the righteous shed tears of grief, they die, they mourn and they hurt. In the Heaven there will be no more tears, no more death, no more mourning and no more pain of any kind. All these things have passed away and are gone forever. The Christians who first received Revelation were enduring horrendous hardship and persecution. What a beautiful picture of what awaited the victorious this must have represented to them. What a beautiful picture that awaits the victorious of all ages this is.

Revelation 21:5

"And he that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he saith, Write: for these words are faithful and true."

From the throne of God, it is announced that the old physical existence with pain, suffering, sorrow and death are to be replaced with something new where none of these things exist anymore. And readers are assured from the throne that these words are true and that they can be trusted. People who are hurting, mourning and physically suffering can put their trust in these words and in Jesus Christ and find their way home. He is telling the truth. There is a place better than the one they are living in. There is a home where sorrow and pain do not exist. There is a home where there are no more tears and we can trust His word on that. These words apply to every Christian that ever cried a tear or suffered a loss.

Revelation 21:6

"And he said unto me, They are come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely."

As is often the case in Revelation, future happenings are described in past-tense terms. So sure and inevitable are these events that they are described as already having been accomplished. The occupant of the throne identifies Himself for us with words very familiar from His own introduction of Himself in the first of the Revelation. In the beginning, Jesus Christ identified Himself as the "*Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending*" (Revelation 1:8). Jesus Christ is speaking from the throne of God. We have here a wondrous image of the unity of God. So united are the Father, the Son and the Spirit that from the throne, they speak as one.

Eternal life in heaven with God is offered to all mankind. This opportunity is given freely to any who would respond to the call. There are teachings among those who claim Christ as their savior that teach God selectively gives salvation to whosoever He will. This isn't true, salvation is offered to whosoever thirsts for it. We see this offer repeated even more strongly at the close of the book, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely." (22:17).

Jesus claimed to be the beginning and the end. Scripture supports this as being a literal statement about Himself. Numerous places credit Jesus Christ as the active agent directing the creation of all things. One of the most notable is found in Colossians 1:16-17, "*For by him [Jesus], were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.*" Also, in John's gospel when he was introducing Jesus in the first chapter, he made this statement in verse 10, "*He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not*" (KJV). Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he taught that God "*created all things by Jesus Christ*" (Ephesians 3:9). It is easy to conclude that Jesus was indeed the beginning of it all.

Jesus will also be the last. He will be the last of all creation when He returns at the end. 2 Peter 3:10, "*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; 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.*" And when Jesus does come, it will be "*from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, (even) eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might*" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). Jesus Himself said, "*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*" (John 5:28-29). Jesus is indeed both the beginning and the end. And when He does end things here on earth, all things will be made new and we will have another beginning which shall never end.

Revelation 21:7

"He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

The overcomers who are faithful unto death will inherit this place of no more sorrow, no more pain, no more tears. Christians in the church today are the sons of God (1 John 3:2), but there is sorrow in the church with tears, physical death and loss. This isn't so in the place overcomers shall inherit. While we are the children of God now, in heaven we will be in the presence of God almighty in a way never before known. He will be the God we can see. We will be His children in His literal presence. God isn't saying here that we are not His children until we inherit the home of no more tears. He's telling the overcomers that when this place of sorrow they are enduring has passed, they are going to come into a divine place of protection in the Home of God where there will be no more pain. This place we are going to inherit is going to be better than anything we have ever known and the relationship we will have with God will be unlike anything we have ever experienced.

Revelation 21:8

"But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part (shall be) in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death."

And here again is the fate of those who never come to righteousness or who did not remain faithful unto death. Here is the opposite destination of those who don't inherit eternal life in the home of the soul. Revelation is an epistle written to the oppressed First Century Asia Minor Diaspora Christians as a message of hope and of perseverance. Christians are told time after time they must overcome. The fate of those Christians who do not overcome is the primary focus of this admonition. Time and again throughout the Revelation Christians are cautioned to persevere and are warned against succumbing to temptation no matter what form it comes in. And now after a vision of the reward for faithfulness has been given, Christians are again admonished to overcome and remain faithful. If it weren't possible for the Christian to fall and lose their awaited inheritance in heaven, there would be no warnings to avoid it.

We have seen the second death mentioned earlier in Revelation. It was first mentioned in the letter to Smyrna. Following the warning to remain faithful unto death in Revelation 2:10, we see the fate of those who don't in these words, *"He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death"* (V11).

The second death is mentioned again in Revelation 20:6 in the context of the first resurrection. The second death has no power over all those who have a part in the first resurrection. As is often times the case, Revelation explains itself and this is yet another example of this. The second death is defined in 20:14 as the *"lake of fire"* & again here as *"the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone"*. We understand this to be Hell, which is the opposite destination of those who overcome, remain faithful unto death and find their way to the city of no more tears.

The second death awaits those who are *"fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars"*. This list of the unrighteous includes all mankind, both Christians and non-Christians. Paul gave instruction to the Corinthian church concerning a Christian who was guilty of fornication in the first epistle chapter five and verse one (1Cor. 5:1). This guilty Christian was required to repent or face the second death. In Acts Chapter 8 we read the account of a man named Simon who was a sorcerer in his past. He heard the gospel and was converted and when he saw the miracles being performed he wanted to buy the ability to pass them on. He wanted to go back to his old tricks of sorcery. He was told to repent or face the second death. In Hebrews 3:12 we read of those Christians who were guilty of unbelief in departing from the living God. Christians can be all of the things listed in Revelation 21:8 and face the second death. Or they can overcome & inherit a home in the city of no more tears. The application for us today is that all must come to Christ & all Christians must persevere and overcome temptation or face the lake of fire; the second death.

Revelation 21:1-8 can be summed up as "heaven, the perfect place of fellowship". The crystal sea that was present in 4:6 is not seen in this vision (V1). In this place of no more tears, this barrier has been removed so that mankind has perfect access to and fellowship with the person of God almighty. In the spiritual kingdom of God on earth, we have fellowship with the Godhead in a spiritual way, but there is a barrier between us. In the place of no more tears, this barrier has been removed and Christians stand in the actual presence of God almighty.

Revelation 21:9

"And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were laden with the seven last plagues; and he spake with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb."

In Revelation 17 an angel holding one of the seven vials instructed John to "*come hither*" and see the judgments of the great whore that sitteth on many waters. The destruction of Jerusalem the religious capitol – along with the city's temple center - was absolute. The beast and false prophet have been put down and thrown into eternal torment. The ringleader Satan has been put down and now what's left is a vision of what awaits those who overcame.

The saved of all time, washed clean by the blood of the lamb and because of their perseverance and faithfulness gained the victory over Satan. As clean and pure as a virgin, presented fit to be the wife of the king. What a connection the saved will have with God. There is no closer bond. There is no greater relationship than that of bride and groom. As the children of God on earth, Christians similarly are known as the bride of Christ. But in heaven, the bride will get to see her groom and be in His presence.

Revelation 21:10

"And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God"

One would expect to see a glorious vision of a bride after reading that the angel was going to show John the wife of the lamb. This is not the case. The wife of the lamb is introduced as the holy city Jerusalem. Let's recall that the great harlot was symbolized as the city that reigned over the kings of the earth. As the harlot was symbolized by a great city, so also is the wife of the lamb symbolized as a city, but this city is holy. In Ezekiel 40:2 we read of this great prophet being shown the frame of a city from a very high mountain. This city that Ezekiel saw was a vision of the church which was to come. In John's vision, he sees the church in its final glory at home with God and with Jesus.

Revelation 21:11

"having the glory of God: her light was like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal"

In Revelation 4:3 Jasper and Sardius stone were used to illustrate He who sat on the throne. The Sardius stone was the color of blood which symbolized God's Judgment. Here there is no judgment for in heaven all that has passed. Now there is only the perfect diamond, flawless in its beauty which represents the glorious illumination of the bride of the lamb; that holy city; the saved of all the ages.

Revelation 21:12

"having a wall great and high; having twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names written thereon, which are (the names) of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel"

Cities in those times had walls built around them for safety. The walls here represent safety and security for the inhabitants. The three uses of the number 12 represent perfect divine organized religion. All the saved of all ages are called the children of Israel.

Revelation 21:13

"on the east were three gates; and on the north three gates; and on the south three gates; and on the west three gates."

There is a lot of numerical symbolism being used here. The number three which represents the perfect divine is utilized four times. The number Four represents the world. Revelation 21 started with a vision of the new earth. The vision John is describing here is of the new earth here represented as the holy city. We have here the figure for the perfect divine new earth. Perfect divine access to the holy city on all four corners for the saved of all ages is in view here.

Revelation 21:14

"And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."

The twelve apostles and twelve tribes of Israel mentioned in V12 make up the complete picture of all the saved of all time. The foundation was built by the apostles, (Acts 2:42) with Jesus Christ as the head of the corner, (1 Peter 2:7). There were more than 12 apostles, the number representing all of them.

Revelation 21:15

"And he that spake with me had for a measure a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof."

Interestingly, John was charged with the duty of measuring the temple of God in Revelation 11:1 which was a figure for the church. An angel is measuring the holy city while John watched. John's measuring stick was just a plain rod, the angel's measuring stick was described as being golden. This image of the city is one of ultimate glory. The bride here which is a figure for the faithful children of God whom are no longer in an earthly assembly. This assembly is in heaven!

Revelation 21:16

"And the city lieth foursquare, and the length thereof is as great as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs: the length and the breadth and the height thereof are equal."

There is no possible way this could be a literal city. The literal size of it is staggering. A furlong is an eighth of a mile therefore the city in the vision is about 1500 miles length by width with buildings 1500 miles tall. Jesus said *"In my Father's house are many mansions"* (John 14:2). The sheer dimensions given by John in his vision certainly allows for plenty of space for these mansions.

The numbers are figurative, the number 12 which is a perfect religious number times 1000 which is a perfect or complete number multiplied by itself three times which is a symbol of the perfect divine. What is in view here is that the city is spacious and is utterly complete and of divine origin in it's makeup from front to back, side to side and bottom to top.

When we consider the description of John's vision as a whole, we see a picture of a strong, spacious, perfect and beautiful city where God's people will dwell with Him in perfect security and peace.

In looking at these descriptions of the city in John's vision we must keep in mind that John had to describe what he saw in earthly terms which humans could understand. Man is a physical being and only relates to things of a physical nature. No man has ever seen heaven or anything like it so can't really comprehend the beauty, peace and tranquility that will be found there. One thing we need to keep in mind is that heaven is the complete opposite of hell. To the extent that hell is horrible, heaven is wondrous. The lost are really missing out on something wonderful.

Revelation 21:17

"And he measured the wall thereof, a hundred and forty and four cubits, (according to) the measure of a man, that is, of an angel."

The walls around this great city are a hundred and forty cubits high, or roughly 200 feet high if you use the measure of a normal man. A cubit was the length of man's forearm and differed somewhat from individual to individual. The cubit here is according to "*the measure of a man, that is, of an angel*". This is a purposefully ambiguous figure. The walls weren't any specific measured height. They were 144 cubits, or rather 12 times 12 which is the perfect number. The walls were the perfect height.

Revelation 21:18

"And the building of the wall thereof was jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto pure glass."

Jasper is believed to be diamond. The walls were made of diamonds, perfect, flawless and shining bright light in every direction. The city was pure gold as shiny as glass. These are physical descriptions of a heavenly non-physical place. It is necessary to describe such a prophetic vision in earthly physical terms. These can't be the descriptions of a literal place, yet there are some who have tried to literalize it.

In rough dimensions John visualized a city that would span a height that the tops of the buildings would be roughly 5 times higher than the edge of earth's atmosphere. It should be immediately evident to the reader of any age that this isn't a literal city. We are being given images of magnificence and splendor in terms we can identify with.

Revelation 21:19-20

"The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoptase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst."

Of significance here is not so much the identity of the precious gems in the vision but the number of them. There are twelve different varieties of stones which again symbolizes a perfect religious number in every dimension given; every characteristic of the holy city is expressed in numbers which have significance by way of Hebrew Numerology to the first readers of the Book of Revelation.

Revelation 21:21

"And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the several gates was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass."

There were twelve ways into the city, each gate constructed of a single pearl. Pearls were highly sought after in New Testament times. In the parable of the pearl of great price, Jesus compared the kingdom of God to a wonderful pearl found by one who was diligently searching for it. Once found, it was a highly treasured possession.

The streets were of gold so brilliant and so shiny that it appeared to be transparent glass. Only the purest, shiniest, and most magnificent gold would symbolize what John was seeing. A gold like no other.

Revelation 21:22

"And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof."

In the church on earth, the individual members are the temple where God dwells, (1 Corinthians 3:16). In this beautiful home of the soul, God does not just dwell in the temple, He is the temple. He is the protection, the sanctuary, the security and the home of the righteous.

Revelation 21:23

"And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof (is) the Lamb."

There is no need for created light in heaven. The glory of God is all the light that is needed. When God visited Moses on Mount Sinai He had to tuck Moses into a crack in the rock and shield him from a direct view of his face as he walked by. The brightness of God in his glory is something no physical man can look upon and live to tell of (Exodus 33:20-23). The account goes on to reveal that the glory of God was so bright even Moses' skin glowed from being in its presence. There will be no need for created light in heaven. The glory of God shines bright enough for that purpose.

Revelation 21:9-23 - - can be summarized as the magnificence, beauty, security, and glory of Heaven and living in the presence of God Himself. What a wonderful place Heaven must be!

Revelation 21:24

"And the nations shall walk amidst the light thereof: and the kings of the earth bring their glory into it."

Salvation was offered to all nations on earth and they shall walk in the light of God's glory. The kings of the earth, which is a figure for all Christians, (Revelation 5:10), will bring their glory into heaven with them.

Revelation 21:25

"And the gates thereof shall in no wise be shut by day (for there shall be no night there)"

In heaven there is the absolute absence of darkness. The gates will not need to be shut because there will be no evil anywhere to threaten the holy city. No bars or locks on windows and doors, no security measures will need to be in place. There will be no evil in Heaven whatsoever. Shutting the gates will be unnecessary. The doors into Heaven stand open for all eternity!

Revelation 21:26

"and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it"

The redeemed out of every nation are in view here. All of the glory sought or achieved out them will be brought into the city. The next verse explains what will never been seen or allowed into the holy city.

Revelation 21:27

"and there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie: but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life."

The gates into the city shall never be shut. The walls are high, the city is great and secure and peaceful. The only citizens will be the unified Godhead on the throne and those who are written in the Lamb's book of life. The eternal spiritual register which contains the names of all the redeemed out of the earth.

AMEN

Come, Lord Jesus

Revelation 22:20

Knowing-Jesus.com

NEW HEAVENS
"NEW JERUSALEM"
"WIFE OF THE LAMB"
"HOLY CITY"
"MOUNT ZION"
"BRIDE"
"NO MORE DEATH"
NEW EARTH

"HE WILL TABERNACLE WITH THEM"

REVELATION 21 & 22

"RIVER OF THE WATER OF LIFE"

The Spirit & the Bride say "Come" (Revelation 22)

Chapter 22 continues with John's vision of Heaven which was the primary subject of chapter 21. When the scripture was written, it was done so without the chapter & verse divisions we have today. According to history, the first English translation of the Bible to contain both chapter and verse divisions was the Geneva translation of the Bible published in 1560. For some reason unknown to this Bible student, a division was placed within John's vision of Heaven. Because of this arbitrary mistake, the first five verses of Revelation Chapter 22 complete the author John's vision of Heaven, the home of the soul.

Revelation 22:1

"And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb"

This is still the angel mentioned in Revelation 21:9 who carried John to a high mountain to see the holy city Jerusalem. This vision is still of the same city. John is shown the water of life flowing like a river. There is plenty of it available and it is in a continuous supply coming from the throne of God. All life comes from the throne of God. This is the source from where everything that is good comes.

Notice here that we again see the Lamb occupying the throne of God. There is one throne mentioned here and this throne is the seat of God and the Lamb. The Holy Spirit is also a part of this throne by necessary inference even though He is not directly mentioned here. Once again, we see an incredible unity of the Godhead displayed in this vision as we see God and Jesus pictured as ruling from one throne.

Revelation 22:2

"in the midst of the street thereof. And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve (manner of) fruits, yielding its fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

The tree of life is pictured here as being in three places. On this side of the river, in the midst and on the other side of the river. The number three is a symbol of the perfect divine. This tree of life, like the river coming from the throne is of divine origin.

This is a figure of the tree of life that was in the garden of Eden from which Adam and Eve were barred because of their transgression. In this part of the vision, John takes us all the way back to the beginning when mankind sinned & was separated from the tree of life (Genesis 3:22-24). When mankind was separated from the tree of life, he lost his physical immortality. **If sin had never come into the world, death would not have come and mankind could have lived forever on earth.**

Revelation 22:3

"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"

When Adam and Eve sinned, God placed a curse on mankind that has endured since that time and will continue to endure for as long as earth remains. Woman's pain at childbirth was increased, and her husband would rule over her from that time on. We see this arrangement in the church today where men are to be the head of their wives who is to be in subjection to them (Ephesians 5:23). In heaven, this is not how it will be at all. Jesus taught that in the resurrection everyone will have spiritual bodies like the angels and none there will remain in or be given again in marriage (Matthew 22:30-32 & Luke 20:35-36). Eve sinned and a curse was placed on women (Genesis 3:16). In heaven, this curse is gone.

Adam received a curse too. Genesis 3:17-19, *"And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread."*

Man has to work for a living. Before man sinned God provided every need in a physical paradise. Man's curse was that from henceforth he would work to provide the basic needs of himself and his family. In heaven, this curse will be removed. God will once again provide all that is needed.

And then the final curse on mankind was that they would all die.

Genesis 3:19, *"till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."*

Man was driven from the paradise of Eden where was found the tree of life. Being no longer able to eat of its fruit, mankind would then begin to age and would eventually die a physical death. Our physical deaths are part of the curse of sin on earth. In heaven, all sin and darkness will be gone, there will be no more curse and we will live forever and serve God on His throne in a paradise once again.

Revelation 22:4

"and they shall see his face; and his name (shall be) on their foreheads."

On earth we walk by faith and not by sight, (2 Corinthians 5:7), no man has ever seen the face of God (John 1:18). In heaven, no longer will we walk by faith and not by sight for we will see the face of God Himself. The separation between God and His children will be gone and they will be in his actual presence.

Revelation 22:5

"And there shall be night no more; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God shall give them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever."

This is a restatement of Revelation 21:23. In heaven there will be no night, no darkness of any kind. The glory of the Lord will lighten our lives from that point forward and into eternity without end.

This completes John's vision of heaven. On earth the church is called the Kingdom of God and sometimes the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 16:18-19) but this is not the same as the heaven the saved look forward to after the resurrection. In the kingdom we live in now, there is pain, sorrow, tears and suffering. Night falls and there is death to face. And we are still living with the curse, the consequences, of sin all around us

In heaven, all of this is gone. Heaven is opposite of Hell and is the final, glorious triumphant separation of mankind from sin and complete and total reconciliation with God. No more tears, no more pain, sorrow and death, no more do we live under the curse of sin. No longer will we have to suffer because of the sinful actions of others. No more will we live with the temptation of sin. No more will we be separated from God, being reunited with Him in person where we shall live and reign with Him and in service to Him forever and ever and ever.

What a beautiful picture John portrays of the hope all Christians have. This vision of heaven is for all Christians who ever lived, suffered and died on earth. All Christians can look at this blessed vision and find hope and encouragement to persevere, to stay the course, to fight the fight and to patiently endure to the end.

Revelation 14:12

"Here is the patience of the saints, they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."

1 Peter 1:7-9

"that the proof of your faith, (being) more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ: whom not having seen ye love; on whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, (even) the salvation of (your) souls."

How beautiful and wonderful heaven must be!

And now we come to the final farewell and closing admonitions of this last inspired Holy book. What a fitting conclusion to the New Testament of God. The gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John reveal Christ. The Acts of the Apostles teaches the believer how to get "into Christ". The general epistles teach the Christians how to live and remain "in Christ". The Book of Revelation teaches Christians how to die in Christ and ends up with a glorious vision of the reward given to the patient and the faithful. Revelation 21:7 sums it up, "*He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.*"

Revelation 22:6

"And he said unto me, These words are faithful and true: and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angels to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass."

The angel showing John the vision of Heaven now proclaims that the things he has been shown are faithful and true. This means that the Christians of the Jewish and the Roman persecutions and all Christians thereafter can depend on them. Christians can commit themselves to these words with confidence and assurance. Christians can know beyond any doubt that they can base their hopes and their destinies in the hands of Christ and be victorious in the end no matter what.

These visions were introduced in the first sentence of Revelation as shortly coming to pass. And indeed they were. Many of the natural disasters which God used to punish the secular and religious authorities were already in progress. At the writing of the Revelation, the Christians were already living under great persecution and a number of the things which we saw in the opening of the seals and the bowls of wrath were already well in progress.

The first readers of the book knew it was written to them in the first sentence and then throughout the book they saw vision after vision of the very circumstances under which they lived and their evil enemies who were bent upon their destruction. Not only was it going to happen relatively soon, it was already in progress.

Revelation 22:7

"And behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book."

Jesus says "Behold" or "look now". "I come quickly" signifies an action being executed speedily or swiftly. Call to mind that Jesus used these same words in the letter to the Philadelphia church. He is coming speedily and surely to the aid of the first readers of the book.

"Blessed is he that keepeth the words of prophecy of this book".

The sixth beatitude of the Revelation and is a reinforcement of the first one found in the third verse of chapter one. Jesus is here restating a number of the things here in the closing remarks of the Revelation that were introduced in the opening statements of the book. The readers are being again reminded of several elements which they must not lose sight of. This is no different than when a parent repeats things of great importance to their children in order to make sure they understand. The entire theme of the Revelation has been to continually persevere and to overcome and to remain faithful to God even unto death. The Revelation is bookended front and back with somewhat similar opening & closing statements. Spirit inspiration is stressing the importance of keeping the words of this book by repeating it for the readers.

Revelation 22:8-9

"And I John am he that heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel that showed me these things. And he saith unto me, See thou do it not: I am a fellow-servant with thee and with thy brethren the prophets, and with them that keep the words of this book: worship God."

As in the beginning of the Revelation, John again affirms to the readership that these visions are indeed coming through him. He is the one who is writing them down by inspiration. He is the last living eyewitness to the ministry, the death, the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus Christ back into Heaven. There can be no greater assurance in the minds of the recipients of a letter than knowledge that their author walked, talked, ate with, accompanied with and shared in the afflictions of Jesus Christ while He was on Planet Earth. The readers were given this assurance first in the opening of the visions and now receive it again in the end.

And with this assurance of who penned the inspired letter, we are reminded of another extremely important factor upon which the entire book of Revelation hinges. John is so overwhelmed with the visions that he falls down at the angel's feet to worship him. In Revelation 19:10 John fell down at the feet of an angel and was forbidden to do it and was told to worship God. Now again, John is reminded that he must not worship anyone but God. Worship of false gods and idols was the crux of the problem upon which everything that happened to the remedy the situation revolved. They worshipped all kinds of gods, they worshipped men on earth as gods, men on earth tried to force worship of other men on earth as gods. The refusal of the Christians to bow down to false worship is what sparked the great persecution.

All the persecution of the Christians, the suffering of the non-believers, the bowls of wrath, the natural disasters, the plagues everything bad that caused so much death and misery were the result of the worshipping of false gods.

The readers are given yet another reinforcement of something vitally important. Worship God and only God. Do not even worship an angel coming in the name of God showing heavenly visions. John had to be reminded of that. The Christians to whom the Revelation was addressed needed to heed it's warning. Worship is to be offered only to the occupant of the throne of God. Jesus is pictured as occupying the throne with the Father. Revelation 4:5 places the Holy Spirit there as well and in a place of prominence before the throne. All three are God and all are unified as God and must be worshipped as one. When we offer our worship to God, all three members of the Trinity are together glorified. Worship God!

Revelation 22:10

"And he saith unto me, Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand."

This prophecy does not need to be kept shut up. It needs to be distributed far and wide for the time of its fulfillment is now. Once again the reader is given the idea that now is the time for the events in the book to be transpiring. Christians are suffering right now. Christians need comfort, reassurance and hope right now. Christians are being killed for professing their faith right now. Christians need to overcome now, for the time is at hand.

Revelation 22:11

"He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy still."

Here we see two classifications of people, the unrighteous and the filthy and the righteous and the holy. This is one of the most powerful statements supporting the free will choice of man to choose his destiny in all of scripture, second only to the one yet to come in verse 17. God gave man free will in the Eden garden and hasn't revoked that privilege since. To those who persecuted the Christians, let them be unrighteous and filthy. Let them do their unrighteousness. Let them be what they choose to be.

Unfortunately, the unrighteous, in their free will choice to be unrighteous can afflict the righteous. Christians throughout the ages have suffered horrendous hardship, persecution and death at the hands of the unrighteous. This summation in verse 11 is one of the main primary messages taught in Revelation. There are going to be unrighteous people who will not turn from their evil ways. Let them be unrighteous. The goal of the righteous is to be righteous and holy regardless of the actions of others. How fitting are the words here of Paul writing to the Roman Christians:

Romans 12:19-21

"Avenge not yourselves, beloved, but give place unto the wrath (of God): for it is written, Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompense, saith the Lord. But if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

Revelation 22:12-13

"Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

Jesus speaks here and states again that he is coming surely and speedily. Jesus is looking ahead now to the final judgment of all the earth as the vision draws to a close. Jesus is the beginning and the end of the creation. At the end, each individual person will be given the rewards for their works, be they either consequences of unrighteousness and filthiness or the rewards of righteousness and holiness. Let those who persist in evil and filthiness receive the recompense of their works.

Revelation 22:14

"Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right (to come) to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city."

Let those who persevere, overcome and persist in righteousness, who wash their robes and keep them unspotted from the world receive their reward. How are their robes washed? Revelation 7:14, *"These are they that come of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."* Only those who have washed their robes are granted the right to enter in by one of the twelve gates in the city of heaven and can enjoy the blessing of eternal life. This is the reward that Jesus said He carried with Him that will be rendered to each man according to his works. This reward is the right to enter through the pearl gates into the city of life.

This reward is in no way earned or merited in any way. The gift of eternal life can't be paid for with money or good works. God the Father was under no obligation to send His Son to earth to die for the sins of the world and God's Son was under no obligation to offer His life as a freewill ransom for the souls of man. No amount of works on the part of any man could ever repay that act of incredible love and sacrifice. This reward of eternal life is by the grace of God through faith. It can neither be earned nor deserved but this fact doesn't negate the Christian obligation to overcome and persevere to the end. The fact that one's obedience to the will of God can never pay for salvation doesn't in any way alleviate them from their responsibilities to God. Jesus is the author of salvation unto all who obey Him. Obedience to the will of God is a work of righteousness upon which our eternal destinies ride. Jesus said in Matthew 7:21 that *"Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven."*

Revelation 22:15

"Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie."

The reward for the Christian life faithfully lived to the end is entrance into the holy city where is the throne of God and the tree of life. And reward for those who insist on unrighteousness is denial into the great city. No one who practices unrighteousness will be allowed into the holy city. They remain outside and will never pass through those gates of pearl.

Revelation 22:16

"I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star."

This is another restatement of what we read in Revelation 1:1. These visions John saw were shown to him by an angel who was sent by Jesus Christ. The visions were directed to the churches of the first century and thereafter who were under the influence of the imperial city worship cults.

We have all seen that last bright star in the morning before the sun comes up. Shining in the heavens, this star is the final herald of the day before the sun bursts forth from beneath the horizon. Jesus Christ claims to be that bright morning star which ushers in the glorious and bright holy city when its glory bursts forth for all to see. Those on earth who are faithful can keep their eyes on that morning star, watch it and follow it and they will then see the glory of that great city burst forth like the rays of the sun in the morning. What a beautiful mental image this paints on one's imagination. How glorious heaven must be!

Revelation 22:17

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely."

The Holy Spirit says come. The redeemed say come. This is the invitation extended to all human-kind. The word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit is calling to the lost. The church on earth is calling to the lost. The call to God is extended to all people on earth. None are denied who freely seek Him.

The water of life pictured here runs in a river from the throne of God, (V1) and is big enough for all and is available to all. *"He that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy still" (V 11)*. In the end there will be only two groups of people. The saved & the lost. Jesus taught as recorded in Matthew 25:31-32, *"the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all the nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats" . . .* And the unrighteous *"shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life" (V 46)*.

Revelation 22:18

"I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book."

These are some of the strongest and most sobering words in all of scripture. Given the diversity of opinions on what the Book of Revelation is and how it should be interpreted, it can be easily seen that many people are falling into the category of those who will fall into condemnation. It is with great diligence that students of the Bible should approach this volume. For those who add to the prophecies, they will suffer the plagues which are written in the book. There are many plagues mentioned in the Revelation, up to including being thrown into the lake of fire, and this verse embraces them all indiscriminately.

For those who would diminish the words of the prophecy in this book, their fate is singular and severe. They will have their right to the tree of life revoked and lose their citizenship in the holy city, which is heaven. In short, those who lessen, or trivialize, or change, or deny any of the words in the Revelation lose their salvation. Who was the Revelation written to? Christians. Who does it pertain to? Christians. Who will therefore lose their right to the tree of life and their place in heaven if they tamper with the prophecies in Revelation? Christians.

One cannot have their part in the tree of life removed unless they first had a part in it. Likewise, one cannot have their part in the holy city taken away unless they first had one to begin with. This isn't a picture of people who have never come to righteousness. This is a illustration of those who first had a part in the tree of life and the holy city and by their actions with the prophecies in the Revelation, forfeited it. There can't be a more serious & sobering verse of scripture with which to end this wondrous book. We must beware the consequences of error and diligently strive for the truth.

This attitude of God's toward the handling of His holy word is by no means unique. A similar command and warning was given concerning the law of Moses in Deuteronomy 4:2 and in 12:32. In the New Testament Paul pronounced the curse of God upon those who would teach another gospel than the one which was received (Galatians 1:6-9). Paul also wrote in 1 Corinthians 4:6 not to go beyond what was written. John also had something to say about going beyond what the written word. He wrote that "*Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God*" (2 John 9). This means to go further than is right or proper and to transgress the limits of God's word.

It has been noted time and again that the key to unraveling the visions of the Revelation is found within and throughout God's holy word and this has indeed proven to be the fact. One cannot tamper with the prophecies of Revelation without adding to, or taking away from, or going beyond what is written elsewhere in scripture. The Revelation is inseparably connected with the rest of inspired scripture and as such cannot be added to or taken away from without altering the word of God elsewhere.

For example, Revelation makes the consistent claim throughout that the faithful Christian must overcome and remain faithful to the end or suffer eternal damnation. If one diminishes this, then they have done violence to passages such as Matthew 10:22 where Jesus told those twelve disciples named in Matthew 10:2-4 to go forth and preach the gospel to Israel and he gave this admonition, *"And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved."* If one tampers with the consequences of sin in Revelation, they have tampered with them in the rest of scripture & therefore fall under condemnation of going beyond or not abiding in the doctrine of Christ. The only conclusion that can be reached is that God's commands regarding adding to or taking away from the prophecies of Revelation have an application to the rest of the word of God as well.

Revelation 22:20

"He who testifieth these things saith, Yea: I come quickly. Amen: come, Lord Jesus."

Jesus is the one who testifies the visions in Revelation. John was merely the man who wrote the testimony down under the direct supervision of the Holy Spirit who inspired all the scriptures.

Jesus for the third time in this vision declared "*I come quickly.*" When the time is right for His last coming, He will come and gather His saints unto Himself and then deliver the kingdom to the Father where all the saved will be united eternally with God Himself in the holy city. John responds with a hearty Amen and echoes the hope and cry of every saint that ever lived on the earth in a final prayer to God:

Revelation 22:20-21

"Amen: come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints. Amen."

This is a final plea for God to come and alleviate the sufferings of the Christians of the time and of His final coming at the end. This is the hope expressed by all Christians who live faithful and righteous life. This is what all Christians strive and persevere for. And so the final curtain drops on the Revelation and as it settles into our memories we are left with the answers to many of man's questions.

Why am I here?

What is my purpose in life?

What is my destiny?

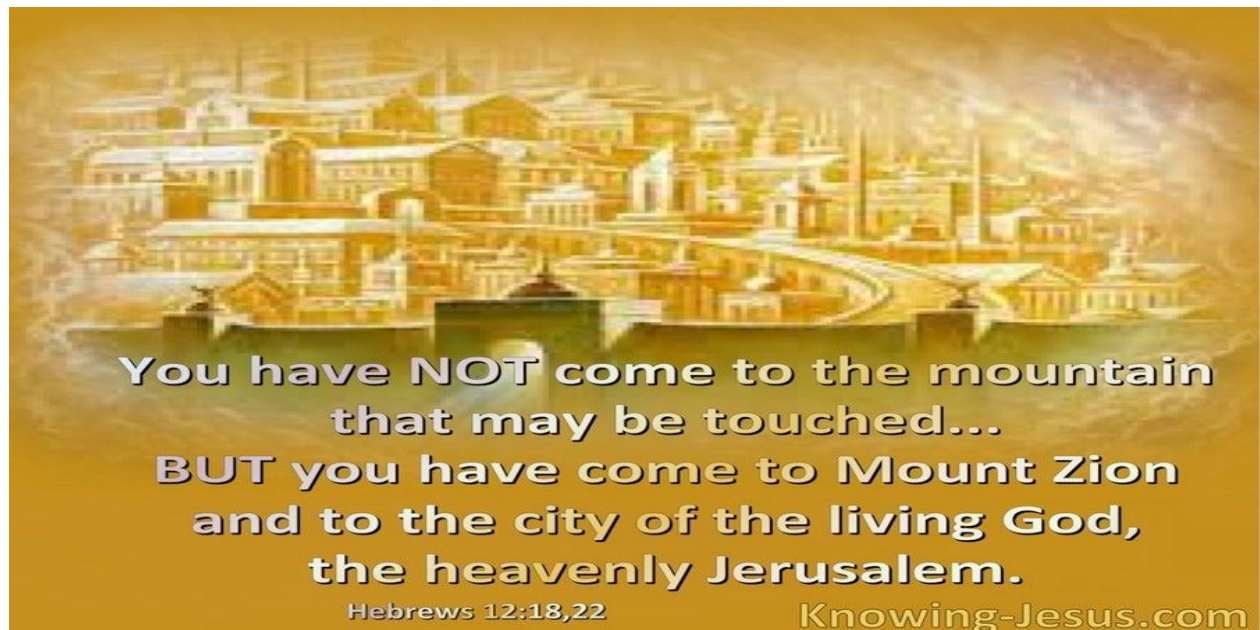
Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. We were placed on this earth to prepare ourselves for eternal life with God. His purpose in all of this is to separate the wheat from the chaff by giving mankind his will and then granting him the right of free choice and letting him decide his own destiny. God already knows without playing this drama out who will be saved and who will be lost. But our God is fair and just. And nobody who's damned to Hell will ever say they didn't have their chance.

Our destinies are one of two possible. Jesus said it best:

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."

As we bring this study of Revelation to a close, we learn from this study that those who triumph over evil, overcome and endure to the end receive eternal life with God in Heaven and those who do not overcome suffer eternally spending forever in the company of the God separated. The circumstances under which Christians live have no bearing on righteousness. God's expectations are uniform and absolute. In the end, the good guys win and the bad guys lose. The good guys are the ones who lived their lives in obedient service to God - being faithful unto death. The bad guys either never came to the knowledge of God or did and then succumbed to temptation & lost it all. [Edited, Church of Christ Articles]



ADDENDUM: THIRD PROPHETIC MESSAGE

Gentile Christian Concerns Regarding The Future Are Answered By Paul Copying John On Jerusalem

The Meaning of “Falling Away” - - An *Apostasy* or A *Departure*

The Case For Translating As An Apostasy

2 Thessalonians 2:1a, 3 Updated American Standard Version (UASV)

¹ Now we request you, brothers, with regard to the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ ... ³ Let no one deceive⁸¹ you in any way, for it will not come **unless the apostasy comes first**, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

On this text, New Testament scholar Jon A. Weatherly writes, “Following the warning about deception, the rest of the verse in the Greek text is an anacoluthon, a subordinate clause with no clause to complete it. Literally, the text reads, ‘Because unless the rebellion comes first and the man of lawlessness is revealed.’ Translators must supply the clause introduced with ‘because’ (ὅτι, *hoti*), which can be clearly inferred from v. 2. Since the question concerns the coming of the day of the Lord, Paul apparently expects the reader to conclude that the day is preceded by the rebellion and revelation of the man of lawlessness.”⁸² (Weatherly 1996)

“[Paul says it] Is Already at Work.”

About 51 C.E., some 18-years after Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension, division was already starting to creep into the faith, “the mystery of lawlessness **is already at work.**” (2 Thess. 2:7) **Yes, the power of the man of lawlessness** was already present, which is the power of [unbound] Satan, the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:3-4), and his tens of millions of demons, are hard at work behind the scenes (v.9).

The apostle Peter also spoke of these things about 64 C.E., “there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies ... in their greed they will exploit you with false words..” (2 Pet. 2:1, 3)

As the years progressed throughout the first-century, this divisive “talk [would] spread like gangrene.” (2 Tim. 2:17, c. 65 C.E.) About 51 C.E., They had some in Thessalonica, at worst, going ahead of, or at best, misunderstanding Paul, and wrongly stating by word and a bogus letter “that the day of the Lord has come.” (2 Thess. 2:1-2) In Corinth, about 55 C.E., “some of [were saying] that there is no resurrection of the dead. (1 Cor. 15:12) About 65 C.E., some were “saying that the resurrection has already happened. They [were] upsetting the faith of some.” - 2 Timothy 2:16-18.

Throughout the next three decades, **no** inspired books were written. However, by the time of the apostle John's letter writing days of 96-98 C.E., he tells us “Now many antichrists have come. Therefore, we know that it is the last hour.” (1 John 2:18) These are ones, “who denies that Jesus is the Christ” and ones who not confess “Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.” - 1 John 2:22; 4:2-3.

From 33 C.E. to 100 C.E., the apostles served Christ as a restraint against “the apostasy” that was coming. Paul stated at 2 Thessalonians 2:7, “For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; but only until the one who is right now acting as a restraint [Jesus’ apostles] is out of the way.” 2 Thessalonians 2:3 said, “Let no one deceive you in any way [misinterpretation or false teachers of Paul's first letter], for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness [composite person, or maybe an organization / movement, empowered by Satan] is revealed, the son of destruction.”

So, again, how did this apostasy, this rebellion, grow out of the first-century Christian congregation? Repeating Paul’s words to Thessalonica about “the thing that acts as a restraint” on the lawless one. We have already said that **it was the apostles, who acted as this restraining force**. It was the presence of the apostles, with the powerful gift of the Holy Spirit, which held off the apostasy in its full force. (Acts 2:1-4; 1 Cor. 12:28) Nevertheless, **when the last apostle John died in about 100 C.E., this restraint was removed.**

Is There a Departure in 2 Thessalonians 2:3?

Introduction

The task before us is to determine the appropriate translation for the word *apostasia* that appears in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. Notice there are no prepositional phrases or other modifiers telling the reader “from whom,” or “from what” the individuals in mind are falling away.

Modern versions imply that what is in view is a “departure, defection, or falling away from a previously known and believed truth of God” or a “falling away from God Himself.” Our procedure for examining this problem of translation (and ultimately interpretation) will be to present evidence in at least five areas arguing for a spatial meaning to the word as opposed to a specialized sense of “political or religious revolt.” First, we will examine the grammar of the passage taking special note of the usage of the definite article. Next will be the lexical data. This will encompass several areas since the word is very low in density in the New Testament. Included in this review will be the verbal cognate of the noun in question.

The next section of the article will examine the structure of both Thessalonian epistles as well as the structure of our passage. Much progress has been made in studies of literary, and especially Semitic language structures recently. Finally, to do justice to the discussion, parallel passages as well as the passage in question must be examined for any clues that help understand the problem passage.

Possible Translations of *apostasia* in 2 Thessalonians 2:3

Historically, scholars have understood *apostasia* in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 to have four possible interpretive meanings: (1) used in apposition to the man of sin (or lawlessness depending on one’s understanding of the textual variant); (2) as a falling away by the body of Christ from the content of Christian truth. It should be noted that in this author’s opinion **there are sufficient contextual clues to eliminate doctrinal departure of the body of Christ from consideration**; (3) as a revolt and a rebellion against God by unspecified participants; or (4) the departure or translation of the body of Christ to heaven. A brief discussion of the four views follows.

Apostasia Used as an Appositive

This interpretation fails because of the structure of the passage. Basically, the protasis of the conditional sentence has two compound sentences contained in it. Both sentences of the protasis contain an articular subject with two verbs. However, the first verb *elthe* is an active subjunctive and the second is a passive subjunctive *apokaluthe*, suggesting a difference.

Further, the first verb is modified by the adverbial comparative *proton* indicating a sequence or a list is being presented. **The “man of sin” and the following descriptive terms in true apposition have modifiers, but the word “apostasy” does not.** Concerning the origin of this suggestion, research has shown that Aquila in his translation of the Septuagint consistently uses *apostasía* to translate the Hebrew “Belial.” This may have been the source of the interpretation held by early church fathers.

Apostasia as a Falling Away from the Faith

As stated above, this writer sees **little evidence in the passage for the interpretation being the church or individuals in the church falling away from the faith.** Interestingly Ryrie opts for the term “apostasy” relating to people within the professing church.

Ernest Best presents the basic issues of tension in pursuing this interpretation.

There is nothing in the Pauline letters to suggest that he expected the church to apostasize, and, in particular, he is confident of the ability of the Thessalonians to endure ...

If then the apostasy is not of Christians of whom does Paul expect it? Does he expect it of unbelievers? But apostasy assumes an original relationship with God. [We might add it assumes a covenantal relationship]

In summary we could ask, “How much apostasy is enough to qualify as *the* apostasy? Why do Paul or any of the other NT writers not point out this significant event in eschatological passages?” We can accept that conditions in the churches can deteriorate but these verses do not use the word apostasy nor deal with issues of eschatology.

For a more favorable option under this category, Rosenthal has recognized the difficulty with viewing “the apostasy” as pertaining to the believing church. His extensive discussion and evidence from intertestamental history must not be ignored. In his discussion, he lists several points of analogy between Antiochus and the antichrist. (We prefer to us the term Man of Sin/Lawlessness since the antichrist would more legitimately be a title for the false prophet.)

Apostasia as Revolt or Rebellion Against God

The recommendation that apostasy is an active idea rather than a passive idea is popular with scholars today. Indeed, one of the reasons this seems so is because in the LXX the word “apostasy” and its cognates translate the Hebrew root (*marad*) twenty five times. The verb can mean either rebellion against man (twelve times) or rebellion against God (twelve times). Not surprisingly however, this rebellion is always in the context of the ANE political/religious world.

Rebellion in Israel is always against the king. Rebellion against outside powers is also possible when a suzerain-vassal relationship has been established between someone like Nebuchadnezzar and the king of Israel as a vassal. Since Yahweh's relationship with Israel is defined using a suzerain-vassal model, rebellion against the Lord is analogous to rebellion against the earthly king.

In the passage under consideration, 2 Thess. 2:3, we should ask, “what covenant is in place?”, “who is doing the rebelling?”, and “against whom are they rebelling?” Let us look at the options.

First of all, the rebels cannot be the world of unbelievers (i.e. the nations) since no covenant is in place with them other than the covenant of Noah. Secondly, the rebels could not be members of the church since one of the promises included in the New Covenant is rescue from the day of the Lord/day of wrath to come. (1 Thess. 1:9-10). Lastly, the rebellion could not be against the Man of Sin since the passage later teaches that a deluding influence would be sent upon unbelieving Israel to cause them to believe the Man of Sin rather than rebel against him.

The Argument from Grammar

The Importance of the Definite Article

The definite article is one of the most fascinating areas of study in Greek grammar and is also one of the most neglected. We cannot treat it lightly, for its presence or absence is *the* crucial element to unlocking the meaning of *hundreds* of passages in the New Testament. The article was originally derived from the demonstrative pronoun. That is, its original force was to *point out* something. Wallace presents a seven-fold breakdown of the use of the article with the substantive. He lists the following: (1) Simple Identification; (2) Anaphoric (previous reference); (3) Deictic (“Pointing”); (4) Par Excellence (“Numero Uno”) (5) Monadic (“One of a kind” or “unique”); (6) Well-known (“Celebrity”); (7) Abstract (or the article with Abstract Nouns).

The Monadic Usage is a possibility. We would then understand Paul to say, “... the day of the Lord cannot come until the ‘one of a kind’ apostasy comes first.” The Well-Known or Celebrity Usage also is a possibility provided that the noun to which it refers has *not* been mentioned in the preceding context (... but in this case it may have been).

The Anaphoric Use of the Article

There is one usage of the article, however, that screams from the text itself to be considered. It is the anaphoric usage. Wallace again says:

Dana and Mantey define the anaphoric article (i.e. the article denoting previous reference): ‘The article may be used to point out an object the identity of which is defined by some previous reference.’

This usage is definitely the case in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. Paul introduces the topic of the following verses as: “Now with reference to the *parousia* ... (coming) and our *episunagogen* (gathering together) to Him ...” We should note that a single article governs both of these important nouns. Thus, they are closely related. We could paraphrase “Now with reference to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ as it related to our gathering together to Him.”

Later we are told “that [day will not come] unless the apostasy/departure comes first ...” The definite article is referring to a synonym in the preceding context. Otherwise, we arrive at the strange result that Paul says the topic is “our gathering together to Him” and yet never refers to it again in the entire passage at which we are looking.

Koine Greek Usage (299 B.C.-A.D. 99)

The noun *apostasia* exhibits evidence from the Koine Period for the meaning “defection” or “revolt” in the works of Dionysius’ *Halicarnassensis* (1st century B.C.); Josephus’ *Historicus in Vita* (1st Century A.D); and Plutarchus’ *Biographus et Philosophus* (1st/2d Century A.D). Proof also exists for *apostasia* to mean a **physical “distance”** early in this period in the works of Archimedes’ *Geometra* (3d Century B.C.), or even some sort of separation.

New Testament Usage

As widely noted in the literature, the noun *apostasia* is rare in the NT, appearing only in Acts 21:21. In that verse, the object or qualifier is immediately apparent. Paul was accused of teaching the Jews (converts) *apostasia* ... *apo* Mouseoph that is “to depart from Moses.”

We should hasten to point out that often this meant actually **physically departing from the synagogue** and perhaps meeting somewhere else, as in the school of Tyrannus in Ephesus. These two usages in the NT appear not to be similar. In Acts there is the qualifying prepositional phrase. In 2 Thessalonians there is not. In 2 Thessalonians the word is used absolutely as if Paul expected the audience to understand the object implicitly.

Patristic Usage

In reviewing the post-New Testament period, Lampe offers evidence for *apostasiph* to refer to “a departure, absence, or separation” in addition to the traditional renderings of the word. In all three of these possible meanings, a physical or spatial connotation may apply.

With the word *apostasia*, although not predominant, Lampe sees the possibility of physical “departure, removal, or **spatial separation as in divorce.**” Sufficient evidence exists for Liddell and Scott to offer their second meaning of *apostasia* as “departure” or “disappearance” a physical or spatial connotation.

Usage of the Cognate Verb *afistemi*

According to Liddell and Scott evidence exists for *afistemi* to mean **“remove” transitively or “depart from” in an intransitive sense.** One of the most intriguing usages comes from online correspondence from Carl Conrad, a classical Greek scholar.

It may be used of a group leaving a homeland to establish a new colony somewhere; that’s the way Peisetairos and Euelpides use the verb in Aristophanes’ *Birds*, where they leave Athens to establish a “trouble-free” colony *in the sky between heaven and earth.*

After this we again consider the Koine usage of the verb. According to Moulton and Milligan, *afistemi* exhibits a sense of spatial departure along with an intransitive sense of removing oneself. They cite at least three examples of spatial departure. Schlier argues that the verb can be translated **“to remove” either spatially of from the context of a state or relationship or from fellowship with a person.** Concerning the usage in the Old Testament, Feinberg writes:

The verb *afistemi* is clearly used of a physical departure in both testaments. In the OT (LXX) the verb is used in Genesis 12:8 of Abram’s departure from Shechem ... of **physical separation of persons** as in 1 Samuel 18:13, where it is used of David’s departure from Saul, and in Psalm 6:8 of the physical separation of the wicked from God’s presence.

In the New Testament usage, the verb *afistemi* occurs fifteen times, twelve of which carry a spatial departure meaning “physical departure”. In Luke 2, the phrase “... she never left the temple” ... (Luke 2:37) means a physical departure from the temple. “When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time” (Luke 4:13) means a spatial departure from the presence of Jesus. The same spatial departure meaning is present in all the following verses: (Acts 5:37, 38; 12:10; 15:38; 19:9; 22:29; 2 Corinthians 12:8; 1 Timothy 6:15; 2 Timothy 2:19).

The other three instances of the verb refer to **religious defection**. (Luke 8:13, 1 Timothy 4:1, and Hebrews 3:12). In each case, **the context tells the reader from what the subjects are departing**.

Conclusion. There is abundant lexical data to support the translation of apostasia as “the departure” in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. The cognate verb as well has substantial support for the translation “to physically depart.” A number of questionable assignments of categories in the standard classical lexicons contribute to the confusion in our understanding of the word.

The Argument from Parallel Passages

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

In this next section we again open with the special formula *peri de* that indicates the subject is changing. But in verse 5:1 there is an interesting phrase that many seem to overlook. What does Paul mean when he says, “now concerning times and seasons ...?” This is of interest because the subject being discussed is the day of the Lord, the same topic as in 2 Thessalonians. The first word is *chronon* a word apparently dealing with “periods of time.” The second word is *kairon* dealing with “points in time.” We know that this word is used in 2 Thessalonians to specify the revelation of the Man of Sin will be at the appointed time.

We are surprised then to discover that Paul essentially tells them that they don’t have a need to know. The reason why they have no need to know is because the day of the Lord will come “like a thief in the night.” A thief gives no warning signs.

In summary, when asked about dates and time periods, Paul spends all his time talking about the opening event in the day of the Lord. The believers have no need to know more because they will be gone while the events of the day of the Lord are played out.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-17

The first thing we notice is that Paul introduces the subject as “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him.” Since the two nouns are governed by one article it seems apparent that Paul wants to explain how “the coming and the gathering” are related. Notice that the word *parousia* is not mentioned again until we get to 2:8. If that is the case where is our gathering together to him being discussed?

Conclusion. A close examination of these parallel passages leads us to understand that Paul is presenting in detail in 2 Thessalonians 2 a more detailed description of the chronology he already started in chapters 4 & 5 of the first letter. This adds to the possibility that “departure” should be the translation and not “apostasy.”

Summary

In this brief study we have set out to examine the possibility that the word *apostasia* normally translated “falling away” in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 should be translated “departure.” We have examined the grammatical evidence first and found that the anaphoric use of the article leans heavily to that understanding. Next, we surveyed the lexical data for both the word *apostasia* itself as well as its cognate verb and found that there is substantial evidence to suggest that the word had within its semantic range the notion of “physical or spatial departure.” Third, we looked at the literary structure of both epistles and suggested a literary structure for the section of Scripture in which our word was found. We discovered the possibility of a chiasmic arrangement that established our word as parallel conceptually to the idea that the believing church has been chosen for the “acquisition” of “glory” which we suggested happened the judgment seat of Christ. Lastly, we examined the two eschatological sections of the two epistles to the Thessalonians and found there was strong evidence that Paul was presenting the day of the Lord as a programmed event; He chose to mention the starting point, the midpoint, and the ending point.²³

Q: What Was The Falling Away?

A: Physical & Spiritual Separation Called for in Future Scenario of Matthew 24:16

²³ Sweigart, J. M. (2001). [Is There a Departure in 2 Thessalonians 2:3?](#) *Conservative Theological Journal* Volume 5, 5(15), 185–204.

Who Was The “Man of *Lawlessness*” & The “Son of *Perdition*”?

The Man of Lawlessness

LaHaye writes that of “all the titles given to him, the one used by the Apostle Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, ‘the man of lawlessness,’ is the most descriptive. As ‘the man of lawlessness’ he will come on the scene in the last days as the embodiment of all the sinful people who have ever lived. Second Thessalonians 2:4 offers an appropriate description of his conduct: ‘He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.’ ”

Paul does not describe the “man of lawlessness” as someone who embodies “all the sinful people who have ever lived.” The actions of the “man of lawlessness are not much different from those of Herod Agrippa I who had James the brother of John put to death (Acts 12:2) and thought of himself as a god. When Herod “put on his royal apparel,” he “took his seat on the rostrum and began delivering an address” (Acts 12:21). He had assumed the role of a deity: “The people kept crying out, ‘The voice of a god and not of a man!’ ” (Acts 12:22). Notice that the “man of lawlessness,” like Herod before him, “takes his seat” (2 Thess. 2:4). God did to Herod what He would do to the man of lawlessness in the first-century temple: “And immediately an angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and died” (Acts 12:23). **In a similar way, the man of lawlessness was killed “with the breath of [God’s] mouth” when he took his seat in the temple and proclaimed himself to be God prior to the temple’s destruction in A.D. 70 (2 Thess. 2:8).**

Although we are not told the identity of the man of lawlessness by name, we are told when he would appear. The “man of lawlessness” was said to take “his seat in the temple of God” (2 Thess. 2:4). When Paul wrote this letter to the Christians at Thessalonica, the temple was still standing. Paul did not write, “The man of lawlessness will take his seat in a rebuilt temple.” Those who first read his letter would immediately have thought of the temple that was still standing in Jerusalem because Paul did not give them any reason to think any other way.

Paul’s man of lawlessness was alive in his day since the restrainer was alive, and the Thessalonians knew the identity of the restrainer: “And *you know* what restrains him *now*” (2 Thess. 2:6, emphasis added). In the next verse, we read, “He who *now* restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way” (2:7, emphasis added). Paul wrote, “The mystery of lawlessness is *already at work*” (2 Thess. 2:7, emphasis added).

Paul was not describing a distant antichrist figure; he had someone in mind who was alive in the first century. This person was identified as “the son of destruction” (2 Thess. 2:3), like Judas (John 17:12). Therefore, it’s reasonable to assume that the person Paul was describing was a Jew who occupied the temple during the siege before it was destroyed.

Since the man of lawlessness has not been revealed to us by name, but by his time, we can only speculate about his identity. We should look for a first-century candidate. Southern Baptist evangelist and prophecy writer John Bray has identified a likely candidate. John Levi of Gischala “was the key man in the destruction of Jerusalem, the greatest instigator of the tribulation upon the Jews in the city, and an ‘abomination’ himself as he ‘sat’ in power in the Temple itself. And he was the cause of the ceasing of the daily sacrifices three and one half years after Vespasian came against the city. So far as the people were concerned, he had taken the place of God in the Temple!”

Following the first-century historian Josephus, Bray offers compelling historical evidence for his opinion, everything from murder to defilement of the temple. Mireille Hadas-Label recounts John’s lawless deeds:

Crimes against men were accompanied by what Josephus considered crimes against God. John of Gischala was especially guilty of these latter. Early in the siege he had used timber intended for the Temple to construct war machines. Next, he had all the sacred vessels melted down, including precious vases offered by the emperor Augustus and his wife. Then he had dipped into the Temple reserves of oil and wine.

John Levi of Gischala was a prominent figure during the temple siege. His occupation of the temple followed the surrounding of Jerusalem by armies.

In the final analysis, the Bible does not identify the man of lawlessness, the beast, or the many antichrists by name. It’s possible that even Paul did not know the identity of the man of lawlessness. He only knew that he was alive and being restrained as he wrote his letter. Tim LaHaye and other prophecy writers who share his views have the luxury of never having to identify the man of lawlessness, since in their prophetic scenario they and all other Christians will be raptured before he reveals himself.²⁴

²⁴ DeMar, G. (2009). [*Left Behind: Separating Fact from Fiction*](#) (pp. 131–150). Powder Springs, GA: American Vision.

‘Exalts Himself over Every So-Called God’, 2 Thessalonians 2:4

Given that a characteristic of their faith was that they were those who ‘wait for His Son from heaven’ (1 Thess. 1:10), Paul in his second letter to the Christians in Thessalonica explains further aspects of ‘the day of the Lord’, dealing with ‘the times and the seasons’, its total unexpectedness and important ethical implications. He emphasizes that it is not necessary for him to repeat certain aspects of his teaching on this issue because they had readily embraced his eschatological perspective (1 Thess. 5:1-11) in spite of the Roman claims of the *pax romana* of ‘peace and security’ that Rome boasted it had brought to all those in the empire.

It emerges in 2 Thessalonians that subsequently a radical change had come about in their eschatological understanding because of recent teaching from a source that was mischievously attributed to Paul. As a result, the Thessalonians had become alarmed and unsettled. The circumstances that gave rise to this came from what others were saying, i.e., what they prophesized. Paul told them to ignore these sources including the misleading letter, as it definitely was not from him—‘neither a letter seeming to be from us that the day of the Lord had arrived’ (μήτε δι’ ἐπιστολῆς ὡς δι’ ἡμῶν ὡς ὅτι ἐνέστηκεν ἡ ἡμέρα τοῦ κυρίου) (2 Thess. 2:1-2). This declared that the day they had been waiting for in 1 Thessalonians 1:10 had actually occurred—hence the use of the perfect tense, ἐνέστηκεν of the verb ‘to arrive’.

Paul exhorts them not to be beguiled in any way, explaining that some Christians would commit **apostasy as a prelude to that eschatological event**, presumably including some from Thessalonica. They would also rebel, and after that ‘the man of lawlessness’ would appear. Paul describes further what would happen when ‘the son of destruction’ appeared—

who opposes (ὁ ἀντικείμενος) and exalts over every so-called god (καὶ ὑπεραιρόμενος ἐπὶ πάντα λεγόμενον θεόν) or object of worship (ἢ σέβασμα), so that he takes his seat in the temple of the God (ὥστε αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ καθίσει), proclaiming himself that he is God (ἀποδεικνύστα ἑαυτὸν ὅτι ἔστιν θεός). (2:3-4)

Here Paul exposes the motivation of the man of lawlessness, whose claims and actions are reminiscent of those in Daniel 11:36-7, where similar terminology is used to describe the divinity of the emperors. Cited here from the Septuagint, it also records a similar eschatological perspective and motivation. The terms chosen by the translators of the LXX as appropriate renderings of the Hebrew were similar at times with that used in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5.

[A]nd the king shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god (καὶ παροργισυήσεται καὶ ὑψωθήσεται ἐπὶ πάντα θεὸν) and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods (καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν θεὸν τῶν θεῶν ἐξαλλα λαλήσει). He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished; for what is decreed shall be done. He shall pay no attention to the gods of his fathers.... He shall pay no attention to any other god for he shall magnify himself above all (καὶ ὑποταγήσεται αὐτῷ ἔθνη ἰσχυρά). (Dan. 11:36-37)

Some of this language also resonates with that found in official inscriptions in the East relating to the Julio-Claudian emperors. The use of the superlative ‘the greatest’ succinctly echoes Paul’s reference to the one who exalts himself over every so-called god or object of worship. Others use another superlative, ‘most divine’, when referring to the Caesars.

For example, on 5 April, A.D. 54, Claudius, just six months before his death, was declared to be ‘the most divine Caesar and truly our savior’ (τοῦ θειοτάτου Καίσαρος καὶ ὡς ἀληθῶς σωτήρως ἡμῶν). The first extant recording of this term used of emperors was by Paulus Fabius Maximus, the proconsul of Asia from 10 to 8 B.C., who wrote to the League of Asia. He chose the superlative θειοτάτος when referring to Augustus in his lifetime as the ‘most divine Caesar’ (τοῦ θειοτάτου Καίσαρος). (See p. 134.)

A somewhat synonymous concept, ‘the greatest’, was later used of Nero. He was referred to as the ‘emperor greatest Caesar Nero Claudius Sebastos Germanicus, son of a god’ (αὐτοκράτορα μέγιστον Νέρωνα Καίσαρα Κλαύδιον Σεβαστὸν Γερμανικὸν θεοῦ υἱόν). He was also declared to be ‘the son of the greatest of gods (τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ μεγίστου θεῶν), Tiberius Claudius’. In the East an inscription dated 28 November, A.D. 67, records, ‘Nero, Zeus the Liberator, the one and only, the greatest imperator of our times’ (εἷς καὶ μόνος τῶν ἀπ’ αὐῶος αὐτοκράτωρ μέγιστος).

The only appropriate response of those who were the recipients of his ‘incredible gift’ was to address him as ‘the Lord of the entire world’ (ὁ τοῦ παντὸς κόσμου κύριος) and ‘the new sun that has shone on the Greeks’ because he bestowed benefactions on Greece and has shown piety towards ‘our gods who have stood by him everywhere for his care and safety’.

This inscription also adds that Nero would be ‘worshipped ever hereafter as Nero Zeus Liberator’ (Νέρωνος Διὸς Ἐλευθερίου). Calling Nero ‘Zeus Liberator’ was a very great honor. Pausanias recorded the significance of this designation, ‘Zeus is king of heaven’, and then added ‘this is a common saying of all men’ (οὗτος μὲν λόγος κοινὸς πάντων ἐστὶν ἀνθρώπων); ‘this same god rules in all the three “allotments” of the Universe, as they are called’. This was the highest accolade and the most divine title the Achaeans could confer upon him.

This decree was promulgated for all to see, being inscribed ‘on a column set beside Zeus the Savior in the agora and in the temple of Ptoian Apollo’. Nero’s speech in Corinth in which he aggrandizes himself by implication in relation to his predecessors and the response in terms of the greatest honors bestowed on him parallels the divine self-promotion recorded in 2 Thessalonians 2:1–5. The terminology found in the epigraphic evidence concerning Claudius and Nero helps in seeking to identify the god being referred to by Paul.

Paul also adds the phrase ‘every so-called god’ (πάντα λεγόμενον θεόν) in 2:4, which is exactly the same term he used in 1 Corinthians 8:5, ‘so-called’ (λεγόμενοί). It is argued that there the reference was to imperial gods and that Paul chose the term ‘so-called’ to indicate that they were popularly but erroneously regarded as such. (See pp. 212–13.)

How have scholars sought to identify the *Sitz im Leben* of the passage in 2 Thessalonians 2:1–5? With respect to imperial self-promotion in the East, Sartre concludes of the other Julio-Claudians who promoted themselves—‘As for Caligula and Nero they contrastingly became its keen propagators, to the point that Caligula sought to have his statue introduced into the temple in Jerusalem.’ Harrison suggests it may be **as a result of Caligula attempting to place his statue in the Jerusalem Temple that Paul believes the emperors have exceeded their mandate and hence 2 Thessalonians 2:4.** However, Caligula reigned from 37 to 41 A.D., prior to Paul’s first visit to Thessalonica. By contrast van Kooten defends the dating to the era of Nero (A.D. 54–68), relating it to A.D. 68–69 after his suicide.

Astrologers had predicted of Nero that he would one day be repudiated.... Some of them, however, had promised him the rule of the East, when he was cast off, a few expressly naming the sovereignty of Jerusalem and several the restitution of all his former fortunes.

One of the challenges in seeking to locate the *Sitz im Leben* of the references in 2 Thessalonians 2:1ff. is to bear in mind that it is important to note that **they point to the future.** Paul had already given them this prophetic eschatological teaching presumably on what seems to have been his one and only visit, i.e., the evangelistic one recorded in Acts 17:1–10. If this is the case, then it occurred c. A.D. 50–51 if note is taken of the dates that Gallio was proconsul of the province of Achaëa. Both epigraphic evidence and events mentioned in Acts 18:12–17 occurred after Paul left Thessalonica and settled in Corinth. He therefore asked, ‘Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?’ (2 Thess. 2:5). He had previously written to them about this in 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11. So, the teaching in 2 Thessalonians was not a new topic.

The language used to describe this man of lawlessness who sought to exalt himself over all other gods resonates not only prophetically with Daniel 11 but also with that in some official inscriptions where the terms ‘the most divine’ and ‘the greatest’ are used of the last two Roman emperors of the Julio-Claudians, i.e., Claudius and Nero. (See pp. 66, 69.) Furthermore, numismatic evidence reveals that provincial coins did not portray emperors as gods with the divine radiate crown in imperial provincial coinage in the Julio-Claudian era ‘with the exception of Caligula and, especially, Nero’.

It is important how the Thessalonian Christians coped with the fact that they could no longer participate in giving divine imperial honors. They had been confronted with this both in the past and again in their present situation. Paul writes that he had boasted to other Christians ‘in the churches of God’ about the believers located in Thessalonica because of ‘your steadfastness and faith (ὕπμονης ὑμῶν καὶ πίστεως) in all your persecutions and afflictions (διωγμοῖς καὶ θλιψεσιν)’ that they ‘are enduring’ (ἀνέχεσθε) (2 Thess. 1:4). He asserted, ‘this is an indication that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which you are also suffering’ (ὕπερ καὶ πάσχετε) (1:5), and assures them that God will act to ‘afflict those who are afflicting you’ (καὶ πάσχετε τοῖς θλίβουσιν ὑμᾶς θλίψιν) while judgement will occur when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire (1:6-7).

Within the parameters of the extant evidence of Thessalonian Christianity, these events relate to the theme of this monograph. These Christians in Thessalonica were confronted from ‘day one’ with a conflict of loyalty over whether they could render divine honors to the Caesars now that they were followers of Jesus. They were also warned to expect on-going confrontation over the ‘so-called’ imperial gods as confirmed by their present sufferings. They were not alone in turning away from idols of the imperial gods, to worship and wait for the return of the Son of God from heaven (1 Thess. 1:9-10).²⁵

²⁵ Winter, B. W. (2015). *Divine Honours for the Caesars: The First Christians’ Responses* (pp. 260–265). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

2 Thessalonians 2

Whatever interpretation is placed upon this passage, its use to refer to a future personage is doomed to failure since Paul explicitly stated that he was referring to a person who would be the product of the circumstances of **his own day**, i.e., “already at work” (vs. 7). How could Paul have had in mind a future dictator that still has not arisen, though 2,000 years have transpired? One need go no further to know that 2 Thessalonians 2 does not refer to the future.

History is replete with a variety of interpretations of this passage, the most prominent one likely being the view that the papacy is under consideration (see Workman, 1988, pp. 428-434; Eadie, 1877, pp. 340ff.). Another possibility is that the “falling away” (vs. 3), or apostasy, referred to the Jewish rejection of the “new and living way” of approach to God (Hebrews 10:20). The Jews were the single most adamant opponents to Christ and the infant church (John 8:37-44; Acts 7:51-53; 13:45-50; Romans 10:20-21; 11:7; 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16). **This rebellion, or falling away, would not reach its “full” (Matthew 23:32) climax until the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and the resulting dispersal of the Jewish people. Paul had already alluded to this Jewish apostasy in 1 Thessalonians 2:15-16. The pouring out of God’s wrath was the logical consequence of the first-century Israelite failure to make the transition to Christianity.**

According to this viewpoint, the “man of sin” or “son of perdition” (vs. 3) would have referred to the personification of Roman imperialism, and would have been equated with “the abomination of desolation” that Jesus, quoting Daniel 9, alluded to in Matthew 24:15 and Luke 21:20. **Verse 4 would refer to the Roman general who introduced his idolatrous insignia into the Holy of Holies in A.D. 70** (cf. Swete, p. xci).

That which was “withholding” (vs. 6), or restraining, this man of sin, at the time Paul was writing 2 Thessalonians in approximately A.D. 53, would have been the presence of the Jewish state. The ingenious design of God was that Christianity would appear to the hostile Roman government to be nothing more than another sect of the Jews. Thus, Christianity was **shielded** for the moment (i.e., A.D. 30-70) from the fury of the persecuting forces of Rome, while it developed, spread, and gave the Jews ample opportunity to be incorporated into the elect remnant—the church of Christ (cf. Romans 11:26). Thus, the nation of Israel was rendered totally without excuse in its rejection of Christianity, while at the same time serving as a **restraining force** by preventing Christianity from being perceived by the Romans as a separate, and therefore illegal, religion (*religio illicita*). **Once the Jewish apostasy was complete, and God’s wrath was poured out upon Jerusalem, Christianity came to be seen as a distinct religion from Judaism. Increasingly, Christians found themselves brought into conflict with the persecution from “the wicked” or “lawless one” (vs. 8). In fact, after A.D. 70 (when the withholding effect of Judaism was removed), Roman opposition to Christianity gradually grew greater.**

Once the shield of Judaism was removed (vs. 7), and Christianity increasingly found itself subject to the indignities of governmental disfavor, the Lord was to come and “consume with the spirit of His mouth” the one responsible. This terminology is not an allusion to Christ’s second coming. Rather, this verse refers to Christ’s **coming in judgment on the Roman power**. Such a use of the word “coming” to describe the display of God’s wrath upon people **in history** is not unusual (Isaiah 19:1; Micah 1:3). Paul alluded to the government’s use of counterfeit miracles (vs. 9) & thus deceit (vs. 10), that is reminiscent of the Concilia’s employment of tricks & illusions to deceive people into worshipping the emperor (Revelation 13:13-15) during the first century A.D. (Summers, p. 178; Swete, pp. 170-172).

Temple Desecrated A.D. 70 per Josephus:

“When Caesar failed to restrain the fury of his frenzied soldiers, and the fire could not be checked, **he entered the building with his generals and looked at the holy place of the sanctuary** and all its furnishings, which exceeded by far the accounts current in foreign lands and fully justified their splendid repute in our own.

As the flames had not yet penetrated to the inner sanctum, but were consuming the chambers that surrounded the sanctuary, Titus assumed correctly that there was still time to save the structure; he ran out and by personal appeals he endeavored to persuade his men to put out the fire, instructing Liberalius, a centurion of his bodyguard of lancers, to club any of the men who disobeyed his orders. But their respect for Caesar and their fear of the centurion's staff who was trying to check them were overpowered by their rage, their detestation of the Jews, and an utterly uncontrolled lust for battle.”

Q: Who Was The Man Of Sin?

A: Rebel or Roman Temple Desecrator

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.”



