

Revelation

NEW TESTAMENT

Revelation 1:1 to 1:15

Greek Interlinear

ΑΠΟΚΑΛΥΨΙΣ

ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ

Chapter 1

Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἣν
A revelation of Jesus Christ, which
ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεός, δεῖξαι τοῖς δούλοις
gave 'to him - 'God, to show to the slaves
τοῦ ἁ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει, καὶ
in things it be- to occur with speed, and
which hoves
ἵμηνεν ἀποστείλας διὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου
signified sending through the angel
οὐ τῷ δούλῳ αὐτοῦ Ἰωάννῃ, 2 ὃς
in to the slave of him John, who
ἠτύπησεν τοῦ λόγου τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ

ἐπ' αὐτόν πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς.
'over 'him 'all 'the 'tribes 'of the 'land.
ναί, ἀμήν.
Yes, amen.
8 Ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ, λέγει
I am the alpha and the omega, says
κύριος ὁ θεός, ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν
[the] - God, the [one] being and the was
Lord - the one who is [one who]
καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ὁ παντοκράτωρ.
and the [one] coming, the Almighty.

A Study Guide For The Apocalypse of Revelation

Prepared by
Rev. Gary Simons
2023

To Study the Bible

I just thought about a Rabbi of mine while I studied Judaism in Chicago. He told me about how a Jewish person would read the Bible. He said read it as if going to paradise – Eden in Hebrew. He said for Christians we should think of Paradise without vowels as in traditional Hebraic scripture.

PRDS

P is for Primary reading which is to be literal as it appears in scripture.

R is for Reread the scripture as metaphor.

D is for Dialogue. This is to read it as a conversation between you and God.

S is for Story. Read it as if it was your story

Then one might discover the truth as it becomes self-evident and you will discover that you are then in Paradise. I have personally found this to be a wonderful exercise in reading for Bible study.

Factoid: According to CHURCHGIST.com there are today, available in English, 50 different translations of the Bible. While these 50 translations do not agree word for word with each other, they still reflect the truth of the Bible which should not be denied. Some of the most popular today are: King James, New King James, New International Version, Common English Version, The American Standard, The Revised Standard Version and the New Revised Standard Version. Every version seeks to be accurate to the translation from Hebrew and Greek to the modern English language. The problem is that some biblical words from the time of Jesus to today have actually evolved making them seem strange. The word God in both the ancient Hebrew and Greek is neuter gender and yet we find God being represented in the masculine gender only in almost all translations. This is a matter of cultural preference.

Example: The word God in Hebrew is first that of 'El and is neuter. The Name of God given to Moses is YHWH and is never translated in the Bible translations, but is replaced usually with the Hebrew word *adonai* which is Lord and masculine. Jews never speak the YHWH name of God, so that they will not disobey the 5th Great Commandment of God to Moses (Exodus 20:7).

The Greek word for God is *Theos* and is feminine in origin. Deos is also thought of as being female, but as it applies to God it is usually considered to be of the trinity – hence God is the trinity of Father, Son, both masculine and Holy Spirit which is feminine. Hence the trinity is androgenous.

Four Archangels of Heaven

Michael = "who is like God" in Hebrew and Greek.

Uriel = "angel of light" in Hebrew and "God is my light" in Greek.

Raphael = "God has healed" in Hebrew and Greek.

Gabriel = "power of God" in Hebrew and "God is my strength" in Greek.

Other Angels of Heaven

Raguel = "Friend of God" in Hebrew and "angel of justice and harmony" in Greek.

Saraqael = "God is my ruler" in Hebrew and "command of God" in Greek.

Remiel = "God shall pasture or shepherd" in Hebrew and Greek

Another Archangel is sometimes mentioned whose name is Phanuel. His name means "God's face has turned." This angel may be the same as Remiel and is found in the Ethiopian Book of Enoch.

These seven names (eight including Phanuel) are of the seven archangels of heaven with the first four listed as being at each cardinal point of the compass around the throne of God. When their names appear not the action of the text and it will most likely be related in some way to the meaning of the names of the archangel.

There are other angels of heaven that are named in varied scriptures and their names too may lead to more understanding of the text – especially in Revelation and the Books of Enoch.

**A STUDY GUIDE
FOR
REVELATION – AN UPSETTING BOOK**

PREPARED BY

**GARY SIMONS
2023**

Ten Eras of Judgment From Book One of Enoch

First Era	Genesis Fall of Humanity to Pre-Flood Judgement	Time of Enoch
Second Era	The Time of the Great Cleansing Flood	Time of Noah
Third Era	Renewal by Righteousness	Time of Abraham
Fourth Era	The Time of Creation of Law	Time of Moses
Fifth Era	The Time of the Glory of the Temple	Time of Solomon
Sixth Era	Time of the Lamb and Temple Destruction	Time of Jesus
Seventh Era	Time of the Apostates and Judgment	Our Time
Eighth Era	Time of the Third Temple and New Future	Time of Future
Ninth Era	Time of Righteous Judgment	Time of Judgment
Tenth Era	God's Eternal Time Declared	Eternal Time

The Ten Eras of Judgment are based upon Joseph B. Lumpkin's "Weeks of Judgement" in his Books of Enoch: The Complete Volume, page 179-180. A critical review that can give understanding to the Apocalypse of Revelation. His view of weeks is specific to one immediately in relationship to time. I chose the use the term era that is more relative than specific. The concepts of time throughout Revelation are less exact and more relative in time to the events.

The Most Up-Setting Book Of the Bible

Introduction

Recently, while talking with a friend of mine, I noted that I was busy preparing a new Bible Study for in the Fall on The Apocalypse of Revelation. He quickly responded saying: "That is the most frustrating book in the Bible." I have to agree, that I too, often find myself frustrated with the book, and often question exactly what it is saying to me as a 21st century citizen of the world.

Revelation is usually considered to be a book from a time of about the turn of the 1st century to the 2nd century of the common era that is today Turkey. It was a book written for the Judeo-Christians of that time specifically in Asia Minor which is western Asia of the time. It is not Asia as the continent today of China and surrounding nations. These were church for the most part started either under Paul or his support in the western portion of Asia Minor that is today Turkey. In Acts 20:18, Paul says to the Church in Ephesus; "You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time." Pauline theology abounds in many Christian churches today and this was even more likely the same teaching for which he taught in Asia to the Seven Churches of the Apocalypse. Paul's theology is very Greco-Roman in emphasis, not as much Judiastic.

J.P.M. Sweet is Chaplain and Fellow of Selwyn College, Cambridge, England is scholar who has written about Revelation with astute interpretation of many of the most difficult passages in the book with an excellent exploration of the 22 chapters, He is correct in noting that to understand Revelation is to journey as an explorer.

One must enter the strangeness of the book and all that it says in the historical context of the 1st and 2nd centuries of the common era. The problems of the early Christians in being faithful is at the heart of

the book's message using the symbology of the Old Testament and the understanding of the present time while looking forward in the very hope, faith, and love that Jesus provided during his ministry that is unto this day. This "up-setting" book seeks to reveal the love of God and the salvation of Jesus for all Judeo-Christians - then and now. It is in one way a look at ourselves and our failing to be the Kingdom of God in our own time. In this way the book is in the highest tradition of the Old Testament prophets calling the people back to God.

There is an old hymn that was popular when I was young. The hymn is – Tell Me the Stories of Jesus. Its principal truth is what we have been told throughout human history the old, old stories of God and of Jesus the Christ and even the workings of the Holy Spirit. That is the story of the Bible and it is the story of Revelation. We have heard it many times and yet, we still fail to allow it to touch our hearts and to allow it to go forth from us as the love of God to others.

The Seven Churches of the Apocalypse had heard the stories and they had registered some results in Asia Minor, but they too soon forgot the story behind the stories which is God's love made known, through it frustrates us at times because we forget the story behind the story.

Revelation is not about the end of time. It is about new beginnings which have taken place historically and will continue to take place until the end of time itself. The Apocalypse of Revelation is a book for ever generation and every time in history, but most of all it is a book for understanding and beginning anew in our own time. It is in this way also a book that reflects the Books of Enoch and the images made known in it.

Defining Apocalypse

The word apocalypse is a form of literature that began to arise from about 200 B.C.E. (Before the common era) to about 150 C.E. (Common era). It is specific in a form using mostly Jewish symbolic imagery and of some forms of an expected imminent cosmologic

catastrophic end to life, the earth and the universe. The end is attributed usually to God acting in a manner that will destroy all evil. Yet, there will be a new beginning with evil being defeated and destroyed. It will create "heaven on earth."

In Greek, the word apocalypse is apokalupsis. This word literally means "unveiling or revealing" as of something important. In the case of the book of Revelation it is the unveiling of bringing history to an end and starting anew. This too was the essence of the Book of Enoch from early Judaism. A big difference is that in Enoch he took 107 chapters although they were shorter in verses to Revelation where it only takes 22 chapters, but some of the chapters are nearly twice the length of Enoch's.

This book was in early Christianity, very controversial. And resistance to its inclusion in the New Testament was great. Those who objected to the book did so on three basic arguments. First, it was deemed by many to be full of the Nestorian church's views or theology that was not considered appropriate for Christianity.

Secondly, the book was viewed as being Montanist in view. The Montanist like many Christians believed that the second coming of Christ was imminent. They believed that when it came the New Jerusalem would be in a Phrygian town of Pepuza and not in Jerusalem. This point hit at both dedicated Jews and Christians.

Thirdly, many Christians believed the apocrypha was the results of a Jewish author named John rather than a Gentile Christian named John. All the arguments created a lack of will to make Revelation a part of the Canon until 491 C.E. when the book outgrew its counterparts and was considered to be from God through Jesus and then via John of Patmos. Essentially, it was a controversial book as even unto today.

It is the only book of the New Testament of the genre of apocalyptic literature. There are parts of the books of the prophets in the Old Testament that are considered to be of this genre including Daniel. The up-setting aspects of Revelation continue to a part of the

ongoing love/hate relationship of some Christian scholars, Pastors and Laity.

Dating the Book

The date for the authorship of the book is uncertain. Most scholars hold to the idea of it being received and written by John of Patmos between the years of 90 to 120 C.E. In short, it is a 2nd century book after taking in to consideration the delay for its arrival among the Christians in the varied churches. This was well after the cessation of the Roman war against Jerusalem and the Christians and Jews in 70 C.E. to about 97 C.E. This war did in fact have a great influence on Christianity as Christian leaders took their message out of the Holy Land into Asia Minor. This was where it could survive and even grow, but not without problems.

Authorship

The book itself gives us a name to whom the visions are given and that is John, who was exiled on the Island of Patmos for his Christian teachings in the church that irritated the Romans as it challenged their gods for whom the planets of our cosmos are named with Jupiter being the High God of the pantheon. Christians at this time were adopting many things from the Roman gods and especially from Saturn and the celebration of Saturnalia in December for about 2 weeks with gifts, feasting, hanging of greens and more. Christians wanted to celebrate the birth of Jesus and to do it in the grand style of Rome.

Still, who was this John identified in Revelation 1:4 with the Christian greeting of; "Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come..." There have been many Johns within the history of Christianity beginning with John the Baptist, the beloved disciple John who Jesus loved and to whom the Book of John and most likely the Epistles or Letters of John were written. However, none of

these men were alive by the year 90 C.E. They like the Lord have died and received the reward of the life eternal. So, we again ask about who this John appears to have been and it seems that he was an elder, teacher and preacher in a church in Asia Minor and that church most likely was the Bishop of Ephesus, at one time, which is relatively close to the Island of Patmos. The reason for his being chosen was that of his faithfulness while serving the church. He is a faithful and worthy one to take the message of the apocalypse to Asia Minor the seven churches of the seven important Roman cities of Asia Minor.

Being a learned man, John is given a vision of coming events in the life of Rome and of the Christians. It was the vision that he then wrote and gave to the Churches in the Roman Empire in the 2nd century C.E. In many historical events from the 1st to the 5th were responsible for the events that destroyed the Roman Empire ultimately and by the time that Constantine is Emperor, his mother is a Christian and he to claims the title. Things began to get better under Constantine and very different with the power of Rome, for Constantine shifted a lot of Romes power to the papacy of the Roman Catholic Church. It was a time of Christian rebirth not unlike that foretold by John of Patmos.

Now the rest of this guide will lift up a synopsis of each chapter for review before or after reading the scripture a help to stimulate discussion and questions for all to share. May this book become a blessing to each person and to the Christian faith in general.

Part I

Revelation 1:1 – 3:22

The Prologue & Letters to Seven Churches

Chapter Synopsis

Chapter 1

It seems obvious from the beginning that the book is in the form of a letter for the 1st century C.E. and it is along with letters within the letter. These words of the letter were meant to be read by the Elders of the churches to their congregations. In reality the book does not say that John wrote it, he received a vision that was meant to be shared with the seven churches of Asia Minor and the logical form for this seems to be that of a letter.

Chapter 1 of Revelation has three parts: Opening statement, a Message for the seven churches in Asia Minor, and the vision at Patmos. The opening statement clearly say that God gives the message to Jesus Christ. He then is going to share the message and it shall be as a "blessing" for those who will hear it. It then becomes the letters to the Seven Churches of Asia Minor and the vision of the future in the Apocalypse of Revelation.

The reading and hearing of the word that comes from God is to be a blessing via prophecy for those who hear and act and prepare for what is to come. This in many ways is an address to the ages that are to unfold as the old give's way to the new. Even now as we live in this age we should heed the message of the Apocalypse. In my own time the era of the Industrial society has come to an end and the new era of the technology society has arrived. But where is it going?

As the reader reads this unsettling book, maybe this question of where is the world going should be asked as the Revelation of Jesus via John comes to our ears. How shall we heed its message?

Verse 4 the purpose of the vision begins to unfold and we find another typical letter form of greeting that is from John of Patmos. Listen to the words: *"Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the*

dead..." God gives the message to Jesus and Jesus gives it to John and the message in the biblical words is: *"Behold, He is Coming with the Clouds and every eye will see Him..."* (verse 7a). Notice that he is announced as coming, but not with the emphasis of "soon." The idea of Chapter one.

In chapter 1 we find the Vision is to be made into a book or letter for the Seven Churches. The rest of chapter 1 brings us a symbolic picture of Heaven. What is seen in the seven stars and the seven lampstands is explained to be the seven angels of the churches who are the Elders or bishops who minister in the churches. The golden lampstands are the symbols for the seven churches.

The early Christians and Jews would have understood the golden lampstand as the Menorah and a golden Menorah stood in the courtyard of the Temple near where the sacrifices were made until the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 C.E. The Romans carried off the Golden Menorah or lampstand to Rome and it has been lost. It stood as a symbol for Israel as the chosen people of God when it was in the Temple court.

Chapter 1 sets the stage for the real message that will follow. In short God via Jesus and the leaders of the churches are going to help bring the truth of Jesus and of God back to the Christian churches and to the Greco-Roman world and the world today.

Chapter 2 & 3

These two chapters contain the Seven Letters to the churches of Asia Minor. Acts 20:17-21 we find that Paul had ministered in the church in Ephesus and it seems in some of the other churches too. Some scholars believe he actually founded some of the churches. That is a point that is up for question. However, Paul's teachings seem to be evident in the church at Ephesus. Paul warns the church of the problem

of the false prophets and the sect of Nicolaitans who were accused of teaching heresy. Who is this sect and what did they believe.

The British scholar of Divinity and Biblical Criticism, William Barclay has presented a most profound and wonderful summary of the seven letters to the Seven Churches of the Apocalypse that follows:

Ephesus	The Vanity Fair of the Ancient World The Church which left its First Love
Smyrna	The Glory of Asia that was faithful unto death.
Pergamos	The most Illustrious City of Asia Praise and Blame
Thyatira	The Threat from Inside The Temptation to Compromise
Sardis	The Peace of Death The Church of the Living Death
Philadelphia	The Gateway to a Great Opportunity The Church that kept the Faith
Laodicea	The Church of which there was nothing good to say. ¹

Barclay amplifies these summaries in the book, but this is a good way for the reader to read these chapters with the thoughts in mind. The churches sin's might be said to be that of complacency, somnolence, and compromise with the world and with cultural values. The case of somnolence we might say that the churches were sleep

¹ William Barclay, Letters to the Seven Churches, (Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN. 1957) The back book cover

walking through the reality of the times. Can you identify with this today?

...the reality of the times... Can you identify with this today?

...the reality of the times... Can you identify with this today?

...the reality of the times... Can you identify with this today?

...the reality of the times... Can you identify with this today?

...the reality of the times... Can you identify with this today?

...the reality of the times... Can you identify with this today?

...the reality of the times... Can you identify with this today?

...the reality of the times... Can you identify with this today?

...the reality of the times... Can you identify with this today?

...the reality of the times... Can you identify with this today?

Part II

Revelation 4:1 – 17:18

The Heavenly Liturgy to the Seven Bowls

Chapter 4 & 5

These two chapters are part of a whole and they express a lot of images of God and heaven that seem to come right out of Isaiah's and Ezekiel's visions of the Divine Glory of The Creator. Isaiah's vision is found in Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel's vision of God's glory is in Ezekiel 1:1-28. It is suggested that one should read these passages for proper background to understand chapters 4-5 of Revelation. You will see some symbols and images that apply in Revelation. The reality is that most of the symbolism and images are from the Jewish scriptures, especially the prophets and Enoch.

The image of the Creator holding a scroll sealed with seven seals that can only be opened by the Lamb is prominent in these chapters. The Lamb is obviously Jesus who is the Lamb of the Passover in Exodus. It is the Lamb who has the power to open the seals. The message seems to be that of Creation (beginning), the Fall of humanity and Redemption by God that completes the cycle of God's modus operandi that maintains balance in the world and beyond into the universe. It echoes the story of Good and Evil and how God works to overcome the tensions of such within life.

Some of the images of Heaven, like the introduction of hymns to interrupt the vision, seem to act to let us catch our breath in the fast-rushing events. It may be even a form of continual worship that sets the pace as in the meter of music. Listen to the words of some of the hymns in chapter 4. (Worship is considered to be continual in Heaven.)

"HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, IS THE LORD GOD,
THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO
IS AND WHO IS TO COME."

The words of the hymn tell us of the nature of God. God is holy. God is the Lord. God is almighty. God was, is, and is to come that is like saying that God is eternal and infinite. This is part of the essential message for those who have ears to hear as it speaks to the reality of salvation for all of Creation, not just humanity.

When reading these two chapters one must be aware that the issues are those that are at the heart of what becomes the Decline of the Roman Empire. What we are to see and hear is that as Christians and Jews there is a need to stay true to the faith in God and Jesus Christ while living in the power of the Holy Spirit. Then we can overcome.

At the end of the life of Moses he gives wise counsel to the Israelites as they prepare to enter the Holy Land long promised to them. Deuteronomy 31:6 says: *"Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the LORD your God is the One who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you."*

(Personal note: Jesus says in Matthew 19:26, Luke 1:37, Mark 9:23 and Jeremiah 32:17 – "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.")

The Revelation is of a nature to make one fearful, but we are to be strong and courageous in our faith because God never forsakes his faithful. The Seven Churches of Asia Minor except for one have lost their way. Revelation is to let those of the Apocalypse see and understand what is happening as God makes a change in course for the history of humanity and the world. Chapter 4 and 5 act as a call to renewal of our faith even in the face of the horrors of the future, for in the end there will be the coming of the Kingdom and the New Jerusalem.

Chapter 6 & 7

Chapters 6 and 7 are interrupted by an interlude separating them, but they both together are part of the unveiling of the broken seals that becomes the open door for those on earth to enter. The Lamb (Pascal Lamb, Jesus) is to open the seals for he alone is found to be worthy. He has demonstrated his faith in God even unto death that led to resurrection and therefore he understands the nature of purpose in the opening of the seals.

The Horses of different colors are mindful of Zechariah's vision in Zechariah 6:1-8. They are attached to four chariots. The colors of the horses are red, black, white, and gray. In Revelation they represent war, famine, death, and martyrs.

In Mark 13 we have Jesus telling his disciples what must come to pass and it again seems to amplify Revelation 6-7. The theme of judgement and punishment is more common than many think in the Bible including the life of Jesus. In Revelation chapter 6:9 and following we find that those under the altar in Heaven are the martyrs and it is they who are calling for judgement and destruction. This seems normal in earthly terms, but in comparing it to the response of Jesus we see more compassion.

What seems strange in many people's minds, including my own even as I prepare this study, is a conflict of views of Heaven. Most of my life I have been taught that Heaven is a place of mercy, compassion and love. Now I am listening to those crying for judgment that brings war, famine, death and martyrs. Is Heaven a place of love with God being on the throne of grace or is it a place of judgment, or still again, can it be a place of both?

Chapter 7 begins the opening of the last or seventh seal. The martyrs are noted as sealed to protect them. This seal is in the Roman Catholic Church and other liturgical churches born from Catholicism is the sign of the Cross. It is used at Baptism and the church members remembering their baptism and mark themselves with the sign of the

cross in application of water to remember their Baptism. This concept is part of the application of what is understood in the seventh seal of Revelation for the Church. We today are to be the living martyrs demonstrating faithfulness to the world.

There is then given a number of 144,000 persons. This is the square of the number of 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel. It seems that this use of the numbers is symbolic to announce that the Church is now the people of the new Israel.² This is not to slander Israel, but to help us realize that Israel is the people of God. God sees the Kingdom in the end of things as being made up of Israel and the nations Churches together. This also means that the number is symbolic and not definitive. These that are the New Israel are an announcement of assurance in the face of the destructive tribulation.

Verses 9-17 of chapter 7 speaks to the character of the multitude who survive the holocaust. They who are clothed in white are the ones who lived in purity and by the power of the blood survive and join in words of praise. Note the words of the various salutations: Verse 10 – 12, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and the Lamb." And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen."

Yet, there is still a seventh seal to be broken and the message continues at the sound of nature and of trumpets. It is a time of woe.

Chapter 8

This chapter reports that there is silence in heaven for about 90 minutes that serves as a prelude to what follows. I call it the Divine pause for dramatic effect. It is a silence that grabs our attention and

² Revelation, J.P.M. Sweet (Westminster Press, Philadelphia, PA 1979) p.7

brings attention for the message from the seven angels with the seven trumpets. We become fully aware in this chapter that this is not just about humanity, but it is about all of creation as earth partakes in the unfolding woes. Mother Earth is in pain and hurt as we see in verse 7 and following. Is this the result of humanities pain inflicted upon the environment? The answer seems to be yes. One author put it this way. "...the symbolism suggests that the disasters, the scorching of the earth and the poisoning of the waters, represents the recoil of men's arrogance and idolatry upon themselves and their world."³

The Golden Censer is will defined as being full of the prayers of the saints. When the prayers are released in the golden censor the earth is impacted by the violence of thunder, lightning and earthquake.

Now seven angels are preparing to sound their trumpets. These trumpet warnings are in a way a call to environmental renewal via metrological events, volcanic eruptions, stars appearing to be falling out of the sky and into the waters which become bitter. There is a darkening of the sun, moon and stars and the day is shortened by a third or about 8 hours of daylight is turned into darkness.

These things of the first four angels are mindful of the plagues that were set free upon Egypt before the Exodus of Moses and the Hebrew people.

Another warning as the eagle flies across the sky announcing that there are three "woes" and then the final three angels in chapter nine will bring more woes.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 is dedicated to the last three "woes". These woes bring supernatural horrors upon the earth and humanity. The first of the lasts three woes is a plague of demonic locust coming up out of the abyss and an innumerable band of calvary of four headed horses from the

³ J.P.M. Sweet, Revelation, (Westminster Press, Philadelphia, PA, 1979) p.7-8.

Euphrates river pointing to the reality of the danger of not repenting the sins of idolatry and numerous immoralities. These creatures have breastplates for armor and teeth like the lions to rip the flesh and tails that are like the stinger of the scorpion. The image is one of a terrible destructive war machine that has come to kill humanity following the Great Prostitute. These are the warriors of Satan or the Devil. The Devil in Greek is *Diabolos* and means "one that is slanderous and accuses falsely." Satan in Greek is *Satanas* means "lying adversary." Satan is the adversary of God who slanders by lying and leads humans into a broken relationship with God thus a sinner is one who lives a lie in worshipping false gods and pursuing immoral behavior that denies the Law of God as given to Moses in the Ten Commandments.

The imagery and symbolism in chapter 9 is closely linked to chapter 10 as the terrible destructive future reveals itself. Chapter 9 does again call the faithful to stand firm for in the end they shall overcome.

Chapter 10

We have an angel that is noted to be strong, but the Greek word in the text is *ischeron* from the root word *ischus* that means: "to have power, strength, might."⁴ The angel is clothed in a cloud which is an image in biblical times and today for Holy Spirit. He also has a rainbow upon his head like a crown that is mindful of the promise of God to never destroy the earth again by water. His face is like the sun implying a bright glory. Lastly his feet are described as "pillars of fire" and are mindful of the pillars of fire that led the Hebrews with Moses out of Egypt into the Sinai desert. A powerful or strong angel in the spirit of God reminding the reader of the promise of God not to destroy the earth by flood whose face is full of the glory of God and feet like pillars of fire to lead the people to the new promise land or heaven. That is a

⁴ The Analytic Greek Lexicon, 1978 edit, Moulton, Zondervan Press, p. 204

powerful message and yet there is in the angels hand an open small book stand with a foot upon the seas and another upon the land. He speaks in a loud voice like a lion roaring and the seven peals of thunder are heard speaking which are to be sealed up for they are not to be revealed.

In response to the revealed truth up to this time the angel lifts up his right hand that in that time was known as the "clean or purified hand" and sworn by him who lives FOREVER AND EVER, WHO CREATED HEAVEN AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE EARTH AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE SEA AND THE THINGS IN IT, that there will be no delay any longer, but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished... Then the voice speaks to John of Patmos saying; "Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land."

This is a pivotal moment. John of Patmos goes to the angel who tells him to take the little book from the angel and to eat it and in so doing it will make his stomach bitter, but it will be sweet to his mouth. John is then told that he is to prophecy again concerning the people and nations and tongues and kings.

The little book is the words of God that have and even now do act to be prophecy. They are words that have the power to save and to destroy! Now the question is: Are we ready to hear the words of salvation that save, or do we ignore them so they become the words that destroy us. Have you heard the expression; "The Bible is a Two-edged sword."

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 introduces a new concept for the Church as the body of Christ. The two witness who wear sackcloth are to prophecy for 1,260 days, which is 42 months. These witnesses are further identified as being the two olive trees and lampstands.

The two olive trees represent the reality of bearing fruit that has to be crushed to bring the olive oil to reality. So, in the life of Israel the idea of Israel being God's olive tree is important and it is also to bear fruit that must be crushed in order to have the precious oil for the people. The reality of being faithful witnesses prophesying for God is that they must suffer in order to bring forth the light of God.

This truth is real for the Church. It must serve God and, in that effort, suffer to bring the fruit to oil that heals. See Numbers 11:24-29, Joel 2:28-29, and Zechariah 4:3, 14. These verses make clear the image of the suffering servant that prophecies.

These witnesses come after the measuring of the Temple in Jerusalem, but not the Temple grounds and the reminds us also that the Holy Temple is not as the courtyard where the people gather. So, to, the Church, as the Temple is not as the courtyard which is the secular cultural physical world.

Chapter 12

A great sign appears in the heavens; a woman clothed with the sun's bright light, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. In the ancient biblical world, there were at least three heavens or as many as seven. In the three-tiered heavens the heaven immediately above the earth is the 1st dome of heaven where creation including humans live. The 2nd dome of heaven is where the angels, sometimes known as cherubim, were supposed to live. The 3rd dome was the abode of God and the seven archangels: Michael – Who is like God; Gabriel – The strength of God; Raphael – God heals; Uriel – The fire of God; Raguel – Friend of God; Zerachiel – Command of God; and Remiel – Thunder God.

The seven - tiered heaven has many more beings separated or ranked by the levels of heaven with 7th being the highest where God rules from and the Archangels again live. The 1st level is the Dome of Heaven above the Earth where humanity resides

Verse, one, does not mention anything about the levels of heaven and claims that she, the woman appears in heaven. She is however more fully made known by her clothes that shine like the light of the Sun that her feet are planted upon the moon. She is Israel. In Hebraic symbology the Sun and the moon are the two great lights that rule the skies by day and night so we might assume she is in the dome of heaven that covers the Earth. The crown upon her head has 12 stars that represents the nations or tribes of Israel. She is "with child" and is in pain from child labor. The child is male and is to rule the nation with a rod and this is most often thought to be Jesus. But the rod raises questions. The rod was for punishment as in the old saying of "spare the rod and spoil the child." Did Jesus come to show God's love or to bring punishment?

Then in verse 3 another sign appears in heaven – a "great" red dragon. The word "great" in Greek in the passage is megas as in mega and implies the greatness is due to its enormous size. The dragon's red color implies that in the last 3 ½ years of the tribulation he, the Great Satan, will bring killing and blood will be spilled. The dragon also has 7 heads and 10 horns with seven diadems. The Beast of War that will bring pain and suffering and death with fear to the hearts of humans.

Enter center stage the archangel Michael who leads the angels in war against Satan and angels and they are defeated and there is found no place for them in heaven for they are defeated and judged unworthy of a place in heaven. This is then followed with a most powerful word of encouragement: *"Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night."* The Victory is because of the blood of the Lamb, the Pascal Lamb, the Christ! There is then the first general resurrection of those who in faith have died.

Verse 7 speaks of war in heaven with Michael and the angels against the Great Dragon and the Serpent who of old was called the Devil. The Devil is the Serpent that tempted Eve and brought sin into

the world. The Devil is literally thought of as the "worthless one against God." The Great Dragon, Serpent, Devil are thrown down to earth. It is on earth that the Devil or Satan is defeated by the salvation made possible for humanity by Jesus and the blood of the Lamb. Yet, in verse 13 the Dragon persecutes the woman, Israel, who gives birth to the child. But the two wings of the great eagle takes the woman to her secluded place, the wilderness. Then the Devil causes a great flood, but the earth opens and drinks the water causing Satan's plan to be thwarted and he was enraged and took to war against the others, the faithful of God. This is again mindful of God never destroying the world by flood.

There is a very powerful message in what has happened in chapter 11 and chapter 12. The world is filled with woes that bring tribulation, and suffering to innocent people, but God does not desert them. God sends his salvation to save them. It is humanity who too often defeats its self in giving up faith in spite of troubles. It is in the time of trouble that the bravest and most faithful come forth to defeat evil in themselves and thus in the world by living in love of God and in being the answer to overcoming the dragons, serpents, devils and evil in the world. Thus, in such is the kingdom of God made manifest for all to see and desire.

Chapter 13

Now we shall confront the beast from the sea in chapter 13 who is the healed beasts from the previous confrontation. This beast is different in form, but not in intent. What appears is a beast with 10 horns coming out of its head with 10 diadems and blasphemous names. The body of a leopard represent speed while it feet being like that of a bear speaks to strength and the mouth of a lion for tearing and the beast was given the authority of the beast.

The Great Dragon seems to have been healed and now has returned in a new form and notice verse 3b. "And the whole earth was

amazed and followed after the beast.” Why would the whole earth follow after the beast? Verse 1 – 10 seem to provide those who lived through the tragedies of Emperor Nero with a popular belief. Nero killed his self, but many Romans thought he had survived and return to power. Those who followed him were like him part of the beginning of the end for the Roman Empire. Nero burned Rome and blamed the Christians. Those Romans that believed Nero’s charges followed him even after his death by suicide. The power of his second life was a myth the many followed bring death to the Christians now to be viewed as martyrs.

The second beast verses 11-18 is the false prophet who brings the Emperor worship into vogue and the false idols, Imperial statues, and the priesthood of the Imperial Roman religion. This again speaks to Nero. The Imperial religion provided many false views with the idea that the Rulers were in fact gods supported by the Roman cults to the pantheon of false gods.

Verse 18 is key. It provides for us the formula for discerning the number of the beast and thus the identity of the beast. The number of the beast is the sum of the numerical value of the letters of the alphabet of the language used.

*“Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding
Calculate the number of the beast, for the number
Is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and
Sixty-six.*

The number 666 is the name of the beast which is the antichrist and this has been associated with Nero who stood for all that was evil. Thus, Nero being evil was and is viewed as Satan the antichrist. Through a complex mathematical calculation based on the numbers of the name in Hebrew - we are given the number 666 and that is associated with Nero whose proper name is Neron. Assuming that Nero is the ruler of Rome then he is the Great Satan incarnate. We now have to ask about the meaning of the symbol placed on the hand of his followers.

What is interesting is that the followers of the beast are to have a mark upon their hand. The mark of the beast is not literal, but points to economic discrimination that Christians endured during the time of Nero. It is not the mark of Christians upon their foreheads that is the sign of the cross made with water upon entering worship as a reminder of our Baptism. In fact, the threatening Emperor of John of Patmos' time was Domitian who threatened Christians and was often thought of as the reincarnation of Nero. Domitian did in fact attack Christianity in many ways including economic suppression that led to poverty, hunger and death for some.

Chapter 14

This is a major change of emphasis as we come to the number of 144,000. This is a return to the 144,000 faithful Israelites that represent 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel and found in chapter 7.

John sees the Lamb, Jesus, standing on Mount Zion. Mount Zion was the closest accessible site to the ancient Jewish Temple that was destroyed in 70 C.E. and was to Jews then and now a sacred place. The sign upon the forehead is revealed to be God's name and Jesus' name upon their foreheads. This is a literal tie between Judaism and developing Christianity. The Early Church was not one of Gentiles but of Gentiles and Jews alike. It is sad that this oneness has been lost. The faithful are the redeemed regardless of the name Christian or Jew.

Verses 6-13 are a unit of scripture unto their own. We are to receive the message of the three angels. They bring a message of judgment. John declares that he has seen an angel in midheaven. This is either the 2nd heaven of the three-tiered version or the 4th heaven of the seven-tiered version. There was another view of heaven as being 3 tiered that has the highest heaven where God resides for all eternity and the mid-heaven is earth, while the 3rd heaven is Sheol, the place of the dead that is under the earth. The first angel's message is clear: *"Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come"*

and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water."

The word fear in the Greek is phobethete literally means "to not be afraid." Thus, give God glory and worship him for the time has come for the righteous judgment. Then a second angel comes saying: "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has made all nations drink of the wine of wrath of her fornication." Babylon is a euphonism for Rome for Israel suffered under Babylon about 500 years before Jesus as there were three exiles to Babylon for the sins of Israel allowed by God and the First Temple was destroyed. Now, the second Temple of God has been destroyed by Rome and it persecutes the Israelites and Christian for their faith while ignoring the gods of Rome. It is worth noting that it is the males that seem to be called to be faithful. "Fornication" - This word in the Greek is pornias. This word literally means "the sin of illicit sexual relations outside of marriage that includes sexual relations with a prostitute even if not married. Note it is a sin and sin is that which separates a person from God. This was a notable issue in the church's life early on. Persons of Roman culture often found the use of cult prostitutes as desirable to maintain their relationship with the Roman gods (The Roman Temple at Corinth is an example) . Becoming a Christian did not always lead to cultural changes even though they did seek a new religious relationship with the God of the Jews and Christians. The third angel follows with a loud voice a stern warning in verse 9-11.

Then comes a call to the saints to keep the 10 commandments of God and to hold fast to the faith of or in Jesus. Verse 12 is powerful in its hope. Now they who hold fast to the faith are not to fear death for they shall find rests in heaven and their good deeds in keeping the 10 Commandments shall be their hope in the time of judgment.

Verses 14 to 20 provides an image of the harvest and the view of the New Wine is for the faithful, but for the sinners there is to be wrath from God for the sinner's blood will flow in a stream that reaches as high as a horse's bridle. We are learning more of the judgments of God.

Enoch 100:3 reads: *"And in those days in one place the fathers together with their sons will kill one another and brothers shall fall together in death until the streams flow with their blood."*

Chapter 15

The Seven Last Plagues!

Some have noted that this is the chapter where the rubber hits the road and it is a time of terror for the just and the unjust. It is the beginning of the end that shall bring the New Jerusalem and hope for the future of the Faithful in Jesus Christ.

Seven angels are bringing seven plagues that express God's wrath and then there is no more. John of Patmos then reports seeing a sea of glass and fire and those who had conquered the beast are standing around the sea of glass with fire with harps in their hands. Harps are the instrument of heaven that plays beautiful music. So, the music of the harps and the voices of the faithful join in singing to Moses and Jesus. Two heroes of heaven the first led the Israelites to freedom and gave them the Law of God. The second, Jesus, brings salvation by which humanity can be saved. Moses was taken up into heaven, but was not allowed to enter the Promise Land. Jesus brought salvation, but died upon the Cross as the Second Lamb of the Passover who then brought to humanity the hope of the resurrection and life eternal. Then in the hope of the music we find that God is providing the salvation to all nations, not just the Israelites. The manner of chapter 15 is like seeing the Hebrews standing at the banks of the Red Sea and celebrating God's liberation from the slavery of Egypt. The nations will hear the Good News.

The imagery of verses 3b through 4 are exciting. The Lord God Almighty is one of amazing deeds. That is going to be true in the unfolding of the scripture until chapter 21. The ways of God are just and true which is the way that humanity is supposed to be also. The word fear in the beginning of verse 4 uses the Greek term me phobet

that is from the word phobia. God's actions are to be so great that we are to be placed in a state of awe that makes us fearful of the power of God. Yet, if we are faithful to God, the awesomeness of God, will become to us the very power by which we can live more fully. The holiness of God becomes our assurance of life. Listen to the words of Isaiah 41:10.

"Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not be anxiously looking about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely, I will help you. Surely, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

Fear becomes awe that allows us to trust in the Amazing God who is almighty. Thus, let us worship the One whose judgments are known. God's actions will cleanse and then and only then can we enter into the presence of God within God's Temple.

Chapter 16

Now the seven angels are commanded to go forth and spread the bowls of wrath. Chapter 16:1-21 are like a continuation of chapter 15. The command to the angels to go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God.

Each bowl is of a different form of pain for the unrighteous.

1. Powerful and painful sores that marks those who followed the Beast.
2. The contents are poured into the sea and it becomes like the blood of a corpse killing all the creatures of the sea.
3. The contents of the third bowl are poured out on the fresh water sources and they became contaminated as of blood.
4. The contents of the fourth bowl are poured out upon the Sun and people suffered scorching fire and fierce heat and they cursed the name of God and they did not repent.

5. The wrath of the fifth bowl is poured on the throne of the beast and the kingdom was plunged into darkness and there was great agony.

6. The sixth bowl of wrath is then poured out upon the Euphrates and its water dries up preparing the way for the invading kings from the east.

Then three foul spirits like frogs come from the mouth of the dragon, the beast and the false prophets – then demonic spirits assemble to go to battle with “God the Almighty.” The place they gather is called -Harmagedon in Hebrew that to us is Armageddon. The place where the final confrontation between God and the unrighteous humans takes place.

7. The seventh bowl’s contents are thrown into the air by the angel and we hear: “It is done.” Total destruction and cities fall and Babylon gave up the wine cup of fury and wrath. It is utter destruction for the victory was already complete in Jesus’ death and resurrection. Details will now follow to complete the picture shown to John in chapters 17 and 18.

Chapter 17

The fall of Babylon is the fall of Rome and its Empire the seventh bowl of God’s wrath which brings the judgment upon Rome and that which it rules over. Rome is the wicked city, the great whore that in the near future is to fall. The imagery is typical to the Old Testament. In Isaiah 23:17 we read: *“It will come about at the end of seventy years that the LORD will visit Tyre. Then she will go back to her harlot’s wages and will play the harlot with all the kingdoms on the face of the earth.”*

In Nahum 3:4 is another place in the Old Testament where the imagery of the whore or harlot is used to name a city or kingdom for its wickedness. *“All because of many harlotries of sorceries, who sells nations by her harlotries and families by her sorceries.”* The language of harlotries is in keeping with the Hebraic view that sin is couched in

Part III

Revelation 18:1 – 22:21

The Lament of Babylon & The Vindication
Of the Saints

sexual misconduct, especially fornication that defiles the marriage Bride which was Jerusalem – the city of God.

In the typical dualism of apocalyptic literature, the miss-use of wealth is associated with the harlotry. The wealth is the wine that feeds the drunkenness of debauchery for the great city of Babylon that is the euphemism for Rome. Babylon was where the inhabitants of Jerusalem went into exile beginning about 500 B.C.E. with three exiles starting with the Religious and political leaders of Jerusalem followed by the wealthy and then the common people; all who sinned against God.

As Babylon fell because of its debauchery of sexual misconduct and the waste of its economy to such sin and fell into disgrace, so too will Rome. The history of the Jewish past seeks to demonstrate the future in the current moment that is soon to come as it is destroyed. History repeats itself because humanity doesn't learn its lessons. This has been and is a reality in all ages.

The stage is set and the sins are soon to be fully and shamefully demonstrated as sins against God. The nakedness of the great beast, the woman, that is Rome will be fully shown and in God's way she shall be destroyed. This is the message that follows in chapter 18 – "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!"

Chapter 18

Chapters 18 -20 are the focus together on the defeat of the enemies of God. Chapter 18 lays out specifically using the example of history of Babylon to reveal the defeat of Rome and its Empire.

"Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!

It has become a dwelling place of demons,

a haunt of every evil spirit,

a haunt of every foul bird;

a haunt of every foul and hateful beast.

For all the nations have drunk of the wine
of the wrath of fornication with her,

and the merchants of the earth have grown rich
from the power of her luxury.”

As the nations have been enticed by Rome’s pleasures and taken part in the sins of Rome, so they are guilty. They used their wealth to purchase and enjoy the sinful pleasures of Rome and thus they too are to be held accountable by God in the judgments to follow. This is a point to be noted as nations today in the world are cohorts with unrighteousness. Are we listening?

There is stern warning in verses 6 and following. ‘Do not follow her.’ “And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and lived in luxury with her, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning, and say: “Alas, alas, the great city, Babylon the mighty city! For in one hour her judgment has come.” Beware Once God has made judgment it comes swiftly.

The wrath that comes is in the form of pestilence, mourning, famine and fire. Babylon was destroyed by such acts that convinced them to let the Israelites go home and thus the persecution of the Jews came to a stop as she went back to Jerusalem and rebuilt the Temple that stood when Jesus was crucified and resurrected. The second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 C.E. which is the freshest of memories for the Jews even to today. For the Christians of the Roman or Greek heritage this was not an issue and still lacks the interest of Christians. Yet it is important in Revelation.

In verse 14 we find an interesting thought. *“The fruit for which your soul longed has gone from you and all your dainties and your splendor are lost to you never to be found again.”* Verses 16 & 17 continue the loss of Roman economically and it is all gone in an hour! This is a reminder that things physical, including wealth, are easy to lose. It is that which is pure in the Spirit that survives.

Notice that chapter 18 is long in comparison to most chapters and it is full of loss and sorrow. This raises the questions of what is it in life

that is really important and how do we behold it and possess it so it is not lost?

Verses 11 through 24 report the total destruction of Babylon that is a euphemism for Rome. That which remains in the cultural and social mind of a people becomes a moment of reflection to new realities as in dealing with the Roman Empire. Memories may not always be accurate, but they always fully express attitudes of the people. When Christianity began to spread from Jerusalem into the Western world Rome reacted. Christianity was a threat to the Roman religion built around a pantheon of gods. The Romans did not like what they viewed as an invasion into their way of life. They did not have the Christian view that did come to them by the 5th century of the common era. They relied upon their old gods that provided for abuses of power and wealth with harsh punishments such as crucifixion. Public executions were to the Romans at times entertainment. They did not see what they were doing as wrong let alone sinful. It was the Christians and Jews who created the discontent. The power of the Jewish/Christian movement was found in the message of Jesus, but it was much like denominations today; each claimed to be right and to hold the true relationship with God. With the fall of Rome came the first stabilization of Christianity, mostly because of openness of Constantine. Thus, Christianity was brought into union as the Roman Catholic Church and through Orthodoxy and Greek Churches arose in another movement of Christianity to the East. The western Jews and Christians though imagined the Roman Empire as the Great Babylon of Enoch that was to suffer and be destroyed by God with righteous judgment that would then empower the Christians who were the righteous ones. This is a real back drop that we should remember as we see Rome judged and destroyed by the righteous judgments of God.

Chapter 19

After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying Hallelujah! (Rev. 19:1)

The key word in this verse is Hallelujah. What does it mean? Generally speaking, today, it means "God is praised." It appears in the Bible today 30 times. It is used 24 times in the Psalms and 2 times in Deuteronomy of the Old Testament or Jewish scriptures. It appears 4 times in Revelation and only in Revelation of the New Testament. In Hebrew Hallelujah means "praise to Jah." Jah is Hebrew substitute word for YHWH that is not to be spoken so one does not disobey God's first commandment in the ten commandments of misuse of the Divine name. But the word has evolved in Greek to mean "God be praised."

Since Revelation is written in Greek, we might assume that for Revelation it means "God is Praised." Why this sudden shift from death and destruction judgment to praise of God. Simple answer is that God is victorious over sin! The victory is the redemption of "the holy city." This redemption is the key idea! Redemption is salvation made real! The tone of the apocalyptic vision now changes radically. Read chapter 19:1-10 as if you were in a worship service. Note verse 6b *"For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns."* Here is an affirmation for every time in history. Note verse 10 the closing sentence affirms that Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. Revelation is in many ways prophetic with the idea that times end and time begins, and as such history is controlled by God and it is ever changing. What does that say to Christianity today?

Two great images then appear in chapter 19:11 to 21. The White horse and Rider is first. Then the defeat of the Beast and its kingdoms. This is salvation at work! The vision changes as one enters chapter 20. The rider speaks with a sharp tongue and a two-edged sword. The latter is the Bible. What does the idea of a two-edged sword mean? It

means that it destroys the unrighteous and defends the righteous. The Bible truly does that.

Chapter 20

This chapter has three parts or divisions beginning with "The Thousand Years." Then "Satan's Doom" is presented. "The Dead are Judged" as we come to the end of the age and prepare for new beginnings in chapter 21. One truth seems clear, that God never brings things to an end without providing for the future and that should always be our Hope! This chapter though seems to make it clear that this does not negate the personal and human responsibility in the management of eternal time.

In Psalm 90:4 we read; *"For a thousand years in your sight are like Yesterday when it is past, or like a watch in the night."* Then in 2nd Peter 3:8 we read; *"But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day."* What both verses are saying is that time is relative. Remember in the beginning of Revelation how it is said that the coming of the Lord to bring judgment will be "soon." Soon is a relative term and with God what is but a day can to humans be like thousands of years. We are in Revelation speak of time in relative term to the factual history of humanity. Even as it would appear that Judgment is near, we must see it unfolding as God wills and not as we might desire. Has the new kingdom of God in the New Jerusalem already come or is it in process of coming. Could it be that we are living in the time when the judgment is made and the New Jerusalem is unfolding? With this in mind one should read chapter 20 beginning with the third picture made clearer in verses 1-3.

Satan was defeat by the first coming of Jesus, but then he was released for a time before the final defeat when he is to be consumed in the pit for all of eternity and his minions with him. It is in the second

coming of Jesus that finality to the sin and evilness of the Beast is complete.

As Christians, are we standing upon the brink of the Second Coming? Yes, we are always standing upon the brink of the Second Coming for in death we are consumed until the time of the New Jerusalem and the question is one of does that new kingdom coming to earth or is it to be consummated in the fulness of the Heavenly realm of reality?

Verses 4-6 speak to the idea of the millennium. It is a picture of Christ living with the people who are his righteous believers for 1,000 years. The first resurrection will be those who will be the priest who live and rule with Jesus. The millennium is the time for the martyrs. The doom of Satan follows in verses 7-10. Satan's prison from which he was released was Hades, "the place of the dead."

Gog and Magog are best explained by reading Ezekiel 38 and 39. Gog is a town or city in Magog. Me'shech and Tubal come from there. Gog is a symbolic representation of the imperial prowess and military alliances that impose power over the righteous. The Lord calls Gog into battle against him. Gog acts as the bully against the righteous, but God is drawing Gog into judgment. This is to be done in front of Israel so they might know the power of the Lord and believe in salvation via God's power that is stronger than that of nations and of kings and of armies.

Verses 11-14 are about judgment. These verses show a white throne with one sitting upon it. White is the color of purity, thus the one who sits upon it must have the authority of purity to judge. Then the dead, great and small are standing before the throne and books are opened that record the lives of the dead by which they are to be judged. This is a way of implying that each individual person judges themselves by their own actions or deed either righteous or unrighteous. How will the scales be balanced? The earth, the sea and Death and Hades give up all that are to be judged. Now anyone whose name was not in the Book of Life was cast into the lake

of fire most commonly known as Hades or Hell – the place of eternal torment. The Book of Life is a book of grace for those whose lives have shown them worthy, even if not perfect, for they have taken responsibility for themselves.

Chapter 21

The imagery of this chapter is the truth of God's mercy that is to be born in the reality of a New Jerusalem and a New Temple. The New Heaven will be a place made perfect in beauty as of a Bride for the Groom. The kingdom of perfect beauty prepared for the Groom Jesus, the Savior of humanity who died for the sins of the world.

This having been said, I would expand an overview quoting from The New Interpreters Study Bible, page 2239. *"This world, God's good creation, is not replaced but redeemed. God does not make all new things, but all things new."* As one begins reading chapters 21 and 22 this idea should be in our minds.

God's purpose in all of this is to reestablish a city – Jerusalem, the holy city, set upon the hill of Mount Zion to shine forth with the presence of the Lord to be the beacon of righteousness for humanity to see and understand in committing ones self to the way, the truth and the light of Christ the Son and the Redeemer.

Chapter 21:1-8 reveals the concept of the New Heaven and the New Earth that the reader should come to see. The view is summarized in verses 3 and 4. As one reads these verses let go of the physical realities and look with spirit fill eyes. The word tabernacle in verse three is the word meaning "house of God." This is a clear indication of God's presence in that which is created anew.

After the overview of a new Heaven and Earth we see a vision of the New Jerusalem. The angel who is measuring keeps coming up with that number found earlier of 144,000 cubits. This point to the perfection of a square again. In the Old Testament and especially Ezekiel the word square is found as a symbol (see Ezekiel 45:2 for

example). The word square in the New Testament appears only once in Revelation 21:16. *"The city is laid out as a square and its length is as great as its width..."*

A square is geometrically perfect with equal sides and equal angles at each corner. This is the point. The New Jerusalem is created in perfection. One example of such perfection is found in verse 22: *"I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb."* The word temple in this verse is *naon* and *naos*. There are two spellings of the word translated as Temple or Shrine and in the first word *naon*, but the second form means "the dwelling place of God." Thus, the first use of the word means a physical place and the second explains its residence. So the Temple or Shrine is the literal residence of God as God lives with the righteous people. The way all is made beautiful by the use of glass or gem stones. Each gem stone can have special significance

Chapter 22

The first seven verses of Revelation 22 bring something to the New Jerusalem that is significant – "the River of Life." It is bright as crystal. The brightness of crystal comes from the light that embraces it. The Light that makes the crystal bright is the Light of God that shines from the Lamb – Jesus. This spiritual realm does not need the sun nor the moon for the Greatest Light shines spiritually in the presence of God and the Lamb. The New Jerusalem is a spiritual reality!

Verse 7 is a key point to be understood. *"And behold, I am coming quickly (soon). Blessed is he (she) who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book."* The book is not important to its form, but to its prophetic announcements. It is a call to each person to come to the source of all life in the perfection of redemption that saves us and marks us for eternal life with the Creator and the Lamb. Thus, we discover that Revelation is about salvation! It comes bringing new life!

Listen to verse 17. It is the call from God to redemption that is the salvation of our souls and the hope of life everlasting in the presence of God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit that enlivens all. Read chapter 22 and receive the grace of the Lord that is with all who believe.

Conclusion

Christians too often fail to understand that life is not about physical reality, but about the development of the Spirit of God within us from the moment of birth to the moment of death. Life is meant to be lived in the power of the Holy Spirit not in the things of the physical world that weigh us down. The JOY of God is ours if we believe and live in relationship with God spiritually now! To live in the power of God within us spiritually is the beginning of living life eternally. Revelation tells us that humanity has fallen for the false aspect of life that are physical instead of living in the spirit that sets us free to grow daily in our walk with God. To live righteously is not to live thinking that we shall always be perfect in the physical being. To live in righteousness is to learn to let go of that which drags us down in our physical life. As Christians we have been set free as Jesus from the Cross assures us of our forgiveness. In the freedom of this forgiveness, we should find the life that is meant to be spiritually, even as we live physically. The call of Revelation is to hear the God that is within you and to respond to God that you might find the fullness of your life now while living for the future in the spiritual presence of God in the perfect New Jerusalem.

May the Peace of God be with You!

Rev. Gary G. Simons
July 25, 2023