

## Commentary on the Book of Revelation

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### Revelation 1

**1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, 2 who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. 3 Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.**

While the apostle John, the same John who wrote the Gospel of John and the three epistles of John, was exiled on the island of Patmos on account of his faith in Christ (v. 9), he received from God a vision concerning the final days. He said that the centerpiece of the revelation is Jesus Christ, for the final days are really about Him coming back to judge the world. First, He came as a suffering servant, but in the final days He will return as a conquering King. God gave John this revelation concerning the final days so that believers would have it available to them. God gives His own what they need to know so that they can have hope in the future and not be deceived concerning the last days. This revelation was given to John by an angel of God commissioned by Christ Himself. This is a claim of John to the inspiration of the Book of Revelation. Those who read this book, listen to it, and respond in faith to what they learn will be blessed. Revelation cannot be dismissed as an unnecessary add-on, a distant myth, or irrelevant symbolism, but God promises a blessing for those who read it, hear it, and change their lives accordingly. Those who reject the truth of God's revelation will suffer for eternity (Revelation 22:18-19). John says that the time of Christ's return was relatively near even two thousand years ago. It is not some distant, imaginary event that might take place millions or billions of years from now. Human history is relatively short, and Jesus' return is nearer now than it has ever been. People need to pay attention and respond accordingly.

**4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: 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, 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood— 6 and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. 7 Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.**

John wrote by inspiration of the Spirit to seven actual churches that were in Asia minor to commend them where they could be commended and to correct them where they needed to be corrected. Interestingly, the things that the seven churches were dealing with are representative of the same issues

that the church of Jesus Christ has had to wrestle with and battle since its inception. The applications are thus very true even for today. John wrote clearly implying the authenticity and inspiration of his writings as being of the Holy Spirit and from God Almighty. God is revealed as the One Who was, Who is, and Who is to come, signifying His eternality and permanence (see also v. 8). The seven spirits who are before His throne signify the Person and work of the Holy Spirit of God Who desires to lead, fill, and empower the believers at each of His seven churches. Seven is a number that reflects God's completeness and perfection as compared to six, which is a number of a man (Revelation 13:18). In addition to writing on behalf of God the Father and the Holy Spirit, John also writes from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, for all that Jesus said in the past was true. Thus, all that He said to John in the revelation is also true. Jesus is the firstborn of the dead, meaning that He was the first to rise from the dead, and He was able to make a way for His children to conquer death and have eternal life as well. Jesus is also the ruler of the kings of the earth, for not the powers of the world in John's time or the powers of the world today are any match for Him. This will be clearly seen as the future events unfold in this book, for only Jesus is able to open the seal for the coming judgments of God (Revelation 5:5). Furthermore, it will be Jesus Who returns to lay waste to the kings and armies of the earth in Revelation 19:11-21. Only Jesus is the King of kings. John rejoiced in the fact that Jesus has saved those who believe in Him on account of His love for them, even dying for them so that they could be saved from the power of sin and death. He has established His true church which consists of all true believers as a kingdom which will keep expanding and growing as more people come to know Him. The redeemed are adopted into His kingdom promises to serve as priests (Genesis 12:1-3, 1 Peter 2:9, Romans 11:17-24) to the Father, and they are His to honor His name in this life and in the next. The Lord will have dominion forever and ever, including during Jesus' millennial rule on earth (Revelation 20:4-6), and He deserves to be praised accordingly. Believers will have the honor of reigning with Him (Matthew 19:28; 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 4:4, 11:15, 20:4, 20:6). "Amen" is an affirmation or agreement with what was just said and could be translated as "may it be." Jesus will return on the clouds, and every eye will see Him, (Matthew 24:26-30, Mark 13:26), even those who pierced Him the first time He came. This is a reference to His second coming and subsequent judgment during which those who refuse to believe in Him will have to face Christ Himself and be condemned (Hebrews 9:27, Philippians 2:5-10, Revelation 20:11-15). Believers, on the other hand, will reign with Christ forever and be rewarded for their faithfulness on earth (2 Corinthians 5:10, 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, Revelation 20:4-6). All unbelievers will mourn when they see Jesus (Revelation 6:16-17), for they do not love Him (Revelation 11:10). They loathe that He has won and that they must face His wrath, for they loved their sin and wished to continue in their evil ways.

### **8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."**

The Lord God Almighty is the sovereign of the world, and He will have to be reckoned with at the last days. Every man will have to face the judgment, and those who do not love Christ will suffer for eternity. God is the beginning and the end, the first and the last, and the One Who was and Who is to come (see also v. 4). He is permanent, eternal, all-powerful, sovereign, and stronger than any man, any

king, any army, and any spiritual force of darkness. Only He is the Almighty, and only He has the name "I am," inferring eternity (Exodus 3:14).

**9 I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet, 11 saying, "Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."**

The early church was persecuted severely (Hebrews 10:34, 1 Peter 4:12), even from the outset in the Book of Acts. John, suffering exile on the island of Patmos, was no exception to the tribulation and persecution sweeping the early church. As 2 Timothy 3:12 says, "Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." John understood what the rest of the church was going through because he was being persecuted also. But there was reason to have hope and to persevere because of the kingdom that belongs to Jesus. The end is good even though the present world has many trials and much persecution (John 16:33). Believers can know that they are blessed to suffer on account of their faith in the Word of God and because of their adherence to the testimony of Jesus Christ and His gospel (Matthew 5:10). Holding tightly to His Word and to the one way to God in Christ will anger the world which hates Jesus. Because the world hates Jesus, they will hate His followers also. But in this book of the revelation of the end, believers can have great hope because Jesus will return to right all wrongs and to judge the wicked. John said that the revelation concerning the churches began on the Lord's Day, likely a reference to the first day of the week which the early church celebrated by gathering together for worship (Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:2). A voice like the sound of a trumpet instructed John to write down everything that he was about to see and to send it to the seven churches: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. Of course, by writing it down, it was preserved as part of God's Word for all time so that the present day church could also benefit by the revelation and instruction to these churches (Revelation 2:7).

**12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; 13 and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. 14 His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. 15 His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. 16 In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.**

John turned to see the voice which was speaking to him. He saw seven golden lampstands, signifying the seven churches (v. 20). In the middle of the lampstands was one who looked like a human (Jesus Himself- see v. 17-18), clothed in a robe reaching to His feet and having a golden sash along His chest. His head and His hair were white like wool, like snow, and His eyes were like a flame of fire. This was obviously an intimidating Figure because of the fiery eyes and perfectly white head and hair. This image just proclaims holiness, purity, power, and glory. The Figure's feet were like burnished bronze when it has been made to glow in a furnace, so even His feet were bright, shining, and glowing. He was holy

from head to toe. His voice was like the sound of many waters, powerful and strong. That the Lord Jesus was seen in the midst of the lampstands highlights the fact that God is present in His true church (1 Corinthians 6:19). In His right hand He held seven stars, which are the angels of the seven churches (v. 20). Hebrews 1:14 says concerning angels, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?" The angelic protectors and servants of the churches (Gabriel, for example, was a protector and encourager of Darius in Daniel 11:1) are seen as being under God's command and protected ultimately by Him. Thus, the church is ultimately protected and encouraged by God Himself because He is the Savior and Lord of the church (Matthew 16:18). He will make sure that His message gets to His people, His church (Daniel 10:12-14). Out of Jesus' mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, for the Word of God is indeed the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17), able to cut to the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). What Jesus has spoken is true, perfect, and enduring forever. His face was like the sun shining in its strength, so looking at Jesus was like looking into the sun. This is a foretaste of the new heaven and earth in which Jesus is the illumination. As Revelation 22:5 says, "And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever." This was foretold in Isaiah 60:1 which says, "Arise, shine; for your light has come, And the glory of the LORD has risen upon you." (see also Ephesians 5:14)

**17 When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, 18 and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. 19 Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things. 20 As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.**

Seeing Jesus in His full glory, splendor, and heavenly majesty caused John to fall at His feet like a dead man in great fear and dread. But Jesus placed His hand on him, not in harshness but in gentleness, and told him not to be afraid. He reminded John Who He was, Jesus Christ, the first and the last, the living One. It was Jesus, the Son of God, the One Who had conquered the grave and the One Whose chest John had reclined upon (John 13:23). It was Jesus Who lives forever and Who alone has authority to cast into hell (Luke 12:5). There is nothing to fear when the One Who is more powerful than any other loves His own and has promised that they are seated with Him in the heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6). Jesus commanded John to write the things that He had seen so far, what He was presently seeing, and what He would soon see concerning future events. God sends His angels to look after believers, and ultimately believers are upheld by His righteous right hand (Isaiah 41:10). This is symbolized beautifully by the seven stars in His right hand, representing the seven angels of the churches. That Jesus is in the midst of the seven lampstands (Revelation 1:13, 2:1) points out that He is near to His own (James 4:8).

## Revelation 2

**“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:**

**The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this:**

**2 I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; 3 and you have perseverance and have endured for My name’s sake, and have not grown weary. 4 But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 5 Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent. 6 Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.’**

Though the message from Jesus is directed to the angel of each respective church, the message is for those with ears to hear (v. 7), which is the church. The directions pertained directly to the people in the church, and that the angel is informed also just reinforces the idea that spiritual warfare does matter (Ephesians 6:12, Daniel 10:13, 20). In each letter to each church, Jesus identified Himself with various descriptors, each which pertained to things that John described in the first chapter in His vision of Jesus. How Jesus described Himself related to the encouragement and/or exhortations that He would give to each church. In this case concerning the church at Ephesus, He emphasized that the church was in His control and that He walked among it. This directly corresponded to the need for the church at Ephesus to return to their first love and enjoy intimacy with God rather than just activities related to Him. He wanted the church to remember that fullness of joy is found in His Presence (Psalm 16:11), and, while serving God is appropriate and useful, it is not a substitute for enjoying and connecting with the heart of God. True worship is in spirit and in truth (John 4:24), not just in going through the motions. Jesus told the church at Ephesus that He was aware of the good that they had done and of their labor for the kingdom and of their perseverance for the truth. He told them that He was aware of the fact that they stood up against evil and did not tolerate sin which corrupts the body of Christ. They were effective and faithful to discern false teachers. They had continued to persevere in the truth and in sound doctrine despite what doing so might cost them. They did this for Jesus’ sake, and they didn’t grow weary because His joy was their strength. These were all good things that Jesus was happy about, but there was one thing that they were doing wrong. He said that they left their first love. They needed to remember where they used to be and repent so that they could return to having the love for God that they had at first. Sometimes it is easy to replace love for Jesus Himself with faithful church service and activities. While it is good to hold to truth and to persevere in righteousness, the first love of every believer must be Jesus Himself. He is the source of joy and life to the full (John 10:10), and faithful service should overflow from a heart that is rejoicing in the Lord always (Philippians 4:4). Jesus knows when His church goes through the motions while the heart attitude isn’t what it should be. Jesus’ home is not a building, but it is in the heart of the believer (1 Corinthians 6:19). Thus, believers must guard their hearts and make sure that they are wholly devoted to Him (2 Chronicles 16:9). Going to church a

lot is not the same as worshipping and enjoying God. Jesus called the church at Ephesus to repent of hollow Christianity and to find their love for Him once again. Holding to sound doctrine is good, and Jesus again complimented them for not adopting the practices of the Nicolaitians. The Nicolaitians advocated fleshly indulgence and sensuality even to the extent that they believed it was necessary for salvation. This was clearly a false gospel, and it turned the true gospel of enjoying God's free grace into trying to earn His approval even through impure means. This was a total perversion of love and the gospel, and the church at Ephesus was right to abhor their evil and to cling to what is good. They had the hating of evil and evil deeds right, but they needed to remember their first love of Jesus Christ and how wonderful and awesome it is to belong to Him. That excitement and the thrill of their relationship with God needed to overflow their hearts and impact those around them. It is not just doctrine that separates and defines the church, but the church is also to be known by its love. This starts with those who bask in the love of Jesus, and, as they see His kindness more fully, they repent and grow in their love for others and for one another (Romans 2:4, John 13:34-35, 1 John 4:7-8). Despite all of the good at the church at Ephesus, this one thing was significant enough to Jesus to threaten to remove their lampstand. God is ultimately responsible for faith in a person's heart and for raising up true churches, for, unless the Lord builds the house, those who labor labor in vain who build it (Psalm 127:1). By taking the lampstand away, God would take His power and blessing away from the church, leaving it but a building or geographical place rather than a spiritually powerful, impactful, and advancing part of His heavenly kingdom. There are many hollowed out churches in the world today with no love for others and a lack of love for God. Ultimately, believers fight a spiritual battle, and the Lord of hosts is He Who can advance the truth through His church by faith. The church is impotent without Jesus' blessing, power, and provision (John 15:5). This message as Jesus said is for any who have ears to hear so that they listen to what He has to say to the seven churches. He wants people to make the adjustments whether they were part of the church at Ephesus or part of a church somewhere in the world today. He wants all believers to contend for truth, to persevere, to know sound doctrine, and to not lose sight of their passion and love for God no matter what distractions and busyness life might entail. Those who persevere to the end are those who belong to Christ. Revelation 12:11 defines overcoming clearly when it says, "And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death." Believers overcome on the basis of their faith in Christ according to the true gospel that they hold dearly and confidently. Though believers do stumble (James 3:2) as Peter did by denying Christ three times when faced with possible death, their ultimate sanctification and coming glorification is on the basis of Christ's blood which changes them from the inside out at the point of salvation and in an ongoing fashion throughout their lives (Romans 8:28-29). The Holy Spirit never stops teaching, guiding, and convicting a saved heart, and ultimately God will perfect and finish the faith that He began in believers' hearts (Hebrews 12:2). Believers who properly understand Christ's love will recognize that this world is passing away and that death is merely a transition to being present with the Lord. Faith in a glorious future, which is how the Bible finishes (Revelation 21-22), is extremely important for encouraging believers to be faithful to the end, even under threat of imminent death. True believers will eat of the tree of life (Revelation 22:2, 14), signifying their eternity with Jesus in heaven, which is best described to the human mind as a paradise (Luke 23:43, 2 Corinthians 12:4). Those who do not overcome, that is, unbelievers, will suffer the second death (v. 11) which is hell (Revelation 20:13-15).

**8 “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write:**

**The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this:**

**9 ‘I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. 11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.’**

Jesus clearly identified Himself as the One Who rose from the dead as He communicated with the church at Smyrna. The church at Smyrna was suffering persecution, and they were going to have more. Thus, as a means of encouragement, Jesus referred to Himself as the eternal One Who has promised eternal life to His own. His own resurrection as the firstborn from the dead reminded the suffering believers at Smyrna that their persecution was temporary, for ultimately they would rejoice and be rewarded with God in heaven. Smyrna was a prosperous place on account of their steady support for Rome and even tendency toward emperor worship. But this contributed to them being hostile toward the one true church of Jesus Christ. The Jewish community also sided against them. To be the true people of God, people must put their faith in Him, not just be from a certain gene pool. Thus, in turning against Jesus, the Jewish people were actually worshipping Satan (see also Revelation 3:9). Despite the prosperity of the region, the church suffered and was in need, though in Christ they were rich in eternity, having every spiritual blessing and pleasures forever in eternity (Ephesians 1:3, Psalm 16:11). More suffering and persecution was promised. Some would be cast into prison and their faith tested for a tribulation of ten days. But even if their physical bodies were to expire before the ten days were finished, the believers did not have to fear, for their eternity was sure. Jesus wanted the believers to be faithful even if it cost them their lives. True believers will be given the crown of life because not even martyrdom can take a believer out of His hand. James 1:12 says, “Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.” When believers endure under trial, God is faithful to reward them in eternity (Revelation 4:4, 10, 2 Corinthians 5:10, 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, Hebrews 11:6, 2 Timothy 4:8). Eternal life belongs to those who overcome by faith in Christ Who will sustain His own and complete the work He started in them (Philippians 1:6). Jesus wanted people beyond just Smyrna to read, hear, and heed the call to repent and the call to endure. Jesus didn’t rebuke this church, but He simply wanted the believers to keep believing and persevering. He wanted them not to fear but to focus on the coming reward. Persecution does have a way of keeping faith full, sharp, and focused. God doesn’t promise to take persecution away (John 16:33, 2 Timothy 3:12), but He does help His own to hold tightly and rightly to faith and truth until the end. He knows trials should not be feared but rejoiced in, for they promote character, hope, and endurance (Romans 5:3-5).

**12 “And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write:**

**The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this:**

**13 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. 14 But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality. 15 So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 16 Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. 17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.'**

Jesus does not mince words toward the church at Pergamum. He identifies Himself as having a sharp two-edged sword proceeding from His mouth, emphasizing that He is about to exhort them with the truth. It is also a threat of a divine judgment on the church (v. 16) if they do not repent (1 Corinthians 11:30) by confronting the error and sin and putting the false teachers out of the fellowship. Sometimes a church needs encouragement, as Smyrna did, but other times the most loving thing God can do is call the church back to sound doctrine. Pergamum was a difficult and hostile place for believers, described even as the throne room of Satan himself. Pergamum was a religious center for the cults of various gods such as Athena, Asklepios, Dionysius, and Zeus as well as the cult of Caesar. The church at Pergamum had been doing some things well, for they held fast His name and did not deny Him even when Antipas, a fellow believer, was killed among them as a martyr. However, God was very concerned with the compromising that they had allowed, for He knows that a little leaven of false teaching is able to leaven the whole loaf given that sin is contagious and corrupting (Galatians 5:9, 1 Corinthians 5:6). In the Old Testament, Balaam, being bought off by the King of Moab, incited the Moabite women to seduce the Israeli men so that the people of God would be corrupted and deceived into idolatry and pagan feasts (Numbers 22-25). The result of Nicolaitian teaching was the same, fleshly indulgence, immorality, and assimilating to pagan practices. Unlike the church at Ephesus, the church at Pergamum did not stand up to the false teachers. They were allowing a stumbling block to be put before the believers there, encouraging them to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality. Allowing teaching that encouraged fleshly indulgence and immorality was a serious issue that God told them to repent from. If they did not, He was going to come to them quickly and make war against them with the sword of His mouth. That is not to say that the faithful ones among them were to face God's judgment, but any believers who had not been bold enough to confront the false teachers might be subject to divine discipline, which is something reserved for God's children whom He loves to teach, train, and sanctify them. Jesus loves His church, and He knows that Satan will come against it. Believers must not compromise on doctrine, but they must take obedience to Christ seriously. The true believers at Pergamum were promised God's hidden manna. The spiritual food that God provides and the rewards that He gives in eternity are so much better than any sinful fleshly indulgence on the earth. Heaven is eternal satisfaction, fullness, and pleasure, and it is worth persevering in obedience on earth rather than going after false teaching that glorifies sin and Satan. Those who overcome by faith and by the power of God Who is faithful to preserve His godly ones (Psalm 31:23, 97:10; Proverbs 2:8) and keep them until the end (Jude 1:24) will be given a white stone with a new name on the stone that only the



person who receives the stone knows. God has a special, personal, distinct, and unique name for each believer. This is significant because every believer's life matters, and each will be judged not on what others do or what others think but on the basis of faithfulness before God which only Jesus knows for sure. God has special good works designed and prepared for each individual believer to do before they are even born (Ephesians 2:10), and He gifts believers differently and uniquely for the task that He has for them to accomplish. Their name is unique because their gifting, their calling, their responsibilities, and their stewardships are unique to them. Believers are responsible for making their own choices in life, and they will be judged on their faithfulness. God doesn't give up on the church at Pergamum altogether, but He says that He will deal with the bad and reward the good. It is encouraging to know that God sees all and is fair in His judgments and discipline (see v. 23-24).

**18 "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write:**

**The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this:**

**19 'I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first. 20 But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. 21 I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. 22 Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. 23 And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds. 24 But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them—I place no other burden on you. 25 Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come. 26 He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; 27 and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father; 28 and I will give him the morning star. 29 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'**

To Thyatira, in stating His identity, Jesus said that He is the Son of God with eyes like a flame of fire and with feet like burnished bronze, just as John saw Him in the vision in the introduction of the book. His eyes see all, and He knows the state of each individual heart, in Thyatira and in churches today. He said to the church at Thyatira that He was aware of the good deeds and love, faith, and service that the believers had done to one another and toward their community. He knew that they were even doing better in regard to good deeds than they did earlier. Thus, there are signs of growth and maturity. But they had one major problem in that they tolerated a false teacher referred to as Jezebel. Much like the pagan wife of evil King Ahab in the Old Testament (1 Kings 21:25-26), this woman taught errors and deceit and sought to lead those who truly loved Jesus astray. God hates when people lead others to stumble (Matthew 18:6), and this church needed to stop tolerating false teaching and put this woman out of their fellowship (Matthew 18:15-18, 1 Corinthians 5:1-5). She was likely very charismatic and interesting, but she was wrong and needed to be cast out. She claimed divine authority and insight, calling herself a prophetess even though she did not speak the truth of God. She gave herself

legitimacy, which the church should have quickly taken away. Even bond-servants of God, true believers, had begun to commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. Bad company does corrupt good morals (1 Corinthians 15:33), no matter how mature a believer might be. False teaching always tries to minimize sin and its seriousness before God and the severity of its devastation and destructive effects. It seeks to empower the flesh to do evil and feel as if it is above being harmed, and it seeks to justify sin and abuse the grace of God. God, in consistency with His abundant mercy, gave her time to repent, but she was not interested in changing her ways. Thus, God decided to send a judgment upon her, casting her on a bed of sickness. Those who committed adultery with her, either spiritually or physically or both, would also have great tribulation unless they would repent. God is always merciful to the last possible moment, but eventually those who harden their hearts and love sin rather than God will suffer His just punishment. Believers will not suffer His wrath, but they might have divine discipline which is not meant to harm them but to point them back to the way of truth and the peaceful fruit of righteousness (Hebrews 12:4-13). God sees all minds and hearts individually, and He promises to render to each according to his deeds. The innocent will not be punished for the evil of the wicked, and the wicked will not escape on account of the righteous. Each person will be held to account based on his or her own merits. This Jezebel would also lose her children on account of a divine pestilence sent upon them. This could be her biological children or those who followed her and jointly became sons and daughters of disobedience. God does punish the wicked to make a statement to the watching world, and He also disciplines His own children by sickness and even death to purge and refine the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:29-30). By allowing this tribulation to happen, God would send a message to believers and to any who were watching the corruption unfold in this church that He takes sin seriously and is able to punish the wicked. There would be no mistaken identity, and each would get what was deserved. The rest at Thyatira were exhorted to remain pure and innocent of Satanic teaching. There would be no benefit to them exploring the deep things of Satan as they were called. These who were innocent and who had not gone along with this cult of Satan within the church needed simply to keep doing right and enduring by faith. God was in the process of refining the church at Thyatira, and He would do just that. The true believers needed to keep holding to sound doctrine and keep being faithful in what they had been doing that was good. The reward for those who persevered was to be able to rule with Jesus forever in eternity, which is true of all believers. He will be King of the millennial age and forever after, and believers will rule over the nations with Him. He also promises to give them the morning star. Jesus Himself is described as the morning star in Revelation 22:16, and He lights the new heavens and earth by Himself (Revelation 22:5). 2 Peter 1:19 says, "So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts." So perhaps there will be a way in which the Light of Christ will shine forth in the hearts of believers in eternity, reflecting His glory visibly and demonstrating that He is indeed Lord of their hearts. As the angel told Daniel, "Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever" (Daniel 12:3). The idea is that God's intimacy will be closer and more real than ever. As with the other letters to the churches, Jesus' purpose in this letter is not just for Thyatira but for other churches who might succumb to the same mistake. God wants churches to deal with sin and not allow it to go unchecked. This letter is also an encouragement for those who do not compromise because God sees all hearts and will deal with sinners and reward the righteous. It is

always worth enduring, overcoming, and persevering despite the deceptions, distractions, and prevalent delusions of the day.

## Revelation 3

**“To the angel of the church in Sardis write:**

**He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: ‘I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. 2 Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. 3 So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you. 4 But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. 5 He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. 6 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’**

Communicating to the church at Sardis, Jesus referred to Himself as the One Who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars. The seven stars refer to the angels of the seven churches according to Revelation 1:20. The idea here is that He is God and the authority over His church, He being the head. His Holy Spirit indwells the true believers in each of the seven churches, and He watches over each with His angels. Thus, He knows all and sees all concerning the state of the church. Even though the church at Sardis had a reputation for being alive (perhaps it was well-attended, busy, and well-financed), God knew better based upon the state of the hearts of those in the church. By and large the church was spiritually dead, and God was not fooled. He had been watching, and, while the church managed to fool others while living in hypocrisy, a lack of love, and doctrinal compromise, God knew that it was a dead body. They needed to repent, wake up, and strengthen that which was about to succumb to sin, complacency, and hypocrisy. There were a few there who had not soiled their garments and who had kept the faith, while others just went through the motions pretending to love Christ while denying Him by their deeds all the while. Titus 1:16 says, “They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.” Their form of godliness (2 Timothy 3:5) was not what God was looking for, and He was able to see through the charade and declare that their garments were defiled and dirty. The church needed to return to the truth and the gospel which had been declared to them in the past. They needed to repent and hold tightly to the truth by faith. If they did not then God would come like a thief when they didn’t expect it and at an unannounced occasion. This is the same language that is used to describe Christ’s second coming in wrath for unbelievers (Matthew 24:43, 1 Thessalonians 5:2). These professing Christians who were actually dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1) and not alive in Christ needed to repent, wake up, and start living for Jesus by faith before it was too late to repent. God still wanted to use this church, for they had deeds that He wanted them to do to fulfill their purpose before God. Despite their imperfections and stumbling, God would use the true believers at Sardis to fulfill their purpose by His grace, but the future of the church as a whole was in doubt. God was giving them time, but they had a decision to make. They needed to get back to the basics and repent and submit to Christ, keeping His commands (John 14:21). Those who know Christ by faith will be found in the Book of Life, but those who do not know Him will not have their names in the Book of Life. Psalm 69:28 speaks of the wicked having their names blotted out of the Book of Life, but the righteous have their names permanently etched in the book from

the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8, 17:8). Those who act corruptly will not be found as having a part of the tree of life, and their names will not be in the Book of Life (Revelation 21:27, 22:19). Those not in the book will go to hell (Revelation 20:15). Those who truly know Christ will endure and overcome on the basis of the blood of Christ and the word of their testimony (Revelation 21:11). He will finish the work that He began in their hearts, and He will help them to endure. His Spirit is already a deposit in their hearts guaranteeing their future inheritance with Christ in heaven (Ephesians 1:13-14). The God of the seven Spirits knows where the Spirit of God lives and in whose heart He does not live. Believers never get erased from the Book of Life, but the wicked have no part in the Book. They erase themselves by their own evil deeds. What an honor it will be for true believers to have Jesus Himself confess before God the Father and the angels that He knows them and lives in their hearts! Those who confess Jesus in this life (Romans 10:9) will be named by Jesus as His own in eternity. People need to pay attention to this Scripture, for God sees all and will one day open the books and judge all the peoples. Only believers will walk with Jesus in white (Revelation 3:18, 4:4, 7:14, 19:7).

**7 “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:**

**He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this:**

Jesus again revealed Himself based upon the description in Revelation 1, this time pulling from verse 18 which speaks of He Who holds the keys. In chapter 1, He said that He holds the keys of death and Hades, for He conquered the grave and paid the penalty for sin. Here, He said that He holds the key of David, implying that He also is Lord over Who enters the kingdom of heaven. He is holy and true, and He will be the final and fair judge of who may pass through heaven’s gates and who may not. No one can go against His will or defy His judgment. This revelation of part of His nature flows into His message to the church at Philadelphia which is meant to encourage them. Though they have been opposed and persecuted in this life, they will be honored in the coming kingdom. Jesus, Who has the keys to that kingdom, will make sure it is so.

**8 ‘I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name. 9 Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you. 10 Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. 11 I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown. 12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name. 13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’**

Jesus knows all, and He is faithful to reward believers according to their faithfulness. He gives them opportunities which He empowers them to do (Ephesians 2:10). He opens doors for them which no one

can shut (1 Corinthians 16:9, 2 Corinthians 2:12). In this life, He opens doors so that the gospel can go forward and so believers can use their gifts and opportunities to advance the kingdom. When they pass from life to death, they will pass into life in heaven because Jesus will make sure the door of heaven is open to them. The church at Philadelphia was said not to have been powerful in worldly terms, having only a little power and earthly influence, but God was strong in and through them (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). The unbelieving Jews, which Jesus said belonged to the synagogue of Satan for denying Him and persecuting His people, would one day have to bow before them. This is likely a reference to the time at the judgment when believers sit on thrones and reign with Christ (Revelation 20:4). There, finally, their vindication for believing in the true Messiah will be accomplished. As Jesus told His disciples in Luke 22:28-30, "You are those who have stood by Me in My trials; and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Unbelieving Israel will be forced to see that they were on the wrong side of the gates of heaven on account of their unbelief, and so the first will be last and the last first (Matthew 20:16). However, some of the Jews have received Christ, and, in the last days, a believing remnant will be saved (Jeremiah 30:11; Joel 2:32, 3:20-21; Micah 4:6-8, 7:19-20; Amos 9:15; Malachi 4:1-3; Zephaniah 3:11-13). This portion that God preserves through the final battle will be given hearts that repent of their errors and have hearts for the Lord (Ezekiel 36:8-38, Zechariah 12:10-14, Hosea 3:5). The faithful believers at the church at Philadelphia weren't impressive by the world's standards, and the more powerful forces around them were able to cause them difficulty. But they didn't deny the name of their Lord, and they kept His Word by obeying His commands. Because of their obedience and perseverance by faith by His grace, they would be kept from the hour of testing that will come on the whole world as a great divine test. This reference to the Great Tribulation period shows that believers have a great hope of not having to endure the terrible period of God's wrath that will come upon the earth (Zephaniah 2:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:10, 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:50-58). Some will turn to Jesus in that time (Revelation 11:13), but most will reject Him even in the day of wrath (Revelation 6:16-17). They will not pass His test. The hope of believers is that they will not face God's wrath. However, those who come to faith during the tribulation will suffer and be persecuted during this time. Some of the judgments they will be spared from such as the sore that oozes from where the mark of the beast was taken and the demonic forces from the abyss. It is on their account that the tribulation will be cut short (Matthew 24:22). It is the wicked who are in God's bull's-eye, and it is Israel that God is working to call back to Himself during these final hours. That God would spare the faithful from having to endure this final period of wrath on the earth is a great promise of hope and blessing. That is not to say that life on earth will be easy, for it will have trials, tribulation, suffering, and persecution. But God's wrath is not aimed at believers because it was poured out on Christ on the cross once and for all. God's desire is that believers, including the church at Philadelphia, would persevere in faith and in truth until they are called home. While believers cannot lose heaven, they can lose out on eternal rewards. Thus, Jesus' admonition to His church was that they would finish strong and not lose a crown as a reward. The believers at Philadelphia, who were viewed as feeble by the world, will be pillars in the temple of God in eternity. There will not be a literal temple of God in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:22), but the tabernacle of God will be among believers (Revelation 21:3). Thus, the idea is that, in heaven, God's presence will be near to His people forever. God's name will be written on them as well as the name of their new home, the New Jerusalem, which comes down from heaven (Revelation 21). Jesus' new

name, whatever that might be, will also be written on them, for they belong to Him forever. They are His possession, His children, and His to shower His blessings and riches and wisdom on forever and ever. People need to pay attention to what is written here, for it should be obvious that it is worth believing in Jesus because of the eternal glories to come. Christians might be “little people” now, but in heaven they will be great (Matthew 18:4, Luke 7:28) because Jesus loves them and will honor them there in His paradise.

#### **14 “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:**

#### **The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this:**

Jesus, referencing how He appeared to John in Revelation 1:5, explained that He is the Beginning of the creation of God. He was with God in the beginning when God made the world (John 1:1), and He is also the firstborn of those who will rise from the dead (Colossians 1:18). Everything He says and does is true and right and good. He is the very definition of truth, veracity, and what is right. What He says can be trusted because He is faithful. He can give an “Amen” to Himself because He is truth and unchangeable. He was killed on account of His own testimony, and His devotion to His Father led Him to be passionate about the house of God and the purposes of God. There was and is nothing wishy-washy about Jesus, for He is absolutely and totally true, right, and faithful. He even died and rose from the dead, proving He is God, the beginning and the end.

**15 ‘I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. 16 So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. 17 Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, 18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. 19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. 21 He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. 22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’”**

The church at Laodicea stood in stark contrast to the definitive character of Christ Who personifies truth and testifies to the truth. The Laodiceans were lukewarm, being neither cold nor hot. God knew their deeds and their hearts, and it made Him want to vomit them out of His mouth. He said that He loved them and therefore in love was going to discipline them unless they would repent and find their zeal and passion for truth and for Jesus. It appears that the church became complacent and self-sufficient rather than living in a sense of dependency on Christ Who alone is sufficient. It seems that they began to rest upon other things such as their money to do the work of the kingdom rather than relying upon the sufficient Word of God. They boasted in their wealth which made them self-confident, and they didn't feel that they needed anything, including divine help and blessing. They tried to do the Christian life on their own, feeling confident in themselves rather than boastful in God. Their pride blinded them from

being able to see how wretched, miserable, and poor they were save for Christ and His grace. They were walking by sight rather than by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7). Pride doesn't lead to eternal rewards, but humility brings honor. The church needed to humble itself, repent, and find its passion for God once again. They needed to find riches in Him, forgiveness, wisdom, insight, and renewed godliness and holiness. It is difficult to be passionate for truth when life is easy and the world has so many distractions. Wealth can be deceitful (Matthew 13:22), and thus Proverbs 30:7-9 says that it is wise to pray to have just enough and to remember to give to those in need lest pride takes over on account of having an over-abundance. This happened to the church at Laodicea. They needed to come to God in humility, begging Him to reveal their arrogance and to help them see just how weak and feeble they were on their own. It is only as believers abide in Christ that they can accomplish things of spiritual value (John 15:5). Otherwise, they cannot do anything eternally worthwhile. Interestingly, the other churches which were being persecuted severely didn't have this problem, for they needed to desperately appeal to God for strength and deliverance. They had no means to deliver themselves or to delude themselves about what really mattered. But God was and is merciful, calling to the Laodicean church to repent and to open the door of their hearts to Him. He was busy knocking and calling to them, just as He pursued Jonah when His servant ran from Him and from His responsibilities before Him. When God calls, His church must submit and listen. He will forgive and empower again if only believers will humble themselves and live according to His wisdom by faith. Wealth can make a person walk by sight rather than by faith, but a person who has just enough needs faith every day so that he can get through the day by the mercy of God. A dependent heart that recognizes and celebrates the insufficiency of man and the sufficiency of Christ will enjoy intimacy and fellowship with Christ. Believers will overcome by faith on account of Christ's blood (Revelation 12:11) because of God's grace to keep them in His hand (John 10:28), and they will reign with Christ forever. Jesus even says that believers will get to sit with Him on His throne (Ephesians 2:6, Revelation 4:4, 20:4). He overcame sin and death and was able to sit with the Father on His throne. The Father gave Him the name above every name on account of His humility and obedience (Philippians 2:5-10). There are such great honors and rewards available to believers, and knowing this will help them to endure and look forward to the weight of glory (2 Corinthians 4:17). Believers should stand in stark contrast to the world, reflecting the truth of Christ, and they should be full of zeal for His gospel and His kingdom. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches of the first century and of today.



## Revelation 4

**After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things." 2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne. 3 And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance. 4 Around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads.**

The vision given to John continued with an open door in heaven that Jesus beckoned him to come through. He wanted to show John what would come to pass after the time of the church. He saw in the vision Jesus sitting on the throne. His appearance was of a jasper stone and a sardius, like a burning fire. There was a rainbow around the throne, which was like an emerald in appearance. The throne and the rainbow had to be exceedingly beautiful in appearance, and Jesus Himself likely looked like a consuming fire. He was holy, deserving of praise, the King of Kings, majestic in splendor, and surrounded by beauty. The rainbow of the Old Testament signified that God would never flood the world again (Genesis 9:8-17), but Jesus in His holiness was going to have to judge the world, just not with a worldwide flood. Thus, the rainbow signifies both the coming glory and beauty of heaven and the need for Christ to judge the world in righteousness. Then peace will come as He establishes His rule once and for all (Micah 4:1-5, 5:5). The fiery jasper and sardius of the coming day of the Lord would transition to the peaceful soothing emerald of His coming reign of peace. Around the throne of Jesus were twenty-four other thrones, perhaps a fulfillment of Revelation 3:21 that believers will sit on thrones with Christ. Jesus also promised His faithful disciples that they would sit on thrones (Matthew 19:28, 22:30) and that believers would rule with Him in His coming kingdom (Revelation 1:6, 5:10). In 1 Chronicles 24, there are twenty-four divisions of priests which served in the sanctuary of God. In 1 Chronicles 25, there are twenty-four divisions of musicians responsible for worship in the presence of God. Hebrews 8:5 says that the earthly house of God was a reflection of what happens in heaven. Thus, it makes sense that there would be twenty-four elders to serve in the temple of God in heaven given that there were twenty-four divisions of earthly priests on the earth. 1 Peter 2:9 explains that believers are a royal priesthood before God, and Revelation 1:6 reemphasizes that believers will be priests of God in His coming kingdom. Thus, it is reasonable to believe that the twenty-four elders are a visual representation of believers who were raptured before the final seven year tribulation period. These are seen singing praises to God and even playing harps in Revelation 4:9-11, 5:8-10, 12-14 just as the twenty-four divisions of musicians did in David's kingdom. Believers are seen later in Revelation 19:7-8 preparing for the marriage supper of the Lamb and then judging on thrones in Revelation 20:4 as the first resurrection occurs in which the tribulation saints join the rest of the believers in heaven in their new eternal bodies. The saints of Revelation 7:9-17 are clearly those who come out of the tribulation, but Revelation 4, 5, 19, 20 imply that other believers were already there present and waiting. Revelation 5:9-10 is of particular importance in determining who the twenty-four elders might be. Please see the notes on that text for more information regarding the identity of the twenty-four elders. Also important to note is the fact that the elders were clothed in white garments with golden crowns on their heads. This description is

consistent with the promised rewards from Jesus' letters to the churches in chapters 1-3. Revelation 3:5 promised believers that they would be clothed in white, and the bride of Christ is seen in bright, clean linen in Revelation 19:7-8. That believers get crowns is seen in Revelation 2:10 and 3:11. This is affirmed in James 1:12, 2 Timothy 4:8, and in 1 Peter 5:4 which says, "And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory."

**5 Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God; 6 and before the throne there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. 7 The first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle. 8 And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come."**

The throne of the Lord exudes power, majesty, might, glory, honor, and authority. The peals of thunder and the flashes of lightning illustrate this wonderfully. The seven Spirits of God presented by the seven lamps of fire before the throne point to the completeness of God. A somewhat similar picture of God's Spirit is given in Zechariah 4:1-10, and it also signifies the fullness of the Spirit of the Lord. The complete and all-powerful God sits on a throne that illustrates those facts, and before the throne there was what appeared like a crystal sea. This imagery is consistent with that given in Exodus 24:10 and Ezekiel 1:22. Though there is no longer any sea in the new heaven and earth (Revelation 21:1), there is a river of the water of life flowing from the throne, clear as crystal (Revelation 22:1). This points to God's healing of the nations and to the fact that only He gives eternal life, He being the Living Water (John 4:10). Just as He will be the Light in heaven instead of the sun (Revelation 22:5), He will also be the source of water that satisfies, that heals, and that causes the trees of life to produce fruit (Revelation 22:1-2), symbolizing eternal life. There were also four living creatures full of eyes around the throne. This is a reference to the cherubim from the Old Testament who praise God before His throne (Psalm 80:1, 99:1). Ezekiel 10 confirms this when giving a near exact description of what the cherubim look like, for it is just as John saw them in heaven. Ezekiel 1 also gives a glimpse of this throne room of the Lord, for Ezekiel also saw creatures with faces of a bull/calf, eagle, lion, and man (Ezekiel 1:4-28). The creatures take in everything about God and worship Him according to all that they see, which is a lot given their many eyes. They are able to accurately and rightfully worship God because they see God as He is and for Who He is. They also have six wings like the seraphim referenced in Isaiah 6:2. These are imposing beings possessing angelic power and strength, and their chief job if not only job is to cry out in praise to God day and night without stopping. They cry out that God is holy, holy, holy, just as the seraphim said in Isaiah 6:3. Holiness is the utmost descriptor of the character and nature of God, He being unique, without blemish, without weakness, without sin, without error, without fault, without failure, and totally perfect and complete in every way. They identify God as the Lord God Almighty, for He has all power and strength. They cry out that He is eternal, that He was and is and is to come. Even these imposing creatures recognize who is God, and they worship Him ceaselessly.

**9 And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 11 “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.”**

The creatures understand what it is to praise and worship God, for they give Him glory, honor, and thanks as they cry out humbly before Him. This is worship in its fullest sense, for it is focused on Who God is and what He has done. They recognize that it is God Who sits on the throne and that it is He Who lives forever and ever. The elders also praise God, falling down before Him and worshipping Him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before Him in an act of humility, for they recognize that whatever honor they have is given to them by God. Any eternal reward and honor is ultimately a credit to Jesus Who fills and empowers His children to be able to accomplish spiritual works to His glory. Thus, He alone is deserving of all praise and worship. The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders rightly declare the attributes of God by calling Him worthy to receive honor, glory, and power. They understand why He deserves glory, and they are able to worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24), reciting what God has done. They praise Him for creating all things and being the sole reason and impetus for their creation and continued existence (Colossians 1:17, Hebrews 1:3). God spoke everything into existence by His will, for He is eternal, powerful, and the One Who put all things together and Who holds them together. There is no confusion as to what happens around the throne of God, for it is a place of humility and joy and of praising, thanking, and bowing before the One Who alone deserves all praise and worship.

## Revelation 5

**I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals. 2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?" 3 And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it. 4 Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it; 5 and one of the elders \*said to me, "Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals."**

As the vision continued, John saw in God's right hand a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals. A strong angel proclaimed with a loud voice asking who was worthy to break its seals. Given that the angel was strong, opening the seals to the book was not a matter of strength but of worthiness. No one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was found who was able to open the book or look into it. John wept at this greatly, for no one was able to open the book to see what it said. He must have understood that what was inside was holy, righteous, true, and necessary. But one of the elders told him to stop weeping because Jesus, the Lion of Judah of the lineage of David, is worthy to open the book and its seven seals. He has overcome sin and death, and that is why He is worthy.

**6 And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. 7 And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. 8 When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.**

Now, between the elders and the living creatures and the throne of God there was a Lamb standing. It was clear that the Lamb appeared as if it had died, but it was alive, pointing to the death and resurrection of Christ. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, signifying the seven Spirits of God, representative of the Holy Spirit as He goes throughout the world and indwells His church. The horns themselves symbolize strength, and the eyes point to the ability of God to see every heart. The Lamb, Jesus Christ, came and took the book out of the hand of God. When He took the book, the living creatures and the elders fell down before Him and sang a new song. As they sang, the elders held a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. The use of the musical instruments and the fact that they bring the prayers of the saints seems to reflect their roles as heavenly priests likened to what is seen in 1 Chronicles 24-25 (see notes on Revelation 4:1-4 for more information). Christians for years will have prayed for Christ's justice to come and for His return to come quickly so that they can go and be with Him. That time had come, and the prayers will not go unanswered.

**9 And they \*sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.**

**10 "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."**

The new song that they sing is worship in spirit and in truth, for those singing duly ascribe worth to Jesus on account of a right understanding of the gospel. They understand that He made Himself low and died as a man yet fully God for the sins of the world. They praise Him for paying the price that only He could pay to redeem those who would put their faith in Him, people from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. The gospel is an indiscriminating proclamation, for God wants people everywhere to repent. But they must choose the only way, finding their righteousness and eternal life in the shed blood of Jesus (John 14:6). Apart from Him, they cannot be made worthy to enter heaven, for He alone is worthy. But those who do embrace Christ as Savior will reign with Christ in heaven as part of His eternal kingdom. They will be His priests, servants in His dominion to enjoy Him forever and worship Him eternally. During the millennial kingdom, believers will reign with Christ (Revelation 1:6, 20:4). Even into the creation of the new heaven and earth, believers will reign with Christ. There is great hope for Christians in the life to come on account of Jesus. The gospel has always been a marvel for the angelic realm (1 Peter 1:12) including the cherubim, and they praise God for His wisdom to claim a people for Himself Who will by His mercy reign with Him forever. It is indeed a privilege to be adopted into Christ's family and to be part of His eternal kingdom.

It must be noted that there is a difference in the translation in the KJV and the NASB. The NASB speaks of the living creatures and the elders speaking in the third person concerning those people that God has redeemed and how He has made them to be a kingdom. The KJV shows the elders praising God for redeeming "us," and the fact that they refer to themselves in the first person points to their recognition as being numbered among the redeemed. This translation would give further credence to the idea that the twenty-four elders are indeed raptured believers. The bulk of the manuscript evidence has a first person pronoun in verse 9 and a third person pronoun in verse 10, except for the manuscript which the KJV is translated from. It has first person pronouns in both verses 9 and 10. Thus, it seems that the most sensible understanding of the passage is to see the living creatures bowing down and the elders praising God for their redemption as well as all those who would still come to Christ during the tribulation period. All believers will serve God as priests in Christ's coming millennial kingdom (Revelation 20:4-6).

**11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."**

Then John saw myriads of voices from myriads of angels around the throne singing to Jesus with a loud voice along with the elders and living creatures. They declared with a loud unified voice that Jesus is worthy because He was slain. He was obedient to the point of death, and now the Father has highly exalted Him with the name that is above every name. He has received power, riches, wisdom, might, honor, glory, and blessing, and believers are joint inheritors with Him of His kingdom (Romans 8:17). It is an incredible gift and something that should cause believers' hearts to overflow with praise as they realize just how much Jesus has done for them.

**13 And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever." 14 And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshiped.**

The creation itself groans for its redemption (Romans 8:22), for, if people won't praise God, then the rocks will cry out (Luke 19:40). Finally, the creation realizes that its time to be redeemed and remade is near (Isaiah 65:17, 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1), and every created thing in heaven, on earth, under the earth, on the sea, and in the sea cries out in praise to God. In unison, the heavenly cry from all of creation is to God Who sits on the throne and to the Lamb. It is a cry of blessing, honor, glory, and dominion forever and ever. They proclaim praise that God is God, that Jesus is Lord, and that His reign is forever. This is a much anticipated time, and it has finally come. The creatures echoed the cry of the creation, saying "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped.

## Revelation 6

**Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, "Come." 2 I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.**

The seven seal judgments are the beginning of the wrath of God being poured out upon the earth during the tribulation period. Jesus broke the first seal, and one of the living creatures told John to come and see what it meant. John saw a white horse with a being riding on it and having a bow, signifying war. He went out conquering and to conquer, signified by the crown of victory on his head. Though the antichrist will feign peace with Israel during the first half of the final seven year tribulation period, the world will not be a pleasant place. As Matthew 24:4-8 indicates, the birth pangs of earthquakes, wars, and famines will only get worse with time. 2 Timothy 3:13 also points out that deceivers and those being deceived will also get worse with time. While it is true that many will get rich from the antichrist's economy (Revelation 18:11-20), the reality is that it will be a fear-driven existence (Revelation 13:4), worship before the antichrist will be required (Revelation 13:12, 15), and right away the antichrist will subdue three kings (Daniel 7:24). He is a war-hungry person who craves power and worship, and no real peace can exist under such a ruler, particularly for those who refuse to worship him. Things will be so bad that human trafficking will be a key driver of the economy (Revelation 18:13). This will not just be a slave trade but a brokering of children for prostitution and other means of ill-gotten gain (Joel 3:3). The tribulation time will not be a great time to be on the earth, and this is another reason why it is a blessed hope to know that believers will be raptured before it comes (Titus 2:13, Revelation 3:10, John 14:1-3, 1 Corinthians 15:50-58, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Zephaniah 2:3).

**3 When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come." 4 And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him.**

Jesus broke the second seal, and the second creature told John to come and see what it meant. This time a red horse went out, and it was granted to its rider to take peace from the earth. A great sword was given to him, signifying that men would kill one another. That war, the first seal, would lead to the death of many and the loss of peace, the second seal, makes sense. Wars and rumors of wars are the birth pangs leading up to the tribulation period, but once these seals are opened, things go to another level entirely.

**5 When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, "Come." I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. 6 And I heard something like a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine."**

Jesus broke the third seal, and the third creature told John to come and see what it meant. John saw a black horse, and its rider held a pair of scales in his hand. John heard something like a voice in the center of the four living creatures speaking of how much it would cost for basic foodstuffs such as wheat, barley, oil, and wine. A denarius was approximately a day's wage during Jesus' time on earth

(Matthew 20:2), so the idea that a quart of wheat or three quarts of barley would cost a day's wage speaks of a severe famine throughout the world. That it would cost a person his entire earnings for the day to just feed himself for that day is remarkable and indicative of the widespread hunger and food shortages that will occur with the third seal judgment. Oil and wine are also seen in verse 6 as being precious and irreplaceable, inferring that growing crops will be difficult given the devastation from the wars. Things that used to be plentiful, such as olives and grapes, will become hard to come by and viewed as luxuries.

**7 When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come." 8 I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.**

Jesus broke the fourth seal, and the fourth creature told John to come and see what it meant. This time the horse was gray like ash, and the rider who sat upon it had the name "Death." Hades, also signifying death and the grave, was following along with him. They were appointed to kill off a fourth of the world's population through the effects of war, famine, disease, and through wild beasts. That wild beasts were seen killing people in substantial amounts signifies that their habitats and food supplies were being compromised and that they were forced into confrontation with people. The world was undergoing great devastation from the wars, and twenty-five percent of the world was wiped out.

**9 When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; 10 and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" 11 And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.**

Jesus broke the fifth seal, and John saw underneath the altar in the throne room of God the souls of those who were slain because of their testimony for the Lord and because they held true to His Word. These martyrs for Christ cried out loudly to the Lamb pleading with Him to avenge their blood from those who hated Him and them on the earth. Knowing that Jesus is faithful and true as well as holy and just, they knew that eventually their blood would be avenged. Yet they prayed for it to come soon. Each of them was given a white robe and told that they should rest a little longer until the full martyrdom during the tribulation had been completed. This was seen as being complete in Revelation 7:9-17, for then heaven is flooded with believers who come out of the tribulation. The white robes signify that they belong to Christ and have been washed clean by His blood. The judgments of God were occurring even as they prayed, and time was short for the antichrist to do his will on earth. Soon, the final seven years would be up, and the antichrist would be killed (Revelation 19:20). At that point, all who would be martyred during the tribulation would have been killed, and they could all come together with other believers for the marriage supper of the Lamb, all clothed in white (Revelation 19:5-8). Their blood will have been avenged by Jesus Himself (Revelation 19:2), and they take part in the first



resurrection and rule with Christ as His priests for a thousand years (Revelation 19:4-6). Eternal life is theirs (Revelation 7:15-17).

**12 I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; 13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. 14 The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. 15 Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; 16 and they \*said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; 17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"**

John looked when Christ broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake. The sun turned black (Amos 5:18-20), and the moon looked like blood (see also Isaiah 13:10). This would fit the description of what would happen if earthquakes rearranged the earth's plates and caused volcanic eruptions on a grand scale. The stars would be blocked from sight and the atmosphere would be compromised and polluted with a quake so large that every mountain and island was moved out of their places. Then again, this could be a major astronomical event or a purely supernatural event in which the stars literally fall from the sky and darkness comes upon the earth (see also Matthew 24:29-30, Mark 13:24-26, Acts 2:19-21, Joel 2:31). The sky is also said to be split apart, perhaps signifying that the atmosphere is compromised. It could also contribute to the intense heat that comes later (Revelation 16:9). Every mountain and island were moved, and an earthquake later will cause all the islands to be gone and all mountains to be leveled (Revelation 16:20, Isaiah 24:19-20). Regardless of the precise mechanics of this event, the devastation, shock, and destruction will be so great that men everywhere, from the rich and kings to the slave and free man, will hide in caves and in the rocks of mountains wishing that they could be hidden from the presence of God on the throne and from the Lamb (see Isaiah 2:10-11, 19-22). They will recognize that a supernatural judgment has come, and they will understand that in the day of the wrath of God no man can stand. Rather than calling out, repenting, and begging for mercy, most will try to hide and run from Jesus. Even their fear of Him doesn't make them want to turn from sin, a great indictment on the nature of man (Revelation 9:20-21; 16:9-10, 21). Some, however, do repent (Revelation 7:9-14, 11:13), and while they will likely perish in the tribulation, they will have eternal life in heaven.

## Revelation 7

**After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree. 2 And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, 3 saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads."**

After the six seals were opened and the six judgments ensued, John saw four angels at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth so that no wind was blowing anywhere. Another angel was ascending from the rising of the sun with the seal of the living God. He cried out to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, and he told them not to act until a select group of the bond-servants of God were sealed on their foreheads. Based on verses 4-8, it appears that those who were sealed during the tribulation are limited to a particular group of firstfruit believing Jews, numbered at 144,000. Believers of all times and places are already sealed by the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption (2 Corinthians 1:22, Ephesians 1:13, 4:30). Their seal is, according to 2 Timothy 2:19, "The Lord knows those who are His." God has set His seal on Jesus first (John 6:27), and all Who belong to Him are sealed by Him and known by Him. The earth has already been harmed by famine and war, but the earth and sea will be directly targeted in future judgments (Revelation 8:7-11).

**4 And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:5 from the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand, from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand, 6 from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand, from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand, from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand, 7 from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand, from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand, from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand, 8 from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand, from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand, from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand were sealed.**

The number sealed was 144,000, 12,000 from each tribe of Israel. God always promised that a remnant of the nation of Israel would be saved (Isaiah 6:12-13, Zechariah 13:8-9, 14:1-5). He would open their eyes and help them to understand and believe the truth concerning the Lamb (Ezekiel 36:22-38, Zephaniah 3:11-13, Hosea 2:14-23). The 144,000 are the firstfruits (see Revelation 14:4) of the Jews who would come to faith (Zechariah 12:1-14). More came to faith in Revelation 11:13, and more will believe in the very end even as Christ descends upon the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14). In Revelation 9:4, God exempts those who are sealed from having to endure a particular plague of demonic judgment. This should have been a clear declaration to those watching that God was more powerful than Satan and that they should fear Him. It is likely that tribulation saints would have also been spared that particular judgment given that they are sealed by Christ on account of their faith.

**9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; 10 and they cry out with a loud voice,**

**saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." 11 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, 12 saying, "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen."**

After the sealing of the 144,000 Jews, a great multitude so large it couldn't be counted from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation appeared standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes and had palm branches in their hands. They had welcomed and recognized Jesus as the true King and Messiah while on earth during the tribulation period by believing in Him and turning their lives over to Him (c.f. Matthew 21:8-9, John 12:13). While most people hardened their hearts and wished rocks would fall on them to keep them from Jesus, some turned to the Rock of salvation (v. 13-17). These cried out loudly and praised God Who sits on the throne for their salvation. They praised the Lamb for making their salvation possible, for salvation is impossible through any other. All the angels were standing around the throne and the elders and creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God. They agreed with the praise of the tribulation saints, and they blessed God and declared Him deserving of all glory, honor, power, and might forever and ever.

**13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?" 14 I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. 16 They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; 17 for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes."**

One of the elders asked John who this multitude of people clothed in white was and where they came from. John answered and told him that he, the elder, knew and would have to explain it to him. The elder told John that those who came out of the great tribulation were the ones who appeared in the presence of God clothed in white. They were those who came to Christ during the tribulation period and died either through martyrdom or other means. Though their robes had been dirty with sin, having missed the rapture of the church, they found Christ and believed the gospel during the tribulation period. Thus, by the mercy of God and on account of the shed blood of Christ, they were made clean in Christ and enabled to worship God in heaven before His throne and to serve Him forever by participating in His kingdom reign (Revelation 22:14). Jesus in the New Jerusalem makes His dwelling among the redeemed literally (this promise is duplicated in Revelation 21:3 and echoed in Revelation 21:22). God Himself will be among them, and as Revelation 21:4 says, "And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away" (see also Isaiah 25:8). The redeemed in heaven will not go hungry or thirsty, the climate will be stable and comfortable (in contrast to the tribulation experience of Revelation 16:9), and their Good Shepherd will guide them to heavenly springs of the water of life (John 4:14, Revelation 22:1, 17). Everything they could want or need will be met in Him, and there will be no sadness there.

## Revelation 8

**When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. 2 And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.**

Jesus broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. Clearly, this judgment was going to be exceedingly severe. Seven angels from near God's presence were given seven trumpets, each which represented an individual judgment, all under the umbrella of the seventh seal.

**3 Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. 5 Then the angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar, and threw it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake. 6 And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them.**

An eighth angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer. Much incense was given to him to add it to the prayers of the saints on the golden altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense with the prayers of the saints went up before God out of the angel's hand. All of the prayers for justice from God's people who have suffered throughout the ages and particularly during the tribulation period were remembered by God. The atrocities committed against God's people were going to be held to the account of the wicked, first on earth, the first death, and during their judgment at the Great White Throne, the second death (Revelation 20:11-15). The angel then took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it to the earth. What followed were peals of thunder, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake. It was then time for the seven angels with the seven trumpets to begin to sound them so that the judgments of God could be poured out upon the earth.

**7 The first sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.**

The first trumpet brought forth hail and fire mixed with blood, and they were sent to the earth, burning up a third of the earth including a third of all trees and green grass. This was not just any ordinary hailstorm, but it was the fiery wrath of God.

**8 The second angel sounded, and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood, 9 and a third of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed.**

The second angel sounded the second trumpet, and John saw something like a huge mountain burning with fire cast into the sea. The result was that a third of the sea turned to blood, and a third of the creatures in the sea which were alive died. A third of the ships were also destroyed.

**10 The third angel sounded, and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters. 11 The name of the star is called Wormwood; and a**

**third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the waters, because they were made bitter.**

The third angel sounded the third trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven. It was burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and springs of waters. The star had the name Wormwood because it turned a third of the waters bitter to the extent that it killed people.

**12 The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way.**

The fourth angel sounded the fourth trumpet, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck. The result was darkness on the earth for a third of the day, and there was no light during a third of the night (see also Luke 21:25-26). Regardless of whether this will be a supernatural phenomenon, atmospherical in nature, or cosmological, it will be frightening and a major warning shot to those who still remain on the earth (supernatural darkness also happened in Exodus 10:21-23 during the plagues, judgments brought upon Egypt by God Himself). God could have done damage to two-thirds or three-thirds of the earth and the heavens right away, but He was still giving people time to repent, even to the last possible moment before His appearing.

**13 Then I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"**

As if it wasn't bad enough already, an eagle flying through the midst of heaven, as the KJV renders it, cried out a threefold woe upon those who were still alive on the earth. This was indicative of the severe devastation and anguish which was to accompany the remaining blasts of the trumpet which were about to sound.

## Revelation 9

**Then the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him. 2 He opened the bottomless pit, and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit. 3 Then out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth, and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. 4 They were told not to hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. 5 And they were not permitted to kill anyone, but to torment for five months; and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man. 6 And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death flees from them.**

The fifth angel sounded the fifth trumpet, and John saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth. Revelation 1:20 speaks of stars being angelic beings when not being obviously literal stars. A key to the bottomless pit was given to this angel to go and open up the abyss (see Revelation 20:3, Luke 8:31) in which bound demonic forces dwell (2 Peter 2:4, Jude 6). He opened the pit, and smoke came out like from a great furnace, darkening the air and sun. Locusts with the power and sting of scorpions came up out of the pit. These were clearly not typical locusts (v. 7-11) but demonic forces. They were instructed by heaven not to harm any of the green plants and trees as locusts normally would, but their mission was to afflict and hurt people except for those who were sealed of God (Revelation 7:4-8). Thus, it should be clear to those who had ears to hear and eyes to see that this punishment was indeed supernatural and divine and targeted to those who were not sealed by God. These locust/scorpion creatures were appointed to torment mankind for five months with severe stings, but they were not allowed to kill anybody. The severity of the torture and torment would make people want to die, but they wouldn't be able to. As time gets closer to the return of Christ, the punishments get more severe as God mercifully tries to get the attention of people before they must be cast into hell, which has a torment that would make this one pale in comparison.

**7 The appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle; and on their heads appeared to be crowns like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men. 8 They had hair like the hair of women, and their teeth were like the teeth of lions. 9 They had breastplates like breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle. 10 They have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months. 11 They have as king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon.**

This description makes it abundantly clear that these locust-like creatures are really demonic forces. They are marched out of the abyss like horses arrayed for battle with crowns on their head, hair like women, and the teeth of lions. They had breastplates of iron and wings to fly, and their wings sounded like chariots and horses running to battle. They also had tails which is how they stung like scorpions for that five month period of torture for mankind. Abaddon or Apollyon means "destroyer," and it could refer to a high ranking demonic force or to Satan himself. Satan enjoys bringing pain to people, for his

work is to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10). God's purpose is to give life and life to the full, and His hope is that some will repent even in this time of great tribulation.

**12 The first woe is past; behold, two woes are still coming after these things. 13 Then the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, 14 one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." 15 And the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released, so that they would kill a third of mankind. 16 The number of the armies of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. 17 And this is how I saw in the vision the horses and those who sat on them: the riders had breastplates the color of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone; and the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceed fire and smoke and brimstone. 18 A third of mankind was killed by these three plagues, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which proceeded out of their mouths. 19 For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents and have heads, and with them they do harm.**

Still under the umbrella of the seventh seal, John spoke about the sixth angel with the sixth trumpet. The threefold "woe" (v. 13) for the last three trumpet judgments had two yet to go. The first was the scorpion stings from the creatures from the abyss. This passage describes the second woe. A voice came from the golden altar before God and told the sixth angel to release the four angels who were bound at the Euphrates River. These angels had been prepared for this precise time to be released and to kill a third of mankind. These angels were heavenly warriors to carry out God's righteous judgment. The time for mercy to repent for many had expired, and it was time for the end to draw even nearer. The angels had horsemen and armies with a count of two hundred million. This angelic host went forth to kill a third of all living people who remained on the earth. The riders on the horses had breastplates that looked like fire, likely red, orange and brightly colored, representative of the wrath of God. The horses which they rode upon had heads like lions with mouths that had fire, smoke, and brimstone coming out. Like a fire-breathing dragon, except from a horse with a lion's head, these armies killed a third of all mankind with the fire, smoke, and brimstone which proceeded from their mouths. These creatures were as strong as horses from head to tail, and their tails were like snakes with heads with which they will do additional harm. These scenes in the vision which seem like a fictional novel are actually real future events that will happen and bring terror and death upon those who resist God upon the earth (v. 20-21).

**20 The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; 21 and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts.**

Though God was willing to be merciful and to forgive anyone who would repent even this late in the scheme of things, those who survived this plague, the remaining two-thirds of what was left of mankind, did not repent of their evil doing. Instead, they chose to worship demons. Demons had just tormented them for five months prior to this plague, and yet they chose to worship them instead of the God Who

alone could deliver them. Their hearts were so hard and their minds so defiled that they worshipped their very enemies, torturers, and tormentors instead of the One Who could save them. This is how it has been from the beginning with man choosing to worship the created order rather than the Creator Himself (Romans 1:21-25). Mankind of the future will, just like mankind of today and of times past, elect to worship things made with human hands, idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood. Even though these idols will be powerless and unable to hear what the people say to them or walk because they are not alive, still mankind will worship them instead of the one true God Who created the gold, silver, stones, and wood that they are crafted from. Those who survived these initial plagues did not repent of their wicked deeds, and they continued in their wicked ways, including murder, sorcery, and all kinds of immorality and stealing. They loved their sin too much to want to change, refusing to respond in humility before God Whom they were well aware of was behind the judgments (Revelation 6:16-17, 9:4).



## Revelation 10

**I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire; 2 and he had in his hand a little book which was open. He placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land; 3 and he cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars; and when he had cried out, the seven peals of thunder uttered their voices. 4 When the seven peals of thunder had spoken, I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken and do not write them." 5 Then the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to heaven, 6 and swore 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 delay no longer, 7 but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets.**

A first strong angel was seen in Revelation 5:2, and he cried out concerning who would be able to open the scroll with its seven seals. Now all of the seals had been opened, and the judgments had continued to be poured out. Now, John saw a second strong angel coming down out of heaven. He was clothed as with a cloud, there was a rainbow over his head, and he had eyes like fire and feet like pillars of fire. His image portrayed a holy judgment given the fiery eyes and feet, and it also held a reminder of God's promise never to flood the whole world again given the rainbow above his head. The judgment upon the world will come, but it will not be a flood. Just as God was merciful to Noah and his family, God was willing to be merciful to any who would repent and believe the gospel. In the angel's hand was a little book which was open. He put his right foot on the sea, and he put his left foot on the land. That he was standing on both land and sea pointed to the coming judgments having no further delay, both on land and sea. Just as Noah's flood covered the whole world, the judgments would cover all the land and sea. The angel cried out with a loud voice as like a lion, and then seven peals of thunder uttered their voices, perhaps a reference to a directive from the throne of God. A voice from heaven told John not to write down what the seven peals of thunder had said, for some things are meant to be secret in heaven (Deuteronomy 29:29). The angel then lifted up his hand to heaven and swore by the name of the Lord God Who created all the things in the world from the heavens to the earth and to the sea. He said that there will be no delay any longer, for the final and seventh trumpet from the seventh angel was about to sound (Revelation 11:15). When that happens, it will signify that the mystery of God is finished which He preached to His servants the prophets. The mystery of God is a reference to the full gospel plan of God and His promised return to punish the wicked and reward the righteous. This was revealed all the way back in Genesis with God's promise to crush the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15). It was reiterated to Abraham by saying that through his lineage the whole world would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3). Isaiah prophesied concerning the suffering servant, the Messiah, Jesus Christ (Isaiah 53). Paul testified concerning the mystery of the church and how the bride of Christ would also include Gentiles (Romans 11:25, 16:25; 1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 1:9, 3:1-10, 5:32, 6:19; Colossians 1:26-27). As the church "age" came to a close and the tribulation period began, more Jews and Gentiles would be saved even during this horrible time. But at the sound of the seventh angel's blast, the chance for people to repent and believe the gospel would soon expire. Jesus would personally return to judge the world and cast

unbelievers into hell. That time was imminent, for the mystery of lawlessness during the tribulation and led by the antichrist and his false worship (2 Thessalonians 2:7) was about to get its due measure of God's wrath.

**8 Then the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard again speaking with me, and saying, "Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land." 9 So I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book. And he \*said to me, "Take it and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey." 10 I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and in my mouth it was sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter. 11 And they \*said to me, "You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings."**

The voice from heaven (v. 4) spoke again to John and told him to take the open book from the hand of the angel (v. 5), and the angel gave it to him and told him to eat it. It would make his stomach bitter, but in his mouth it would taste sweet like honey. John did so, and it happened just as the angel said. The book represented God's holy standards, His just wrath, and the many counts of iniquity that must be held to the accounts of the wicked. Justice is sweet and good to the one who belongs to God and who longs to see His justice meted out, but it is bitterness and woe to those who receive of His just wrath. Believers rejoice in justice, but it is saddening and sickening to know of the eternal suffering that will befall those who reject Christ. Hell is not something sweet, though it is just, and it should make the stomach upset. John was then told that there was more for him to write down concerning the many peoples of the earth and their final hours on the earth as God's wrath came to a crescendo.

## Revelation 11

**Then there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, "Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it. 2 Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months. 3 And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." 4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. 5 And if anyone wants to harm them, fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies; so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way. 6 These have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.**

John was given a measuring rod like a staff to go and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worshipped in it. He was to leave out the court outside of the temple and not measure it, for it was given to the nations to trample under foot for forty-two months. This second three and a half year period of the final seven year tribulation period is exactly what Daniel had foretold in the Old Testament (Daniel 7:25, 12:7). The antichrist will make a peace treaty with Israel at the beginning of the seven year period (it is his major accomplishment as he is revealed on the world scene). Then, after three and a half years, he will break it. As Daniel 9:27 says, "And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate." God will allow the temple to be trampled underfoot by the antichrist for three and a half years (Revelation 13:5, Hosea 3:4), after which time swift judgment from God Himself will ensue. Daniel 12:11-12 speaks of an additional thirty days and then another forty-five days before the final series of glorious events take place, probably including the first resurrection and the launch of the millennial kingdom. During the time of the great tribulation on the earth, the second three and a half year period, God will appoint two witnesses to prophesy and speak the word of truth to the nations. These two olive trees, God's open hand of reconciliation if only man would repent, were sent as lampstands of His presence to testify to His mercy and to the gospel. If anyone wanted to harm them, fire would flow out of their mouths and devour them. Thus, any who wanted to harm them would be killed in this way. Nothing would stand in the way of God presenting His gospel truth through these two witnesses in a powerful manner and display. In a time of great wrath, the greatest tribulation that Israel will ever face (Jeremiah 30:5-7, Daniel 12:1) and the greatest suffering the people on earth will ever encounter (Matthew 24:21-22), God's mercy was equally great if only people would listen. The two witnesses also had the power to shut up the sky so that it wouldn't rain while they prophesied, and they had the power to turn the waters into blood and strike the earth with plagues whenever they desired. These powers were necessary because they had to take drastic measures in order to get the attention of the people who kept worshipping demons instead of God (Revelation 9:20-21). The people of the earth needed to see the connection between the God Who sends the plagues and the consequences of their own sin. The people would have gladly killed the messengers of the gospel (v. 10), but God wanted His message to go forth for the full 1,260 days. Thus,

He gave them the power to protect themselves and to demonstrate His divine power backing their ministry.

**7 When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them. 8 And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. 9 Those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. 10 And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and celebrate; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.**

At the end of the 1,260 days, the testimony of the witnesses will be complete. An angel from heaven will declare the gospel throughout the world one last time in Revelation 14:6, and then the end will quickly come (Matthew 24:14). The beast that comes out of the abyss (Luke 8:31, Revelation 20:1, 3), the antichrist himself, will be allowed to kill the two witnesses after they complete their testifying. These prophets who had preached against sin for three and a half years to the chagrin of the nations will finally be done away with, likely making many happy and enthralled with the beast (v. 10). Their dead bodies will be allowed to lie in the street of what is in all likelihood Jerusalem given the temple descriptions to start this passage in v. 1 and the fact that Jesus is said to have been crucified there (v. 8). However, the place, Jerusalem, will be better known at that time as a place akin to Egypt or Sodom because of how it will have become overrun by sin and sinners, including the antichrist. People from every tribe, tongue, and nation will see their bodies lying dead for three and a half days. They will not allow them to be laid in a tomb, holding them in contempt rather than giving them the respect of a proper burial (see also Acts 14:19). Those on the earth will rejoice and celebrate, even giving gifts to each other, because they will not have to listen to God's Word being preached any longer from these two prophets of God. Hearing God's Word throughout the world in the last days will be a torment for sinners just as it often is now (2 Corinthians 2:16).

**11 But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were watching them. 12 And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." Then they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them. 13 And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.**

After three and a half days of their bodies lying in the streets, God brought them back to life. They stood up and caused great fear to fall upon those watching. A voice came from heaven summoning them to come up to heaven, and they ascended into heaven in a cloud as their enemies watched. In that same hour, there was a great earthquake which caused a tenth of the city to fall and killed seven thousand people. The rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. Finally, some people glorified God, but it took literally resurrecting two prophets of God, pulling them up to heaven, and sending a killer earthquake to do it. God's Word doesn't go forth void, but it accomplishes what it sets out to do (Isaiah 55:11). Those who had ears to hear finally heard. Likely some Jews finally believed

also, adding to those who had already been sealed (Revelation 7:4-8). This was further fulfillment of the prophecy concerning Israel finally turning to God with a heart for Him in the last days (Zechariah 12:10, 13:1). Unfortunately, they still had the remainder of the tribulation period to deal with before they could enjoy paradise in heaven.

**14 The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly. 15 Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying,**

**“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.”**

All part of the seventh seal, the three woes were the three final trumpet judgments. The first woe was the locusts with the scorpion stings, the second was the angelic army of two million sent to kill a third of mankind, and the third woe was what followed with the sounding of the seventh trumpet by the seventh angel. Seven bowl judgments will come shortly to conclude the woes and trumpets (Revelation 15-16), but John is first given a glimpse into the joy in heaven over the fact that the day of justice and righting wrongs is about to arrive. After the trumpet sounded, there were loud voices in heaven declaring the fulfillment of the Lord's Prayer that God's will would be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10). The eternal kingdom of God, beginning with His thousand year reign on earth, was just around the corner (Revelation 20:4-6). The kingdom of the world which God allowed to be run by the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2) for a time was going to be reclaimed by the King of Kings (Revelation 20:7-10). His reign will be eternal.

**16 And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, 17 saying, “We give You thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign. 18 And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth.” 19 And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple, and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm.**

The twenty-four elders (see notes on Revelation 4:9-10, 5:8-10) fell on their faces before God to worship Him, and they thanked Him, their eternal God and Mighty King. They recognized that it was time for Him to take His eternal power that was always His and to now set up His eternal reign once and for all. The nations were enraged at God and at war with one another and against God's people, and His wrath came in the great tribulation. Thus, once the judgments are complete on the earth and the three and a half years are finished, marked by Christ's personal return, the millennial kingdom and the eternal age will be ushered in. The dead will be judged with the wicked going to hell, and those wicked who sought to destroy will be destroyed (Revelation 21:8). The righteous, on the other hand, will enjoy eternal life to reign with Christ (Revelation 19, 20). God's servants, His saints who love and fear His name and who have suffered accordingly, both small and great (for earthly status has no bearing on salvation), will be rewarded accordingly. Believers will have the chance to rejoice in God's justice, in Him finally taking

back rule over the earth, and in the fact that they will be rewarded eternally for their faithfulness (1 Corinthians 3:10-15, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Hebrews 11:6, Colossians 3:24). 2 John 1:8 says, "Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward." Believers cannot lose their salvation because Christ will see to it that they overcome by faith. Even when they are faithless, He is still faithful (2 Timothy 2:13). Of course, they are still responsible for exercising their will and making God-honoring decisions by faith (Philippians 2:12-13), and, to the extent that they do so in their lives on earth, they will be rewarded in heaven. That which was done selfishly or by the flesh and not by the Spirit or by faith will be burned up and worth nothing in heaven (1 Corinthians 3:10-15). But that which is done faithfully and as a stewardship before Jesus of the gifts, talents, and opportunities that He gives (Ephesians 2:10, Matthew 25:14-30) will be rewarded. The objective for believers is to get a "full reward" and to bear much fruit (John 15:8). John then caught a glimpse of the temple of God in heaven, and the ark of the covenant appeared in the temple. God never breaks His covenant with His people, and He will preserve a remnant of faithful Jews and establish an eternal kingdom with all who have been blessed through them, including those who were blessed by faith in Christ (Romans 11:25). The ark of the covenant represented God's presence, and the presence of God in heaven will be everywhere and near. Lightning, thunder, an earthquake, and a hailstorm accompanied this vision, all pointing to divine power, authority, dominion, and imminent judgment for the wicked.

## Revelation 12

**A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; 2 and she was with child; and she \*cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth.**

The account of this sign in heaven that John sees sets the background for everything that is about to culminate with the final judgments of God. He saw a woman clothed with the sun (perhaps picturing God's love and blessing for His chosen nation). The moon was under her feet (perhaps depicting the future honor and exaltation of the nation), and on her head was a crown of twelve stars, clearly representing the twelve tribes of Israel. She was with child, and she cried out, being in labor and pain to give birth. The woman represents the Jewish people through whom the entire world would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3) on account of Jesus being born (see v. 5). God loves His chosen nation (Deuteronomy 10:15), and He always will (Ezekiel 16). Sadly, many refused to believe in Him, but some have and some will.

**3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems. 4 And his tail \*swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.**

Another sign appeared in heaven. There was a great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns. Revelation 17:9-12 says, "Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits, and they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while. The beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction. The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour." Thus, Scripture explains the meaning of the great red dragon and his seven heads and ten horns. The seven heads represent historical world powers (thus, the crowns on the heads) of which the dragon, that is, the antichrist is the seventh (and the eighth in the sense that he fakes his own resurrection). The ten horns are ten kings who are given authority with the beast for a short time during his brief world rule (see also Revelation 13:1). The antichrist will rise out of the region of the old Roman empire, and he will subdue three kings (Daniel 7:24). Daniel 7:25 says of the antichrist, "He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time." That the dragon casts a third of the stars in John's vision to earth most likely refers to the angels which fell from heaven with Satan during his rebellion from God (see v. 7-9, Ezekiel 28:11-19, and Isaiah 14:12-14). The dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, for he wanted to devour the child. Jesus (see v. 5) was protected from Herod's plan to kill all the male children under two years of age and younger because of the angel's revelation to Joseph to flee (Matthew 2:13-15).

**5 And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne. 6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she**

**\*had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.**

The woman gave birth to a Son (Micah 5:3), and Jesus will one day rule all the nations with a rod of iron (Revelation 2:27, 19:15). The antichrist who thinks he is powerful, coming from the region of the old Roman empire which is represented in Daniel as iron (Daniel 2:40-43, 7:23), will be crushed by the One who rules with a rod of iron. Jesus' rule will not be cruel but sure. Satan's imitation rule will be short-lived, and it will fail. Jesus obeyed God and died for sin and rose again so that He would be given the name above all names and all authority. He ascended into heaven until the time when He would return to judge the world, which is imminent in this unfolding of the Book of Revelation. The woman, that is, the nation of Israel, is seen in John's vision as fleeing into the wilderness where God will have a place to protect her for the 1,260 days of the tribulation period. This second three and a half year period was predicted by Jesus as being a time when those still in Jerusalem would need to flee to the mountains if they hoped to survive (see also verses 13-17). Matthew 24:15-16 says, "Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.)" This may have also been foretold in Isaiah 26:20 which says, "Come, my people, enter into your rooms And close your doors behind you; Hide for a little while Until indignation runs its course." Though many countries will fall before the antichrist, Edom, Moab, and Ammon will be spared (Daniel 11:41). It may be that this is where many Jews will hide out during the great tribulation (see also Jeremiah 31:2, Matthew 24:15, and Zechariah 14:2). During the great tribulation, many Jews are killed or sold into slavery (Joel 3:3, Revelation 18:13). However, a remnant will be saved spiritually (Revelation 7:4-8, 11:13), and a remnant will be saved physically which will also turn back to God spiritually (Zechariah 14:1-5, Jeremiah 30:7).

**7 And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, 8 and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.**

John saw war in heaven, Michael the archangel (Jude 1:9) and his angels fighting against the dragon, Satan. The dragon and his fallen angels, the demons, fought back, but they were not strong enough. They were cast out of heaven. This points to the account of Isaiah 14:12-14 in which Satan is cast out of heaven for wanting to take God's place and be like the Most High. Satan, the serpent of old from Genesis 3, was cast out of heaven and allowed to deceive the whole world, just as he did Eve who took Adam along with her in sin (2 Corinthians 11:3, 1 Timothy 2:14). Satan was cast out of heaven with his demons down to earth where he was allowed to rule as prince of the power of the air for human history up until Christ returns (Ephesians 2:2). During this period in which Christ advances His kingdom in the hearts of men, the devil opposes the saints (1 Peter 5:8) and increasingly deceives those on the earth (2 Timothy 3:13). During Satan's final seven years roaming the earth before he is cast into the pit for a thousand years, he deceives the masses to an even greater extent because he knows his time is short (v. 12). 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12 says, "Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; that is, the one whose



coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness." The antichrist will use signs, wonders, and intrigue to get the attention of the world, and they will bow to him in fear and submission (Revelation 13:12-15, Daniel 8:23). He, as well as his false prophet, Satan, the demons, and those who worship him, will be cast into the lake of fire in the end (Revelation 19:20-21, 20:7-15).

**10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "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. 11 And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death. 12 For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time."**

Even way back when Satan was cast out of heaven, God demonstrated Himself to be God alone and all-powerful. But that didn't mean that Satan would stop fighting and opposing God and His children. He even accuses believers by trying to convince God that they are not worth allowing into heaven and by trying to convince believers that God won't forgive them on earth if they repent. He doesn't bring the good news of the gospel, but he reinforces a hopeless life and a doomed eternity of condemnation. Sometimes he tricks people into damnation by lying to them about their "righteousness," while other times he tries to convince them that even Christ could not make them righteous. But Jesus intercedes for believers, for it is His blood which makes them acceptable in God's sight. As Romans 8:33-34 says, "Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us." And Hebrews 7:25 says, "Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." It is by Jesus' shed blood that the ransom has been paid and that believers have an entryway into the presence of God. Those who repent of their sin and put their faith in Christ to save them will find that they are saved forever and kept by Jesus because of His ministry of intercession. No accusation against the body of Christ will stand because Jesus paid it all. It is because of the perfect Lamb's sacrifice to which believers testify by their words and deeds that they overcome (Romans 10:9-10, Matthew 7:20). Overcoming is not something that any person can do apart from Christ, but it is something that Jesus will do in and through those who are humble, contrite over sin, and who tremble before His Word (Isaiah 66:2). These whom Jesus saves will endure to the end, even if they stumble to the finish line, because Jesus makes intercession for them. He is their boast and their righteousness before a holy God. As Christ's return nears, a loud voice in heaven exalts over the fact that He will win because He already has won. He won when Satan was cast out of heaven, and He won on the cross by dying for sin and rising from the dead. Even though Satan will make war against believers on the earth, particularly during the reign of the antichrist, believers have the last laugh because Jesus has already won the war. Satan even knows that

his time is short and that he will lose. Thus, his wrath is great as he tries to take down and deceive as many as possible before his time is expired. There is no mystery as to whether it is Satan or God Who is sovereign, and believers can have great hope in that reality. It should cause them to rejoice because the weight of glory is so worth even paying the ultimate price of martyrdom on earth.

**13 And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child. 14 But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she \*was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. 15 And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood. 16 But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth. 17 So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.**

Satan understands that he has lost the war with Jesus being born, dying for sin, and rising from the dead, but that doesn't mean that he won't use his hatred against God to persecute the saints and the Jews, God's chosen nation. He has done this throughout history, and he will do it severely in the tribulation period, even treading the city of Jerusalem underfoot, ending sacrifices, defiling the temple, and even setting himself up as god (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4, Daniel 12:11, Matthew 24:15). This must happen until the power of the holy people, Israel, is shattered (Daniel 12:7). However, a remnant will be saved until the end (Zechariah 12, 14:1-5), even to the end of the three and a half years of the great tribulation (Daniel 7:25; 12:7, 11-12). God will protect a remnant in the wilderness (see notes on verses 5-6) during the great tribulation. Verses 15-16 point out that Satan will somehow make an aggressive attack on the Jews to wipe them out, but it will fail. Perhaps this refers to a flood of armies being brought against them only to have the earth open up during a quake of some kind to block them from reaching their objective (see Zechariah 14:5). He will recognize that he has been stymied by God, and he will in great wrath go after any tribulation saint anywhere he can find one. This comes across as a sort of desperation attempt on the part of the devil as his time runs out and the battle is about to be lost. His acts of desperation will be short-lived as Jesus will slaughter him and the armies of the earth (2 Thessalonians 2:8, Revelation 19:11-21).

## Revelation 13

**And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names. 2 And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority.**

John's vision of the dragon continued. The dragon stood on the sand of the seashore and watched a beast come up out of the sea. This beast is clearly a reference to the antichrist (see also Revelation 12:3-4) who Satan raises up and empowers to do his bidding in the final days before they are both defeated. The seven heads represent historical world powers of which the antichrist is the seventh (and the eighth in the sense that he fakes his own resurrection) (Revelation 17:9-11). The ten horns are ten kings who are given authority with the beast for a short time during his brief world rule (Revelation 17:12-13). On the ten horns are ten crowns, signifying that they will enjoy world dominion for a short time (v. 7-8). On his seven heads were blasphemous names, for the antichrist will set himself up as god and desire worship for himself (Daniel 11:37 and Revelation 13:7-8). The beast looked like a leopard but with the feet of a bear and the mouth of a lion. These are three imposing animals, signifying speed, strength, and power, and the antichrist is one who will love war (Daniel 11:38). He will, like a leopard, advance quickly through nations conquering with ease given his military power like a mighty bear or lion (Daniel 11:40-43). His strength and power is Satanic, given to him by the devil himself. He is raised up by the devil for the express purpose of leading many astray and persecuting the people of God (2 Thessalonians 2:8-12). Satan knows his time is short (Revelation 12:12), and he will be as aggressive as possible to oppose God and His people (v. 7). However, while he may try to boast like a lion, he is not the Lion of Judah Who will slay him.

**3 I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast; 4 they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?" 5 There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him. 6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven.**

One of the ways that the beast/antichrist will ascend into world power will be through an apparent resurrection, a cheap imitation of Christ's genuine resurrection (Daniel 8:23, 11:21). Only Jesus has authority over death and hades (Deuteronomy 32:39); Satan does not have this authority (Revelation 6:8, 20:14). But he is an expert deceiver, and the beast's apparent rising from the dead will be convincing to the masses. This "miracle" will make people worship the beast and Satan himself (c.f. John 4:48) because they will believe that he has power over even death. The whole earth will be amazed and follow after the beast and the signs and wonders that accompany him (2 Thessalonians 2:9, Matthew 24:24, Mark 13:22, Revelation 13:13). They will believe that he is the one to be feared because of his satanic power, and they will fall in line with him (v. 8). In worshipping the beast, they will be worshipping Satan himself. Satan always wanted to receive worship like the Most High (Isaiah

14:14), and this will be the closest that he will get. Unfortunately for him, he is not the most high, and he will pay for his rebellion. The antichrist will speak great blasphemies against God and act arrogantly as if he is god and deserving of worship (Daniel 11:37, Revelation 13:8). He will be a corrupt con-artist, the most powerful political entity on the planet (v. 8), and the creator of a robust economy (Revelation 18:11-20) whereby many will get rich. However, it should be noted that this will not be real happy and peaceful for everybody because there will be a slave trade and human trafficking (Revelation 18:13). This means that in antichrist's "peace" during the first three and a half years of the tribulation, life won't be wonderful for most. He is a cruel person who enjoys oppression, cruelty, and rule by force. He will not care for the desire of women, implying that he will likely show no tenderness or gentleness toward females or to children (Daniel 11:37). Being a man of war who enjoys power and battle, it makes sense that he will hold the weak in derision. But this isn't the worst of it. Though it likely won't happen until the second three and a half year period, Jewish children will be traded in his economy, a boy for a prostitute and a girl for alcohol (Joel 3:3). But for the first three and a half years, the antichrist will fake peace with Israel, and the world will likely laud him as a great hero for his middle east peace treaty. As Daniel 9:27 says, "And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate." Yet war is in his blood (Daniel 11:38), and after three and a half years, his true nature will be fully revealed. He will persecute God's people severely to an extent that they have never suffered before (Daniel 12:1), and that is significant because of how much travail the Jews have already had historically. Having broken his peace treaty with them, he will trample the holy city underfoot, put an end to sacrifices, defile the temple, set himself up as god, and try to kill as many Jews as he can. He will also persecute and kill the saints of Christ. He will be a terror of war and hate for this period of time during which God also rains down plague after horrific plague on the earth. People will have to decide who is really more fearful, God or the beast. The two witnesses of God will also be testifying to the world concerning God and the gospel at this time, but they will be hated (Revelation 11:3). The hardness of heart of mankind will be evident and on full display during this three and a half year period. The antichrist will aggressively mock and blaspheme heaven during this time, and the wrath and vengeance of God won't tarry very long (Revelation 19:11-21).

**7 It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. 8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. 9 If anyone has an ear, let him hear. 10 If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints.**

God will allow the antichrist to severely persecute and kill Jews and tribulation saints, but their blood will be avenged. The antichrist becomes head of the most powerful empire on the planet, and all people will be under his rule. All people on the earth from every tribe, tongue, and nation will worship him (interestingly, this is a weak and perverted attempt to counterfeit the worship of God in heaven portrayed in Revelation 4 and 5 by people of all nations, tribes, and tongues), except for those who have

insight and faith to believe in the true Sovereign of the world (Daniel 12:10). Those who come to faith during the tribulation period have their names in the Book of Life like all the saints who have come before them. These will see the deception for what it is and not bow before the beast or take his mark (Matthew 24:24, Revelation 19:20, 20:4). The devil is powerful enough to deceive the entire world into worshipping himself through the proxy of the antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:8-12), but God's Word has given a warning not to fall for this. People need to know the Bible so that they will not be fooled and doomed to an eternity in hell. Those who come to faith during the tribulation period need to recognize that they will likely end up as captives or dead (Revelation 20:4). If they choose to fight with the sword, they will lose and die by it. Overcoming and the perseverance of the saints is not a matter of military might or earthly prosperity during this time, but it is a matter of holding to faith and worshipping Christ no matter what. There will be grave consequences for those who refuse to bow before the beast, but those who overcome in Christ will stand firm, knowing that He will reward them in short order. That said, this should be a great incentive not to wait to believe until after the tribulation period has begun. There is an urgency to gospel proclamation and a warning concerning God's wrath that accompanies evangelism. Those who have ears to hear need to hear now so that they don't wait until this horrific time on earth to believe should it come during their lifetimes.

**11 Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon. 12 He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed. 13 He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. 14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who \*had the wound of the sword and has come to life. 15 And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed. 16 And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, 17 and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name. 18 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.**

Satan, the antichrist, and his false prophet make up this false and unholy trinity. The second beast is the antichrist's false prophet. He speaks like a dragon because he speaks for the devil. He has the same authority that the antichrist himself has, for they are both backed by satanic power. The two horns could emphasize his dual persona as a spokesman for the antichrist and servant of the devil. It could also relate to his two primary responsibilities, the first of which is to deceive the earth by making people worship the antichrist. The second is to perform great signs by even making fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of mankind. It is not coming from the dwelling place of God, but it is likely from the spiritual realm. It is meant to be intimidating and coercive, demonstrating that noncompliance will not be tolerated. It is a rule by fear rather than of love and grace and open invitation. This is but one way where the false prophet is far different from Jesus, the true Lamb of God

and speaker of truth. The false prophet will tell those on earth to make an idol consecrated to the antichrist on account of his apparent death and resurrection. He will make the idol of the image of the antichrist able to breathe and speak and tell people to bow down and worship the antichrist. Those who do not worship before it will be killed. The false prophet will make sure that people everywhere, whether rich or poor or slave or free, are given a mark signifying that they have committed themselves to the service and worship of the antichrist. The mark will be on their right hand or forehead so that it is easily visible, accessible, and obvious to all where their allegiance lies. All things that Satan does are cheap counterfeits of God's good and perfect ways, plans, and deeds. Even the mark (whether high-tech, supernatural, or low-tech as per Leviticus 19:28 is not given) is a cheap imitation version of the sealing that God has done to those who are His own (see Revelation 14:1 and notes on Revelation 7:4-8). The mark will be required in order to buy or sell under the antichrist's world rule. The entire economic order of the world will be bound up in a false religion of emperor worship. Thus, without the mark no one can conduct business or even buy food to eat. Either the antichrist's name or number will be necessary in order to function in his economy, and his number is 666, which points to that of a man, that which is incomplete, insufficient, and short of the glory and holiness of God. God uses the number 7 to reveal Himself and His nature, from the seven golden lamps in the temple and in heaven (Numbers 8:2, Zechariah 4:2, Revelation 4:5) to the seven spirits of God (Revelation 1:4, 3:1, 4:5) to the seven days of creation (Genesis 1). It is a number of perfection, completeness, holiness, and true deity. The Holy Trinity is holy, holy, holy (Isaiah 6:3, Revelation 4:8), a true seven, seven, seven as opposed to the unholy trinity, a six, six, six. Those who are wise will not take the name or the number of the beast, and they will instead recognize Jesus as Lord even though it will almost certainly cost them their lives (v. 10). The beast's economy will be so corrupt that even children will be used as currency to buy prostitution and alcohol (Joel 3:3). This is but one example of how and why the beast's number is that of a man, for he even uses people as commodities and currency. Those who are foolish enough to take the mark will drink the coming wrath of God in full strength (Revelation 14:9-10) including suffering the plague of seeing the mark turn into a malignant sore (Revelation 16:2) as well as being cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 19:20).

## Revelation 14

**Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. 2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps. 3 And they \*sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth. 4 These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb. 5 And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless.**

Mount Zion is a name for Jerusalem (Psalm 2:6) where Jesus will return and save a remnant of Israel (Isaiah 37:32) and set up His earthly reign (Isaiah 24:23, Isaiah 31:4). In the vision, John saw Jesus on Mount Zion with the 144,000 Jews which He had sealed as His own in Revelation 7:4-8. His name and that of the Father, not that of the antichrist, was on their foreheads. There was a voice from heaven that at once sounded like many waters, loud thunder, and the music of a harp. The 144,000 sang a new song before the throne of God and in the presence of the twenty-four elders and living creatures. It was a song distinct to them that only they were permitted to learn and sing. They belonged to Jesus, and they were pure because they were washed in His blood. It is not that they lived perfect lives on the earth, but it is that they will be the firstfruits of those the Jews who come to faith during the tribulation period. In contrast to the rampant prostitution that will go on during the tribulation period (Joel 3:3), these who belong to God will be sexually pure in God's sight. They will follow Jesus wherever He goes and speak only the truth. That they are viewed as blameless in Christ's eyes is related not to their human perfection but to His perfection. Their righteousness is His righteousness. As 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." In heaven, believers will no longer have to deal with sin (Romans 8:30, 2 Thessalonians 1:10, Revelation 22:14), and that the 144,000 are pictured with Christ on Mount Zion shows that they are already enjoying the benefits of being in the presence of God forever. Having been redeemed and glorified, it is only natural to sing praises to God on account of being purchased with His blood and set free from the lusts of the human flesh that wages war against the spirit (Galatians 5:16-17).

**6 And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; 7 and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters."**

John saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven with a gospel to preach to those on the earth. God sent this angel to give man yet another opportunity to repent before the final decimation of the peoples and the coming judgment. Every tongue, tribe, nation, and people would have the opportunity to hear and understand if only they would have ears to hear. The admonition from the angel was that people would fear God and give Him glory. The hour of judgment had come, and the true God is jealous for

worship. God made all things, not the antichrist. God is eternal, whereas the antichrist had a beginning and will have an end. Perhaps there were some waiting their turn to bow before the beast, and the angel's clear declaration of the gospel could change their mind. God always makes sure that people have the opportunity to hear the truth and to choose for themselves their destiny.

**8 And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality."**

Another angel warned that the evil world system was about to come to its end. There always has been sin which is at work in the world, for Satan is at work in the world. Babylon, the evil empire of ancient times, is symbolic of the evil world system that exists even today and which will be formalized into a political and economic union under the antichrist. Revelation describes this new world empire as a new Babylon because of its iniquity, brutality, and immorality (Revelation 17, 18). The new Babylon will be short-lived and quickly come to an end. Many have gotten drunk on the sin which the world cheers and pushes, and it will be the same in the last days, except more severe. The world system is temporary because Satan's work on the earth will be brought to a sudden end with Christ's return and His conquering of the armies of the earth (Revelation 19).

**9 Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, 10 he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will 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 goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name." 12 Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.**

Yet another angel, a third one, gave another warning to the people on the earth at the time of the antichrist not to take the mark of the beast. Falling in line with Satan and worshipping him is not compatible with belonging to Jesus. No one can serve two masters (Matthew 6:24, Luke 16:13), and taking the mark implies devotion and allegiance to the antichrist. Those who do so will have a stiff eternal penalty to pay, for they will store up God's wrath for themselves. They will be cast into the lake of fire along with the antichrist and the false prophet whom they worshipped (Revelation 19:20). God is Lord over hell, for judgment is given to Him. This is why Jesus told people to fear Him Who has authority to cast into hell (Luke 12:5). Satan doesn't rule hell and torment people with a pitchfork; rather, those whose names are not in the Lamb's book of life will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and of Jesus Himself. The dead who rejected Christ do not just die and get annihilated, but they are tormented for ever and ever. This is why even after the thousand year reign of Christ, the devil is cast into the lake of fire along with the beast and false prophet who have been suffering there already for a thousand years (Revelation 19:20, 20:10). Hell is not just permanent death, but it is permanent torment. This is why Jesus warns that in hell there is great weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 8:12, 13:42, 13:50, 22:13, 24:51, 25:30; Luke 13:28). This judgment is just, for God paid a way of escape through the shed blood of Christ. Even to the very end, God sends a gospel declaration to the world, but still people reject Him. Hell is a just answer to wicked people, and it is a vindication



and avenging for the righteous who suffered at the hands of the wicked. God has a cup of anger mixed full strength, and His wrath will be poured out against the wicked and unbelieving. The smoke of their torment goes up day and night forever and ever with no end, and they have no rest. The righteous inherit life and joy forever, but the wicked will suffer forever. This is horrific and terrifying, and it should be. This is why Jesus keeps saying that those with ears to hear need to hear. He doesn't want this to come upon any person, but He will not force them to believe. Hell is for the wicked from all times, not just those who take the mark of the beast. Not worshipping God is worshipping the devil, and God's wrath will be poured out on those who serve Satan rather than God.

**13 And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them."**

It is likely that there would be some who would believe the gospel declared by the angel because some would die in the Lord from this point forward. John was told to write about how they would be blessed, for in death on earth they would find life in heaven and rest from all of their strife and striving against sin and the devil's minions. God would remember their faith and their faithful deeds and reward them accordingly. Heavenly rewards and the joy of Jesus will make any earthly suffering for the sake of Christ more than worth it.

**14 Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. 15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe." 16 Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped.**

John then saw Jesus sitting on a white cloud with a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. An angel came out from the temple of the Lord in heaven announcing that it was time for Jesus to use His sickle to reap. The angel's words reflected the prayers of the tribulation saints who had been calling for Christ to come soon and avenge their blood (Revelation 6:9-11). Christ always hears the prayers of those who abide in Him, and He swung His sickle over the earth and reaped a harvest of wicked souls. It is important to understand that this is not the rapture of the righteous or the resurrection of those dead in Christ. This harvesting of the wicked is foretold by Christ in the gospels. Matthew 13:40-43 says, "So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear." And Matthew 13:49-50 says, "So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Luke 17:28-37 also describes how, as in the days just before the destruction of the world in Noah's day and of Sodom and Gomorrah in Lot's day, people will be doing everyday activities like grinding at a mill. But then one will be taken and the other left. The disciples asked where they are taken to, and Jesus told

them that it is to a place where the vultures gather, a place of death. Just as the plagues have been sequential and some have died in each one, some of the wicked will be harvested for the coming judgment by the reaping angels in this time. The rest who remain who are also wicked will encounter the remaining horrific bowl judgments (Revelation 15-16).

**17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle. 18 Then another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe." 19 So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. 20 And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.**

More harvesting was needed still. Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle. Another angel who has power over fire came out from the altar in heaven and told the one with the sickle to gather from the earth because it was time. The wicked were put into the wine press of God's wrath. So many were killed on earth in this heavenly action that there was blood up to the height of a horse's bridle for a distance of two hundred miles. That this happened outside of Jerusalem and in a place where blood could pool points to it likely being the same time when Jesus will destroy the armies of the earth on the plain of Armageddon (Revelation 16:16). A similar event will happen at the end of the millennial age when Satan is released to deceive the world one final time. Armies of the world will march on Jesus' Jerusalem, and they will be destroyed with fire from heaven (Ezekiel 38-39). But given the timeline of the Book of Revelation, it is more likely that this particular event is the second coming of Christ to battle outside of Jerusalem as explained in Revelation 19. Revelation 19:15 is particularly telling when it says, "From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty." The winepress of 14:20 is carried out in 19:15, a massive bloodbath of the wicked armies of the world.

## **Revelation 15**

**Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished.**

Already during the great tribulation, there was tribulation on the earth with the breaking of the seven seals and the seven trumpet judgments which accompanied the breaking of the seventh seal. Now, however, John saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels with seven plagues. These were the last because in them the wrath of God was finished in terms of His wrath being poured out upon the earth. There would still be eternal wrath, but this was the last of that which would be poured out upon the earth before He would personally return and establish His kingdom.

**2 And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God. 3 And they \*sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,**

**“Great and marvelous are Your works,**

**O Lord God, the Almighty;**

**Righteous and true are Your ways,**

**King of the nations!**

**4 “Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name?**

**For You alone are holy;**

**For all the nations will come and worship before You,**

**For Your righteous acts have been revealed.”**

In heaven, John saw a sea of glass mixed with fire (see notes on Revelation 4:6) in the presence of God in heaven. The scene is the very throne of God, and those who resisted the mark of the beast on earth and refused to worship him or his idol are seen with God in heaven worshipping the Lamb. Though they suffered great persecution and martyrdom on earth, Scripture describes them as those who had been victorious over the antichrist and his image and number. True success is not who has the most power or strength on earth, but it is defined by faithfulness to the Lamb and by testifying to His glory even if it means death on earth. As Revelation 12:11 says, “And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.” The tribulation believers were proved victorious in the end because in Christ they are more than conquerors. That God wins is the story of Scripture, Satan loses, and believers reign with Christ forever. After the Israelites were delivered by God through their miraculous passage through the Red Sea during which the Egyptian army was destroyed, Moses and the Israelites sang a song of praise to God in Exodus 15:1-20. The song that the believers pictured in heaven sing here in Revelation 15 echoes the themes of the song in Exodus 15. For example, in Exodus 15:6, 11, the Israelites sing, “Your right

hand, O Lord, is majestic in power, Your right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy. Who is like You among the gods, O Lord? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?" These themes of God's power, glory, majesty, and marvelous works of deliverance are repeated in Revelation 15:3. God's ways are true and righteous, and He will make sure that justice is served in the end. Exodus 15:17-18 says, "You will bring them and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, The place, O Lord, which You have made for Your dwelling, The sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established. The Lord shall reign forever and ever" (see also Deuteronomy 32:43). God promised to ultimately plant the Jewish nation on Mount Zion where He would personally dwell and rule as King of the nations during the millennial age. This is precisely what the believers are seen in heaven in Revelation 15:4 singing about. People from nations throughout the world will come to Jerusalem during the millennial kingdom to worship (Isaiah 11:10, 19:18-25, 66:18-20). That which the Israelites sang thousands of years ago was being fulfilled in John's vision, and it will come to pass. God alone is holy, and this is the rallying cry and joyful boast of those who have put their faith in Him. He will prove Himself righteous and just in His final judgments and when He rules the world as King in the kingdom to come. That Jesus will reign and His servants with Him is the main theme of the song of the Lamb in Revelation 5:9-10, 12-23. Jesus is worthy to be the Judge and the coming King because He was slain and purchased people from every, tribe, tongue, and nation. He is worthy and deserving of eternal blessing, glory, honor, power, and dominion.

**5 After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened, 6 and the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, clothed in linen, clean and bright, and girded around their chests with golden sashes. 7 Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever. 8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.**

The seven angels came out of the temple in heaven, and one of the four living creatures gave them seven golden bowls filled with God's wrath to be poured out upon the earth. That the bowls were golden and that the angels were clothed in white linen with golden sashes speaks to the fact that God is eternal, powerful, and holy in distributing His just wrath upon the wicked on the earth. The seven plagues or bowl judgments are deliberate, planned, and executed after the gospel has gone forth many times and in many ways. There is a sense of finality and seriousness about what is about to happen. The temple was filled with smoke from the glory and power of the eternal God. No one could enter the temple in heaven until the judgments were passed. This also highlights how God is glorified in putting an end to sin, in punishing wickedness, and in establishing His kingdom with His righteous ones (Daniel 9:24). It is a somber occasion that will lead to a glorious future for God's people shortly thereafter.

## Revelation 16

**Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."**

A loud voice from the temple told the angels to begin the bowl judgments and to pour God's wrath out upon the earth. These judgments were so severe that, if they had not been cut short, nobody would have survived (Matthew 24:22). But God cut them short on account of the elect (Matthew 24:22), for some did turn to Christ and were still alive. They were not the target of God's wrath, and God wanted them to receive the kingdom as soon as possible.

**2 So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth; and it became a loathsome and malignant sore on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image.**

The first bowl judgment was to give those who had taken the mark of the beast and who had worshipped his image a loathsome and malignant sore. This sore could be similar to the boils that afflicted the Egyptians during the plagues (Exodus 9:9-11) and to the sores which Job was afflicted with (Job 2:7). The beggar Lazarus also had open sores which the dogs were licking (Luke 16:21). These sores would have been extremely hideous, gross, painful, oozy, and foul. It is possible that the sore erupted precisely where the mark had been placed as a direct sign from God that He was taking His just revenge.

**3 The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood like that of a dead man; and every living thing in the sea died.**

The second angel poured out his bowl judgment into the sea, and it turned to blood. Every living thing in the sea died, whether person or creature. That amount of death and blood is unimaginable and far worse than what Egypt suffered when the Nile was turned to blood (Exodus 7:20-25). This plague took place over the seas of the entire earth, and the stench and devastation would have been felt everywhere. Earlier, God only targeted one third of the water by turning it into blood (Revelation 8:8-9), but now that His wrath upon the earth was in its final stage, all of the seas were turned to blood and made undrinkable and unsurvivable. Things were coming to an end, and the earth would have to be recreated (Isaiah 65:17, 66:22; 2 Peter 3:10, 13; Revelation 21:1).

**4 Then the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood. 5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying, "Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things; 6 for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it." 7 And I heard the altar saying, "Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments."**

The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and springs of waters, and they became blood. Reserves of drinking water were thus removed, and death by thirst became very real. The angel of the waters praised God for being eternal and the only Holy One. He praised God for being just in all things including this bowl judgment because those who suffered during it deserved it, having poured out the blood of the saints and prophets of God. A voice came from the altar in heaven confirming the reality of

God's justice saying that this plague, like all the other judgments, was true and righteous. The world regards sin and the mocking of God and the persecution of His people as a light matter or even a sport (Proverbs 10:23), but God will pay them back for their deeds. The coming tribulation will happen as will the casting of the wicked into the lake of fire because these judgments are true and righteous.

**8 The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. 9 Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory.**

The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it made the earth extremely hot such that the people on the earth were scorched with fierce heat. Yet people didn't turn to God and beg for mercy. Interestingly, they were well aware of Who it was who was bringing the plagues. They didn't have their deities confused or suppose that the antichrist was doing all of this. They knew that it was the God of the Bible, and still they chose to retain their allegiance to the beast. None of them could claim ignorance, for they all were blatantly guilty before God for rejecting the revelation of the gospel that they had all heard from the two witnesses (Revelation 11:3) and directly from the angel who spoke from heaven (Revelation 14:6-7). Foolishly and arrogantly, they mocked and rejected the only One Who could stop the plagues and save them (see also Isaiah 8:21). They refused to acknowledge Him and submit to Him, choosing rather to endure great pain and even death. Sometimes people think that an eternity in hell is not fair, but if these plagues were not enough to make people repent, hell is likely not going to sway their minds either. They will have an eternity to blaspheme God, and they will be punished forever for doing so.

**10 Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, 11 and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.**

The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom which was throughout the earth was darkened. This was foretold in Isaiah 60:2 which says, "For behold, darkness will cover the earth And deep darkness the peoples; But the Lord will rise upon you And His glory will appear upon you" (see also Amos 5:18-20, Mark 13:24-25). This is reminiscent of the plague of darkness that happened in Pharaoh's kingdom, a darkness so severe that it could be felt (Exodus 10:21-23), but this time the darkness will extend throughout the whole domain of the antichrist. The God of heaven Who put the plague into place could save the people who were suffering greatly if only they would change their ways, but they would not. Even though the pain that they were in was so great and only made worse by the darkness which made their predicament seem even more inescapable and frightful, they would not worship the God of heaven. They would rather chew on their own tongues in agony and thirst than be saved by a God Whom they hated.

**12 The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east. 13 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 like frogs; 14 for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings**

**of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. 15 (“Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.”) 16 And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon.**

The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the Euphrates River and dried it up. This was a judgment on the antichrist and his kingdom because it paved a way for the kings from the east to come and rebel against God (Micah 4:11-13, Revelation 17:14) with him at which point God would lay them all waste. The final battle would take place on the plains of Armageddon, the Hebrew name for Mt. Megiddo, which is sixty miles north of Jerusalem. The battle would extend southeastward for 1600 stadia, which approximates to 200 Roman miles or 184 modern miles (Revelation 14:20). 184 miles would include both the Megiddo valley (Har-Mageddon) and the valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3:1-2, 12-13), which, based on the battle Jehoshaphat fought, would continue south just east of Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives down toward Engedi near the Dead Sea (2 Chronicles 20). Taken altogether, this 184 miles stretch will be the scene of the final battle, the valley of decision (Joel 3:14), in which Christ comes out victorious. The real purpose of God here was to gather the armies of the earth (Revelation 19:20-21) so that they could be taken out in one fell swoop (Revelation 19:19). This is why the blood from the slain will be as high as the horse’s bridle (Revelation 14:19-20). John saw coming out of the mouth of the unholy trinity (beast, dragon, false prophet) three unclean spirits that looked like frogs, spirits of demons sent to perform signs and go to the kings of the whole world to gather them together for the war in which Jesus would slaughter them all. This is the day of the Lord, the great day of the Almighty when Jesus would finally be not just the sacrificial Lamb but the King of Kings on the earth as well as in heaven (Daniel 11:45). Joel 3:1-2, 12-13 says, “For behold, in those days and at that time, When I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all the nations And bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat. Then I will enter into judgment with them there On behalf of My people and My inheritance, Israel, Whom they have scattered among the nations; And they have divided up My land. Let the nations be aroused And come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, For there I will sit to judge All the surrounding nations. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread, for the wine press is full; The vats overflow, for their wickedness is great” (see also Zephaniah 3:8 and Revelation 19:15). When Christ comes with a sword proceeding from His mouth, the victory will come quickly and easily. Zephaniah 1:17 speaks of the armies being struck with blindness. Zechariah 14:12-13 says, “Now this will be the plague with which the Lord will strike all the peoples who have gone to war against Jerusalem; their flesh will rot while they stand on their feet, and their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongue will rot in their mouth. It will come about in that day that a great panic from the Lord will fall on them; and they will seize one another’s hand, and the hand of one will be lifted against the hand of another.” Jesus’ judgment at Armageddon will be to allow the armies of the earth which He has gathered (Satan thought he was doing it against God, but this was ultimately God’s plan for destruction- see Micah 4:11-13, Revelation 17:14) to have their flesh literally rot, blinding them, deluding them, and making their boastful tongues fall out. Zechariah 12:4 adds, “‘In that day,’ declares the Lord, ‘I will strike every horse with bewilderment and his rider with madness. But I will watch over the house of Judah, while I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness.’” The plague is actually a judgment that reflects their spiritual condition. Those who boasted in their flesh saw their flesh rot away. Those who thought they had eyes

to see turned blind. Those who blasphemed God were silenced as their tongues rotted in their mouths. Those who thought they were clever and wise were made mad. Those who thought that they were mighty warriors and could defeat God turned against each other and self-destructed. In that day, the Lord will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, make them strong, and destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem (Zechariah 12:8-9). This has always been God's plan in the end, to wipe out those who hate Him, to exalt Himself and His people, and to give His people a heart for Him in the new millennial kingdom. The sifting of Israel is the most important aspect of the final seven year tribulation period, and, as it comes to a close, a righteous remnant with hearts that love Jesus will be saved and blessed (Amos 9:15). Amos 9:9-10 says, "For behold, I am commanding, And I will shake the house of Israel among all nations As grain is shaken in a sieve, But not a kernel will fall to the ground. All the sinners of My people will die by the sword, Those who say, 'The calamity will not overtake or confront us.'" Though the seven year process will be horrible, it will end with a righteous remnant. Zechariah 13:8-9 says, "'It will come about in all the land,' Declares the Lord, 'That two parts in it will be cut off and perish; But the third will be left in it. And I will bring the third part through the fire, Refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them; I will say, 'They are My people,' And they will say, 'The Lord is my God'" (see also Micah 2:12). The picture of Jesus coming as a thief is a warning to the peoples of the earth not to get caught in a state of spiritual nakedness, emptiness, and depravity when the day of the Lord comes. 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 says, "For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, 'Peace and safety!' then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape" (see also Matthew 24:43). Unbelievers must prepare themselves before Christ returns by turning to Him for salvation and by repenting of sin so that they can be wrapped in His robe of righteousness (Isaiah 61:10). Otherwise, they will face His just wrath and be shamed for eternity. Jesus' return shouldn't be a surprise given that it is all throughout the Bible, but sadly many ignore the truth that God has revealed to them in the Scripture. When the day of the Lord comes, they won't be ready, and they will suffer the consequences.

**17 Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done." 18 And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty. 19 The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. 20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. 21 And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, \*came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague \*was extremely severe.**

The seventh angel poured out the seventh and final bowl judgment upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne declaring that the judgments of God's wrath upon the earth during the great tribulation were complete. There were flashes of lightning and thunder, and there was the greatest earthquake of all time (see Isaiah 24:19-20). The earthquake was so strong that every city on earth was destroyed. Jerusalem was affected also, but was not leveled, only split into three parts. Zechariah 14:4, 10 says, "In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of



Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south. All the land will be changed into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem; but Jerusalem will rise and remain on its site from Benjamin's Gate as far as the place of the First Gate to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's wine presses." The topographical changes in Jerusalem will be for the better. Joel 3:18 says, "And in that day The mountains will drip with sweet wine, And the hills will flow with milk, And all the brooks of Judah will flow with water; And a spring will go out from the house of the Lord To water the valley of Shittim." Water will flow out from Jerusalem to the east, and it will be healing to the creation (Ezekiel 47:1-12). Babylon the great, likely a reference to the specific empire and chief city of antichrist's domain (Revelation 17-18), was remembered by God specifically to face the greatest intensity of His wrath in the earthquake (c.f. Isaiah 13:6-13). The earthquake changed the topography of earth so dramatically that the islands sunk or were flooded, and the mountains were leveled. Jerusalem, however, would rise (Isaiah 2:2-4, 40:9; Zechariah 4:10; Psalm 48:2). The seventh plague did not end with the earth-reshaping earthquake, but huge hailstones, weighing one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven. Whether this was purely a supernatural event or a result of the weather being affected by the plagues and the earthquake is not given, but what is sure is that it will be a divine punishment of God and that it will happen. The plague of the hail will be extremely severe as hailstones fall like bombs from heaven (Isaiah 32:19), but still those who survive will not repent. Instead, they will blaspheme God even to end.

## Revelation 17

**Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, 2 with whom the kings of the earth committed acts of immorality, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality."**

One of the seven angels responsible for the bowl judgments told John to come with him so that he could show him the judgment of the great city Babylon (see also Revelation 14:8), described here as the great harlot, likely the capital or chief city of the antichrist's world empire. Given that the antichrist's empire is said to come out of the region of the old Roman empire (Daniel 7:23-24), the city is probably somewhere in that vicinity as well. The waters that the great harlot sits on do not signify a geographical area, but they refer to the peoples, tribes, and tongues that fall in line with her immorality (v. 15). Given that the economy of this evil city required the antichrist and his image to be worshipped and his mark or number in order to buy and sell, it is clear that this city caused immorality and idolatry to spread throughout the entire world. The kings of the earth gave their allegiance to the beast (v. 12-13), and they gorged themselves on immorality and became drunk with corruption. They and their nations, except for the few who would turn to Christ during the tribulation, sold themselves out to satanic worship for the sake of a prosperous economy and out of fear. They foolishly chose to worship Satan rather than to trust God and be a victor eternally with Him (Revelation 15:2).

**3 And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns. 4 The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality, 5 and on her forehead a name was written, a mystery, "BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."**

John was then carried away in the Spirit to a wilderness as the vision continued. There he saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of blasphemous names. This woman is the great harlot from verses 1-2, and she derived her prosperity from the satanic practices of the beast, the antichrist himself. She made her mark on the world through the mark of the beast and by the rampant blasphemy of God. The beast she sat upon had ten horns, signifying the ten kings who will give their allegiance to the beast (v. 12-13). The seven heads are representative of seven evil world empires that operated in the antichrist's region before him. He is the seventh major evil empire of the region (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, future Babylon) (see notes on verses 9-13). The scarlet color indicates sin, particularly idolatry and harlotry, and it may also point to the blood of the saints which the beast is responsible for shedding. The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, signifying power and earthly royalty along with evil and immorality. Her economic prosperity during the last days is signified by her adornment with gold, precious stones, and pearls. Her wealth will be gained through immorality (Revelation 18:3), for in her hand was a gold cup full of abominable, sinful, and immoral acts. On her forehead her name was written. She was Babylon the great, the capital and breeding ground of all the antichrist-inspired immorality and satanic worship that would spread throughout the world. All that is in

the world even now that promotes Satan and blasphemes God is a type of that which is to come. The Babylon of the past was wicked and pagan, and a coming Babylon, likely in a very similar geographical location, will be even worse. It seems likely that it near a major water port given the many sea travelling merchants that are seen doing business there (Revelation 18:11). It would probably be in the same region (not exact location but region) as where the antichrist sets up his royal pavilion. Daniel 11:45 says, "He will pitch the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain; yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him." Perhaps this is why Jerusalem is referred to as Sodom in Revelation 11:8, for the region will have been overtaken by immorality and idolatry. But when Christ returns, He will see to it that evil is crushed and that His ways are put into place in His holy city (Isaiah 2:2-3). It is also noteworthy that this particular location where the antichrist makes his royal home is likely in the same region where the final battle will be fought (see notes on Revelation 16:16) just to the east and north of Jerusalem. This will likely contribute to his end coming quickly with no one to help him.

**6 And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. When I saw her, I wondered greatly. 7 And the angel said to me, "Why do you wonder? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.**

The antichrist will persecute the saints severely, and in the boundaries of his kingdom great atrocities will be committed against those who testify to Jesus Christ and His gospel. John wondered when he saw the woman and the beast, but the angel explained what he was seeing.

**8 "The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.**

The beast will come up out of the abyss under Satan's watch (Luke 8:31, Revelation 9:11, 11:7), he will be allowed to rule for a short time on the earth, and then he will be killed by Jesus Himself. His time of dominance on the earth will be short-lived, but his eternity in the lake of fire will be forever (Revelation 19:20). His destruction is assured. However, as he comes to power, he will seize the world by intrigue with an apparent death and resurrection. People who see this apparent power over the grave, which only Jesus truly has, will believe that he is a god worth worshipping. That they fall for this demonstrates that their names are not in the Lamb's book of life (Revelation 3:5, 20:15, 21:27). Those who do come to saving faith during the tribulation do have their names in the book of life as members of the redeemed, though they will face severe hardship and almost certain death (Revelation 13:15, 20:4) during the tribulation at the hand of the antichrist and false prophet. However, Jesus will raise them again to eternal life, for He does hold the power over the grave. The antichrist will be powerless to defeat death and eternal judgment when Christ comes to take His throne on earth.

**9 Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits, 10 and they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes,**

**he must remain a little while. 11 The beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction. 12 The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. 13 These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast.**

Wisdom understands who the beast is, and those who read John's words should be able to recognize the veracity of the prophecy and hopefully repent as a result of what they read. The woman represents the evil world system, Satan's rule and domain on the earth throughout history, and specifically the antichrist's coming empire. Satan is the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2), and he holds sinners captive (2 Timothy 2:26). The seven mountains on which the woman sits represents the evil that pagan world empires have accomplished throughout the history of the world. Daniel points out several of these including Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome (Daniel 2, 7). The two dominant world powers before Babylon were Egypt and then Assyria. The first five empires had come and gone, and Rome was the world power as John wrote this. The seventh king would come later, and he, the antichrist, would rule for a short time. The beast is the seventh and also the eighth in the sense that he supposedly rules twice given his apparent resurrection from the dead. That will come to a very quick end. The ten horns are ten kings which will be on the earth at the same time as the antichrist, and they will give their authority to him. He will also subdue three kings and conquer many nations (Daniel 7:24, 11:40-45). The ten kings will serve and advance his satanic cause. The beast's rule is short-lived for a mere seven years (Daniel 9:27), and then he will be destroyed.

**14 These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful."**

The beast and his armies will wage war against Jesus Himself, and Jesus will win (Revelation 19). He is the King of kings and Lord of lords, after all, and those who are bought with His blood will rule with Him (Revelation 20:4, 6). They are those who have responded to the call of the gospel and followed Him on earth. They will be rewarded in heaven.

**15 And he \*said to me, "The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues. 16 And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire. 17 For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled. 18 The woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth."**

The waters where the harlot sits are not actual waters but representative of the tribes, nations, tongues, and peoples which she has led astray by the multitude. The beast and his ten subservient kings will be instrumental in their own capital city being destroyed. The harlot's prosperity was largely economically driven because of the fact that the whole world was forced to trade through the beast's kingdom and with his mark. There was much money to be made on the business of sensuality (Revelation 18:3) and human trafficking (Revelation 18:13) as well as the selling of various cargoes (Revelation 18:11-14). But when the antichrist breaks his covenant with the many and reveals himself as a madman set on war and

destruction, the economic prosperity of Babylon will be compromised. It will fall to violence (Revelation 18:21). Ultimately, Babylon's fall will be a result of God's judgment and the plagues, famine, and pestilence that are sent upon the whole earth, including the beast's major city. When the earth succumbs to the judgments and plagues of God, a prospering economy will be impossible because people will just be trying to survive. God will ultimately bring Babylon low (Revelation 18:4-8), but it is the beast's immorality and blasphemy as well as war-mongering and persecution of the saints that incites God's wrath. In that sense, he and his minions destroy themselves and their own engine of economic prosperity. They will have prospered by commercializing sin and Satan worship, but sin always ends in death and destruction, destroying the very thing that they had built. As wisdom says of itself in Proverbs 8:36, "But he who sins against me injures himself; All those who hate me love death."

## Revelation 18

**After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illumined with his glory. 2 And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird. 3 For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality."**

John then saw another angel coming down from heaven, one with great authority and so much glory that he lit up the world. He cried out loudly that Babylon was fallen. Whereas it had been a bustling economic powerhouse, now it was a dwelling place fit only for the spirit world. Demons lived there as well as other unclean spirits and the kinds of birds that enjoyed living on waste and death. God will punish Babylon because all the nations of the world will have corrupted themselves by participating in her idolatry by worshipping Satan and his antichrist. People will get rich during the early part of antichrist's empire because all trade will be routed through Babylon with his mark of approval, but they will have to bow to him first. Sensuality will be a big business as well as the selling of many goods, including people (v. 13 and Joel 3:3), and it will all be in a context of emperor worship, immorality, and blasphemy of God.

**4 I heard another voice from heaven, saying, "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues; 5 for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. 6 Pay her back even as she has paid, and give back to her double according to her deeds; in the cup which she has mixed, mix twice as much for her. 7 To the degree that she glorified herself and lived sensuously, to the same degree give her torment and mourning; for she says in her heart, 'I sit as a queen and I am not a widow, and will never see mourning.' 8 For this reason in one day her plagues will come, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for the Lord God who judges her is strong.**

God wanted any who had ears to hear, particularly of the Jewish nation, to escape Babylon and run for the mountains (Matthew 24:15). The longer a person stays with bad company, the more their morals are corrupted, the more their conscience is defiled, and the harder it is to leave (just ask Lot- Genesis 19:16). Those who participated in her iniquities would be punished with the plagues of God, and there would be no special treatment or exemptions. God had kept a record of Babylon's iniquities, and they piled up as high as heaven. His vengeance was imminent, a double-portion of wrath. She glorified herself in great pride and blasphemy and lived in great immorality and sensuality, and God was to repay her with torment and mourning. Her temporary rule on the earth as "queen" would quickly come to an end (Isaiah 47:7). Those who lived by her prosperity thought that the good times would go on forever, but they were wrong. Mourning and great loss was just around the corner, for God's judgments would cause destruction to come over the whole earth. Babylon, the prize of the worldly nations, would not be exempt but targeted with double vengeance from on high. In one day her plagues will come with disease and famine and fire. When God moves to launch His campaign of seal, trumpet, and bowl

judgments, Babylon will face quick destruction. This will be to make a point that God is the Lord, that He is the One doing the judging, and that He is strong, much stronger than antichrist and his armies.

**9 “And the kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her, will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning, 10 standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’**

The kings of the earth aligned themselves out of fear with the antichrist and probably greed as well, for they believed that he was the ultimate power. They believed in his false miracle, and they wanted to serve him. They enjoyed his charisma, and they believed that he would bring world peace and economic prosperity of highest degree. They rejoiced in his vast markets of immorality and sensuality. When they saw Babylon burning, however, their confidence was shattered, and they mourned. They realized that all was not well, and God’s judgments will make them want to die (Revelation 9:6). They will stand at a distance watching the city burn and cry out in great mourning and distress. Fear will definitely be on their minds because of the severity and rapidity with which the destruction will come.

**11 “And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes any more— 12 cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and every kind of citron wood and every article of ivory and every article made from very costly wood and bronze and iron and marble, 13 and cinnamon and spice and incense and perfume and frankincense and wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep, and cargoes of horses and chariots and slaves and human lives. 14 The fruit you long for has gone from you, and all things that were luxurious and splendid have passed away from you and men will no longer find them.**

Those who bowed to the antichrist like it was no big deal, having no fear of God in their hearts, will mourn because they will not be able to sell their goods any longer. The whole world economy will be devastated as the judgments of God rain down. Their riches and prosperity were but for a few years, but God’s judgment will be forever. All the world’s goods that they had to buy and sell and get rich from would pass away. The fruit that they longed for would be unobtainable, for famine and pestilence would be everywhere. All the things that they had enjoyed that were splendid and luxurious would be gone from them and never to come back again. Previously, they had enjoyed gold, silver, precious stones, pearls, linen, purple fabric, silk, scarlet, special wood, ivory, and things made of costly wood, bronze, iron, and marble. Vast craftsmanship and ornate wares were prevalent until the day of destruction. At the marketplace, there were cinnamon, spices, perfume, incense, frankincense, wine, olive oil, flour, wheat, cattle, sheep, horses, chariots, and even slaves and human lives. As Joel 3:3 says, “They have also cast lots for My people, Traded a boy for a harlot And sold a girl for wine that they may drink.” The businessmen of the world were making money left and right, and they were even willing to sell people into slavery for money. People were property to be bought and sold for selfish gain, for business was about money, not the fair treatment of the weak. Money was their god, and worshiping the beast and his image was part of the bargain. But it all came to a fiery end in short order, for God’s wrath had come. Now they would be lucky to stay alive, let alone find food and water or shelter.

**15 The merchants of these things, who became rich from her, will stand at a distance because of the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning, 16 saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, she who was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls; 17 for in one hour such great wealth has been laid waste!' And every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea, stood at a distance, 18 and were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What city is like the great city?' 19 And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in one hour she has been laid waste!' 20 Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her."**

Those who had ships to travel to Babylon and sell their wares got rich quick because of the prosperity that Babylon had and the money which was there to spend. Of course, their financial prosperity came at the cost of bowing to the beast, but that was no matter for them. But it became a great concern when in but one day they saw Babylon burn and suffer divine torment and destruction. They wept and mourned not over their sins and in fear of God but over the fact that they lost their chance to make more money. The rich city of pagan prosperity had been destroyed. The wealth of the earth can be taken in a breath, and this is why people need to invest in heaven and in doing God's will (Matthew 6:33). His kingdom endures forever, and it is never worth making a compromising deal in order to get ahead on earth because God's rewards and riches are forever (Psalm 16:11). But all those who sold their souls for wealth cried out as they saw their livelihoods go up in smoke in an instant. They thought that Babylon was as good as it could ever get, and they had no conception of what Jesus' millennial kingdom would be like and the honor it would be to serve Him during it. But those who loved Jesus could rejoice because God had begun to avenge the blood of the saints and witnesses of the gospel upon Babylon. His wrath was coming now quickly and in full force, and soon the entire armies of the earth and the antichrist himself would be wiped out just as quickly as their beloved city was.

**21 Then a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "So will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and will not be found any longer. 22 And the sound of harpists and musicians and flute-players and trumpeters will not be heard in you any longer; and no craftsman of any craft will be found in you any longer; and the sound of a mill will not be heard in you any longer; 23 and the light of a lamp will not shine in you any longer; and the voice of the bridegroom and bride will not be heard in you any longer; for your merchants were the great men of the earth, because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery. 24 And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth."**

A strong angel took up a stone and cast it into the sea as a visual of the casting down of Babylon. Its sin was a millstone around its neck, and it would be judged accordingly because God hates any who make others stumble (Luke 17:2). Babylon was cast down with violence because God repaid its violent ways with divine judgment. The antichrist's breaking of the peace treaty and launching into war was the beginning of the end of economic prosperity and the beginning of the judgments of God. The turning point was abrupt, and God's judgments were sudden and fierce. There would be no more musicians playing, craftsmen and artisans creating, people grinding at the mill, people getting married, lamps lit



signifying life and human activity, or merchants coming to do business and becoming great in the earth on account of their financial prosperity. The nations of the world were deceived by the lies of the antichrist (John 8:44, 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12) and the satanic trickery of the false prophet. Their false religion led many to damn their souls, and many of those who came to faith were killed in their city, probably even in consecration to the beast and his image. God held the antichrist and Babylon accountable for deceiving others. Their lies caused people to ignore the testimony of the two witnesses and to instead follow the beast (Revelation 11:1-13). Thus, Babylon's judgment was extra severe.

## Revelation 19

**After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; 2 because His judgments are true and righteous; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and He has avenged the blood of His bond-servants on her." 3 And a second time they said, "Hallelujah! Her smoke rises up forever and ever." 4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!" 5 And a voice came from the throne, saying, "Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great." 6 Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. 7 Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." 8 It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.**

There was a great celebration in heaven at this point as a multitude in heaven praised God. They acknowledged that all salvation, glory, and power belonged to God. It is difficult for the righteous one on earth while the wicked seem to prosper, but all is made right in heaven. Believers should rejoice in the fact that God will render to each according to His deeds. The wicked will face His wrath, and believers will find joy and eternal honor with Him. God judges in truth and righteousness just as He did with Babylon. He is faithful and just to forgive sinners who ask, and He is faithful and just to punish sinners who don't and instead continue in sin and blasphemous rebellion. There is exceeding joy in heaven when one sinner repents (Luke 15:7), and there is great joy in heaven when God justly punishes the wicked. In both, God demonstrates Himself good, faithful, true, almighty, powerful, and eternal. Because God is on the throne, the whole scheme of things will be made fair, right, and just. Without God, the wicked would triumph over the weak and righteous. But because God is good and just, He will pour out His wrath on the wicked and allow the righteous to reign with Him and enjoy His treasures forever. The twenty four elders and the four living creatures bowed down and worshipped God Who always sits on the throne of the universe. They wholeheartedly agreed with the sentiment in heaven, and they rejoiced in God's justice and His imminent kingdom on earth. A voice came from the throne instructing all who were in heaven who feared God and served Him faithfully to praise Him. Whether small or great on earth, it didn't matter in heaven because God allows all of His saints to reign with Him. Some believers are well-known, while others nobody knows about. Some are poor, and others have more than they need. But in heaven, everybody will have an abundance in Jesus Christ Whose inheritance is eternal. The only proper response to God and His victory is to praise Him, and that is what will happen. Those in heaven will praise Him because He is the Lord, He is God, He is almighty, and He reigns. Those who surround the throne to praise God will rejoice and be glad because the time will have finally come in which the wicked armies of the world including the antichrist will be destroyed. Also, the bride of Christ will be presented to Him. The bride has made herself ready by faith in Christ while on earth. Thus, He has clothed the righteous in His righteousness and removed their sin as far as the east is from the west. The bride is clothed in fine linen, representing Christ's righteousness which transformed them from the inside out and enabled them to bear fruits of righteousness by faith in life. This is the

culmination of the narrative of Scripture, for it is what believers have been looking forward to since they first read about heaven in the Scripture. Going to be with Jesus is the blessed hope (Titus 2:13) that helps believers endure persecution on earth and be faithful. The church will finally get to meet up with her Savior and celebrate the marriage supper of the Lamb.

**9 Then he \*said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he \*said to me, "These are true words of God." 10 Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he \*said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."**

All believers are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Some will be of God's chosen nation, Israel. Others will be Gentiles who were grafted in by the grace of God and given eternal life in Christ by faith (Romans 11:19). No unbelievers will be there, but all believers from all time will celebrate a great feast together. It is a feast that celebrates Christ's victory and imminent rule on earth, finally seeing Jesus face to face, finally being vindicated and rewarded, and finally being freed from dealing with sin, sorrow, pain, and death. It will be a great union of all friends and loved ones who have died in Christ. It will be the biggest and best celebration that has ever happened. It is true, and since God cannot lie, it will happen just as John wrote. At this point, John fell at the feet of the angel who had been speaking to him, and the angel objected, reminding John that he was but a fellow servant of God. His job was to be a ministering spirit (Hebrews 1:14) to John and to the servants of Jesus, and he did not want John to confuse his role with God's place as the only One deserving worship. He told John to worship God, for worshipping anything or anyone other than God is idolatry, just like what happened in Babylon. The angel's message is that the whole point of prophecy is not to glorify the messenger but the testimony and works of Jesus. Reading the Book of Revelation should leave a person marveling at the power of Jesus and looking forward to the day when He sets all things right.

**11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. 12 His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. 13 He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. 15 From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. 16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."**

Jesus came to earth first as a Lamb to die for the sins of the world, but next time, His second coming, He will return as a conquering King. As John sees it, heaven will be opened as Christ comes down to earth to lay waste to the antichrist and His armies. He will ride a white horse, signifying power combined with purity. He is named Faithful and True because He judges the world righteously and avenges the righteous. His war against the wicked is a just war because they have stored up His wrath and rejected the many opportunities that He has given them to repent (Revelation 11:1-13, 14:6-7). His eyes are a flame of fire, signifying just anger, and on His head are many crowns because He is the King of kings. There is a particular name written on Him which is only known by Jesus Himself. This points to Him

being unique, holy, and the one true God. His robe is dipped in blood, which points out that He is out for blood and ready for war, for His just wrath has come (see Isaiah 63:1-6). His heavenly hosts clothed in clean white linen follow Him on white horses of their own. From His mouth comes a sharp sword with which He will strike down the nations. By His very words the world was made, and His words are what bring salvation and life. Thus, it should not be a surprise that His word is enough to defeat the enemies of God and set up an earthly kingdom which He will rule with a rod of iron (Revelation 2:27, 12:5; Psalm 2:9). Zechariah 14:12-15 explains the specific way in which the armies die, for a flesh eating plague destroys them, one obviously authorized by Jesus' command (see Isaiah 29:5-8, Zephaniah 1:17, 3:8, Joel 3:1-2, 12-17 and notes on Revelation 16:16 and v. 19-21). Jesus treads the winepress of God's wrath by destroying all who have resisted His mercy and warnings. On Jesus' robe and thigh are written another name, that of King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The Lamb of God has returned to claim His rightful kingdom on earth. Jesus the first time told Peter to sheath his sword because He needed to die to pay the penalty of sin (John 18:11). This time, He will bring His own sword and fight with power consistent with His deity. The armies will be no match (v. 19-21).

**17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, "Come, assemble for the great supper of God, 18 so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great."**

An angel seen standing in the sun summoned all the flesh-eating birds to come and feast upon the commanders and kings of the earth who assembled themselves to fight against Jesus. They were told also to eat of the horses and their riders and all the men who had assembled, both small and great. This was, for the birds, the great supper of God. There was no doubt in heaven as to who would win this final battle before Jesus' millennial rule.

**19 And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. 20 And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. 21 And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.**

Like arrogant fools, the antichrist and his armies will try to attack Jesus and His army. There will be no drawn out dramatic fight scene or struggle back and forth. The next sentence reads that the beast and the false prophet were seized and thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. They were the firstfruits of those who would suffer the second death. They didn't need to go to the Great White Throne for judgment, for they were granted early admission. The rest were killed with the sword that came from the mouth of Jesus (Micah 4:1-3). Zechariah explains that this "sword" is actually a flesh eating plague that brings delusion (see Zechariah 14:12-15 and Isaiah 29:5-8). The birds clean up the mess that is left, filling themselves up on the flesh. But the blood pools up to the horse's bridle for 200 miles (see Isaiah 34:2-3 and notes on Revelation 16:16). These who die by the "sword" will go to the

Great White Throne judgment and then be cast into the lake of fire along with the antichrist and his false prophet (Isaiah 24:21-22, 50:11).

## Revelation 20

**Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3 and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.**

An angel came down from heaven holding a key to the abyss as well as a great chain with shackles. He laid hold of Satan, the serpent of old from Genesis who had troubled mankind for so long, and bound him in the abyss for a thousand years. He was sealed up and unable to deceive the nations any longer. For Christ's thousand year rule on earth, the devil will not be allowed to do his evil work. But at the end of the thousand years, he will be released for a short time. He will deceive the nations one last time (v. 7-8) and bring a massive army against Jerusalem where Christ reigns (Ezekiel 38-39). Fire will fall from the sky and devour them all (v. 9). Satan will then be cast into the lake of fire along with the beast and the false prophet where they will all be tormented forever and ever (Isaiah 27:1). Satan is not the boss of hell, but he will be tormented by God's wrath forever.

**4 Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.**

Believers are immediately pictured as being seated with Christ in heaven when they die (see notes on Revelation 4-5 and Ephesians 1:20, 2:6), and even the tribulation saints are also pictured in white robes in heaven in Revelation 7:9-17. So, it is not as though there is a period of waiting around in a holding place of the dead for believers, for they go right to be with God in paradise as soon as they die, just as Jesus told the thief on the cross who repented (Luke 23:43). All believers from all times and places converge at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-10) to celebrate the coming kingdom of Jesus and the fact that the bride of Christ has been gathered for eternal life and reigning with Jesus. Yet the Bible is also clear that there is an incident of transformation from the natural body to an eternal, immortal spiritual, glorified body (1 Corinthians 15:50-58). This change happens instantly as in the twinkling of an eye. Believers are caught up to be with Christ with the dead in Christ rising to meet Him first. Then the rest who are alive are also caught up with Him to meet Him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). It seems from the whole of Scripture that there is a rapture or taking up of the saints before the tribulation period. Those who died in Christ or who were still alive at His appearing in the clouds are taken up, glorified, and transformed for heaven in that instant. Then, it appears that there is another phase of that glorification at the first resurrection in which those who died in Christ during the tribulation also get changed and made immortal and ready for eternal life and reigning with Christ (v. 4).

Those who take part in the rapture and the first resurrection are considered blessed and holy because the second death and has no power over them. They will be priests of God in the coming kingdom and enjoy Him throughout the eternal age. They will judge angels (1 Corinthians 6:3). Their future is paradise to the max. Those who are not raptured or resurrected will suffer the fate of the second death in which the wicked dead are presented before the Great White Throne and sent to eternal judgment in hell. Everybody dies once and is appointed judgment after that (Hebrews 9:27). Only unbelievers suffer a second death (v. 14-15) of eternal torment in hell (Isaiah 26:14). Believers are resurrected to paradise and to being part of Christ's eternal kingdom. The first resurrection is the one to want to be a part of (Daniel 12:2, Isaiah 26:19). The second resurrection is the resurrection of unbelievers for judgment, and this one does not end well (v. 11-15).

The millennial kingdom is not a period to underappreciate, for there is much in Scripture about it. The books of the prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and more have much to say on the subject. While Christ will reign forever and establish a new heaven and earth with a New Jerusalem that is Christ's promised eternal home for believers (John 14:1-3), the millennial period is also going to be a remarkable time. Believers will enjoy ruling with Christ as His priests during this time, perhaps helping in administration and teaching others the ways of God, including those from other nations as they traverse to Jerusalem. But it will be a special time for Israel because it will finally be a time when God opens their hearts as a nation to see and hear the truth of the Messiah. In the last days a remnant of Israel will be saved which will have a heart for God (Isaiah 1:24-31, Amos 9:9-10, Zechariah 13:1, Hosea 14:4, Joel 2:32, Ezekiel 36:26, Zechariah 13:8-9, Micah 2:12). Israel will regret its past sin and rejection of Jesus (Zechariah 12:10-14, Ezekiel 36:21-22, Hosea 3:5). There will be a temple and a priesthood during the millennial kingdom (Ezekiel 37:26, 40-48; Isaiah 60:13, 66:21) but not during the New Jerusalem and eternal age (Revelation 21:22). The sacrifices will not save anyone then as they didn't in the Old Testament. It will be about obeying God and doing the things that He said were unique and special to His chosen nation. The Law of God always pointed to the need for Jesus to change the heart by faith, and this will be made clear once again during the millennial kingdom. Also during the millennial kingdom, remnant, redeemed Israel will be honored and a light to the nations (Isaiah 44:5, 45:17, 49:5-6, 49:22-23, 61:9; Zechariah 8:22-23; Zechariah 9:16-17; Hosea 14:5-7). Jerusalem will be lifted up spiritually and topographically (Isaiah 2:2-3, 25:8, 29:22-24; Joel 3:20; Amos 9:14-15; Ezekiel 47:1-2; Micah 4:1-2). Jesus will be King, Judge, and ruler (Isaiah 2:4a, 9:6-7, 11:1-5, 33:22; Zechariah 9:10; Micah 4:2-3). Jesus will put an end to war and establish eternal peace (Isaiah 42:1-4, 2:4b; Micah 4:3-4). Jerusalem will be a refuge because of God's supernatural protection and blessing (Isaiah 2:4-6, 11:10, 32:15-18, 62:5; Zechariah 8:3). There will be no divided territory in Israel, but Israel will get all of what had been promised to her (Isaiah 9:1, 26:15). The creation will be at peace with one another and with man (Isaiah 11:6-9, 65:25) so that it will be safe for children to play with snakes and for lions to lie down with lambs. Thorns will stop coming up as the curse is reversed (Isaiah 55:12-13). Sadly, some outside of Israel and Jerusalem will remain fools and refuse to believe (Isaiah 26:9-11, 35:8; Zechariah 14:16-20), but it will also be true that many from other nations will come and believe (Isaiah 18:7, Isaiah 19:18-25). God will wipe away Israel's tears and they will worship Him along with the redeemed (Isaiah 30:19-22, 35:9b-10, 65:19). God will optimize growing conditions for abundant and fruitful harvests (Isaiah 30:23-26, 35:7, 41:18-20, 51:3; Joel 3:18; Ezekiel 36:29-30). Those who dwell in Zion will experience physical

and spiritual healing and wholeness (Isaiah 33:24, 35:5-6). Only the redeemed will dwell in Zion during the millennium, for no sin will enter there (Isaiah 52:1, Joel 3:17). The redeemed will be so numerous that they will spread out and resettle some of the desolated cities (Isaiah 54:3, Ezekiel 36:38). In Jesus' eternal kingdom reign, there is no possibility of Israel falling away yet again (Isaiah 59:21). The nations of the earth will bring treasures to Zion (Isaiah 60:10-11, Haggai 2:6-9), and any who resist will perish (Isaiah 60:12, 66:24). Thus, all who enter there will be clean and of those who delightfully bow down to Jesus (Isaiah 66:23). All of Israel who lives during this time will have hearts for God, and they will have many offspring who will also love King Jesus (Isaiah 60:21-22). Jesus will be the light (Isaiah 60:19-20). Israel will be given a new name, and so will any Gentiles who repent (Isaiah 56:4-5, 62:2). Lifespans will be longer (Isaiah 65:20, 22b), and the presence of God will be immediate and intimate with His people (Isaiah 65:24). As good as the millennial kingdom will be, the best part is yet to come when God creates a new heaven and earth and a New Jerusalem descends from heaven where God's people will dwell forever (Revelation 21-22).

**7 When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, 8 and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. 9 And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. 10 And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.**

At the end of the thousand years, Satan will be allowed to deceive the nations one last time. He will gather an army against Jerusalem (Ezekiel 38-39) made up of unbelieving people, and God will rain fire down from heaven to devour them (Isaiah 26:11). Satan will then be cast into the lake of fire along with his demons (Isaiah 24:21-22) where the beast and the false prophet already are. Their torment is eternal, and they have already been suffering for a thousand years. Satan will also be joined by many lost souls once the second resurrection is complete. Satan will not be ruler of hell or immune to its effects, but he will suffer severely in the torment of God's wrath day and night.

**11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 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 from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.**

This should be the most fearful passage in the Bible for unbelievers. Jesus told them to fear God because He has the power and authority to cast into hell (Luke 12:5). He will do it in the future, and this is the account of that day as John saw it. There was a great white throne which Jesus sat upon, signifying power, dominion, authority, kingship, holiness, purity, and justice. It is the ultimate in



intimidation to the extent that in John's vision even heaven and earth fled away. It was the throne and Jesus and nothing else. There is no way to bypass this event, and every unbeliever will have to face Him. They will have no choice but to bow and confess Him as Lord even though they will not make Him Lord of their hearts (Philippians 2:5-10). They will not bow in reverence and praise but because they will have to and likely be cowering in fear. Both rich and poor and small and great will face this judgment if they have not repented and trusted in Christ for salvation. Nobody can evade this or buy their way around it. Each person will stand before the throne. There will be books opened that demonstrate a record of the wrongs that have been committed against Christ. The book of life will be opened to show that no record of the person is in the book. Their deeds will condemn them, and by their deeds they will be judged. God sees all and promises to render to each according to their deeds. They will reap according to how they have sown, and all these who rejected Christ or trusted in their own works to save them will come up short (Romans 3:23). The throne is perfection, and God's command is to be perfect as God is perfect (Matthew 5:48). Since no man outside of Christ can meet this standard, they all will be cast into the lake of fire. Death and Hades are also thrown into the lake of fire. In heaven, there is no longer any death, but, more importantly, this emphasizes that not even death can save a person from eternal torment in the lake of fire. Death, too, which is the wages of sin (Romans 6:23), is powerless to the judgment of the One Who is victor over sin and death (1 Corinthians 15:55). The believer's hope is the first resurrection, and the unbeliever's fear should be the second resurrection. Hell is real, it is torment, it is eternal, and not even death can save a person from it (Luke 16:19-31; Matthew 13:42; Revelation 14:11, 20:10). That the antichrist and the false prophet are still in the lake of fire a thousand years after they were first cast in adds further credence to this fearful but true reality.

## Revelation 21

**Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.**

After all the wrath and carnage on the earth and the trouble and tribulation of the righteous given throughout this book of prophecy, it is beautiful to see the end when God makes all things new (v. 5). After the millennial kingdom and after Satan is defeated once and for all, God will create a new heaven and earth (Isaiah 65:17). John saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. The earth had been cursed, and thus it had to be recreated (see Isaiah 24:1-6). This is the redemption that the creation has been groaning for (Romans 8:22). The old earth had remnants of death and sin (Ezekiel 39:11-16) even after the millennial kingdom, and this needed to be done away with. As 2 Peter 3:7 says, "But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." Revelation 22:3 indicates that in the New Jerusalem, the curse will finally have been totally undone. On the new earth, God will create a New Jerusalem, a holy city which will descend out of heaven from God with His glory (v. 10). It is made ready for the saints just as a bride adorns herself for her husband. The city will be exceedingly ornate and beautiful (v. 11-21) with Jesus illuminating it with His presence (v. 23). Jesus said that He would go and prepare a place for His saints and then take them there (John 14:3), and this is the ultimate fulfillment of His promise.

**3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, 4 and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."**

A loud voice from the throne declared that in the New Jerusalem, the dwelling place of God is among His people. They belong to Him forever, and God Himself will literally be among them. While believers are on earth, the temple of God is their hearts in which He dwells (1 Corinthians 6:19). But in the New Jerusalem, believers will walk and talk with Jesus because His constant presence will be the temple (v. 22). They will see Him face to face (Revelation 22:3-4). He will wipe away every tear (Isaiah 25:8, Revelation 7:17), and there will no longer be any death. Even during the millennial kingdom, those who resist Jesus will die (Isaiah 60:12, 66:24). But in the New Jerusalem no death will ever happen, for no sin will be present. All will have eternal, glorified bodies. There will be no more mourning because there will be no reason to grieve. Before entering the millennial age and the New Jerusalem, there could be some disappointment on the part of those who realized that they didn't maximize their stewardship in this life before Christ (1 John 2:28, 1 Corinthians 3:10-15). Perhaps there might even be a moment of realizing that some loved ones aren't there. But in the end, Jesus will make all things well by taking all sorrow away as glorified souls learn that Jesus is just, fair, good, true, and faithful. There will be no lack and only fullness. All that could bring sorrow will be taken away as Jesus Himself becomes a source of eternal pleasure and joy (Psalm 16:11). There will be no crying in heaven, for this is a paradise that is uncorrupted by sin, the curse, and by evil people (Luke 23:43). The first things, that is, that which was

typical of life on earth before the recreated new heaven and earth, will be gone and done away with forever.

**5 And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."**

The Lord Who sits on the throne has made a promise that He will make all things new. It is unfolding even now as the end draws near. First things will have to get very bad for those who love wickedness as tribulation and the destructive rule of the antichrist is sure to come. Even in the present, deceivers and deceptions increase daily (2 Timothy 3:13). But once sin and death and Satan are done away with, only newness will exist. Things won't decay and rot, people won't age or grow weak and frail, and sickness will be eliminated because the glorified body will be brand new and stay that way forever. Things won't go from order to disorder or from new to old, but everything will be new eternally.

**And He \*said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." 6 Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. 7 He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. 8 But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."**

God's promise of newness and a recreated heaven and earth are true because He is faithful and His Words endure forever. His promise of eternal life and never needing to thirst again stands true for those who repent of their sin and receive Him as Savior by faith. The revealed and glorious future is a done deal because Jesus said it will happen this way. Thus, it will happen. He has been alive from eternity past, and He will reign through eternity future. He knows the end from the beginning, and as He gives His church a glimpse of the end, they can have confidence in the future and the coming hope. Salvation is something that cannot be bought or merited, for it comes without cost. It is a free gift because Christ paid the ransom in full. This gospel is powerful to save and necessary to be preached and understood, and it will be preached until the end. Those who overcome by faith by the grace of God Who will keep them and give them strength to stand will inherit eternal life and enjoy the New Jerusalem and the presence of Jesus. Though overcoming is dependent on God's promise to finish sanctifying His own, there is also a call for believers to stand firm until the end. Though God works in and through them to His glory (Philippians 2:13), they still must work out their salvation by exercising their will and making good choices by faith (Philippians 2:12). Ultimately, true believers can rest in the fact that God will perfect them (Hebrews 12:1-2, Philippians 1:6), and it is this kindness of His that continually motivates them to keep on repenting, growing, and persevering (Romans 2:4). In eternity, the believer will literally be God's adopted son or daughter. Scripture is clear how much God loves His Son and has exalted Him, and He will show great honor and glory to those whom He has adopted into His family on account of their faith. They are joint heirs with Christ of an incredibly wonderful future inheritance (Romans 8:17). Believers will worship God forever because it is such a fulfillment and enjoyment for them. After all, it is He Who has made the New Jerusalem possible. It is His genius that designed it, and it was His mercy that saved them to begin with. However, those who didn't repent of their sin and who, instead of being clothed in the righteousness of Christ, are defined by their wicked

deeds will not be part of this eternal paradise. They were cowards, refusing to step out in faith and believe the truth, preferring to blend in with the satanic influence and pressures around them. They were abominable because they rejected God and blasphemed His Holy Spirit, the only unforgiveable sin (Luke 12:10). They were characterized by murder and hate, by immorality, by sorcery, by idolatry, and by lying. Their wickedness defined them, for their hearts were never made new in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). Their part will be in the lake of fire and brimstone. This is the second death which is eternal, conscious torment forever. Even death itself is cast into hell, and there is no escape for this eternal punishment.

**9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."**

One of the angels who was part of the final seven bowl judgments came to John and told him that he would get to see the bride of Christ, namely, the New Jerusalem. This beautiful city from out of heaven is where believers will live forever. It is all of the saints taken together which constitute the wife of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-10), and they dwell together in the New Jerusalem.

**10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, 11 having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper. 12 It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. 13 There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west. 14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.**

In the vision, John was carried away to a great, high mountain where he saw the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God Himself with His glory upon it. The city was holy and brilliant like a crystal clear diamond. Believers who, even though they may be poor in this life, will not need money in the next life, for all of God's riches will be theirs to enjoy. The city had a great, high wall with twelve gates. At each gate were twelve angels. Each gate had the name of the twelve tribes of Israel, for it was through God's promise to Abraham that the world would be blessed. This is the ultimate fulfillment of that promise to him way back in Genesis 12:1-3. The city had four sides, and three of the gates were on each side, three on the north, three on the south, three on the east, and three on the west. There were twelve foundation stones on the wall, each having a name of one of the twelve apostles. The Lord did indeed build His church upon the confession and testimony of the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20), and the gates of hell did not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18). The New Jerusalem testifies to that fact, for the gospel did go forth. All who believed the testimony of the apostles and the Word of God had this city for their eternal home.

**15 The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. 16 The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. 17 And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human measurements, which are also angelic**

**measurements. 18 The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. 19 The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; 20 the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. 21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.**

The angel with John had a gold measuring rod with which he measured the city, its gates, and its wall. The city is laid out as a square at its base, for the length is the same as the width. It is 1500 miles per side, and it also ascends upward for 1500 miles. Thus, it would appear as a gigantic cube. At the Tower of Babel, sinful man tried to reach the heavens by building up to Him, but here God brought heaven down to earth because His Son had come down to earth to save sinners. The wall of the city was 72 yards wide (144 cubits is approximately 18 inches each which comes out to 72 yards), a measurement that, while the vision was in the angelic realm, would stand true in the new earth as man would see it. The gold of this city was clear, and the whole city was made of it. The wall was a precious stone, also transparent (v. 11) to allow the illumination of Christ to shine through it all. The foundation stones were not rocks or clay, but they were giant gemstones of various colors (c.f. Isaiah 54:11-12). If reading about the beauty of sapphires, emeralds, topaz, amethyst and many other pure and new gemstones with God's glory and of heavenly origin in the New Jerusalem doesn't create a major desire to look forward to actually being able to see it in person, then something is wrong. The twelve gates were twelve giant pearls, for each gate was one single pearl. Like the rest of the city (v. 18), the streets were pure gold, transparent so that Christ's glory could shine. Even the elements of greatest wealth on a cursed earth are made new and better in the New Jerusalem. Thus, even the greatest treasures of the world, which can't be brought into eternity to begin with, wouldn't be reflective of the standard of God's newly created brand new eternal treasures.

**22 I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. 25 In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; 26 and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; 27 and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.**

There was no physical temple in the New Jerusalem, for the Lord Himself and the Lamb are the temple. Even in the first heaven, there was seen to be a temple of some kind (Revelation 11:19, 14:17, 15:5, 8), but in the new heaven God's presence will be near and real to all who dwell there. The city will have no need for the sun or any luminary such as the moon to shine upon it to give it light, for Jesus Himself and the glory of God will be its light. There will no longer be any night (Revelation 22:5), for it may be that the glorified body won't need sleep to recover. Every tribe, tongue, and nation will be represented in the New Jerusalem, for some of all tribes, tongues, and nations will have responded to faith in Christ throughout history. The gates of the kingdom will never be shut, and the glory of the nations will be

brought into the city. The glory of the nations of the old earth was immorality and abomination and spoil and plunder. The honor of the nations in eternity are those who are loved by God, who rule with Him as kingly royalty (1 Peter 2:9), and who live there with the entire earth to enjoy and explore. They are the honor of their respective peoples, tribes, and tongues, and they carry the honor and rewards with them that Christ has bestowed upon them. They will be able to walk out of the city and explore the earth, and then they can come home back to the city later. All of creation will be redeemed, and an entire new earth like the garden of Eden will be at their disposal to enjoy. There will be no more sin or death or curse, and, thus, there will be no unclean or sinful people to be concerned about. There will be no danger, and the fear of man will not be upon the animals any longer because there will be no sinful impulses for them to fear. All the people will know God and walk in His ways. Believers will never have to worry about an evil person sneaking in to their holy city or causing the earth to fall into decay and a curse like it did last time. It won't happen because only those who live in the New Jerusalem on the new earth will be those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life (Revelation 22:14-15).

## Revelation 22

**Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, 2 in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.**

The same angel then showed John a river of the water of life. The river was crystal clear, for there are no contaminants or impurities in heaven. The water is indicative of the living water of Christ, and, thus, it is pictured as emanating from the throne of God and the Lamb. He is the source of the living water. Those who drink of it in this life by putting their faith in Him will have access to Him and to the river forever (John 4:10, 7:38). God's throne will be present in the New Jerusalem. Thus, at least in a way, heaven will have come to earth in the most complete way. The New Jerusalem descended to earth from out of heaven, and God dwells there. Jesus' prayer of His will in heaven being done on earth (Matthew 6:10) has some fulfillment in the church age, even more during the millennial kingdom, but its ultimate fulfillment here. The river of life is in the middle of the street, which is of gold, for it symbolizes that life goes out from Jesus as promised to all in the city forever and ever. The tree of life on each side of the river adds to this imagery and reinforces the fact that eternal life is assured. Eating from the tree of life back after the fall would have been a disaster (Genesis 3:24), but eating of the tree of life in eternity is a guarantee of eternal bliss and satisfaction. The trees are seen producing twelve different kinds of fruit throughout the twelve months of the year. Thus, there is a sense of time in eternity, but it just goes on forever and ever. It doesn't get boring or dull, for there are always new things to enjoy, learn, and explore. Thus, there will always be more things to glorify God for. This might be hard for people to understand because sinful pleasures get old and less satisfying with time (Hebrews 11:25). However, as the ever-yielding and multi-yielding tree of life suggests, godly pleasures are always new, fulfilling, satisfying, and eternally worth enjoying. Just as love within marriage grows deeper as both learn how to love one another better with time as God enables, enjoying God will only get more wonderful with time. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. People from every tribe, tongue, and nation will be there in this heavenly glory, and God will wipe away every tear and every sorrow (Revelation 21:4). There will be no brokenness, disability, or frailty in heaven, for Jesus will make all things new. The minds of the redeemed will be made new also, able to enjoy God forever and fixate upon His glory. All the remnants of sin, death, and pain will be lost forever. Relationships will be made whole, and joy will be made full.

**3 There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; 4 they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. 5 And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.**

In heaven, there will be no curse because sin and death have been done away with. The earth has been remade new with no effects of the curse. The throne of God and the Lamb will be in the New Jerusalem, and the redeemed will willingly and gladly serve Him there. They will see the face of God and live because they are without sin or blemish any longer. Previously, seeing the face of God would kill a

person because of sin and their mortal flesh (Exodus 33:20). His name will be upon their foreheads because they belong to Him and reflect His name and glory. There will be no more night (Revelation 21:22-25) in the New Jerusalem. God Himself will illumine the redeemed and the city with His glory and presence so that the light of a lamp or of the sun will not be needed (Isaiah 24:23). The whole earth will literally be full of His glory (Isaiah 6:3). Jesus and His people will reign forever, for this eternal paradise has no end.

**6 And he said to me, "These words are faithful and true"; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must soon take place. 7 "And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book."**

The angel told John that the words that he has heard and the visions that he has seen are indeed faithful and true because they are given by God. God sent the angel to John to show to him and to the saints of God in John's time, in the present time, and in the time of the end what would take place. God didn't leave people without a warning for the end, nor did He leave His people without a reason for hope in the end. He, the same God Who hinted at these future events as He spoke through the prophets of old (Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and others) has spoken in this revelation to John concerning the times of the end. These events will take place soon and not eons of time in the future. The timeline of Scripture is but thousands of years, and Jesus' return is imminent. Believers are to live eagerly awaiting and anticipating the return of Jesus. Even though they do not know the hour or day (Matthew 24:36), they know the season, and the signs of the times are coming true with great rapidity (Matthew 24:4-14, Daniel 12:4). Jesus will be back soon, and a blessing will be upon those who listen to and heed the words in this book. A curse will be upon those who reject the truth of Jesus and who add or take away from this book (v. 18-19). God wants people to hear the truth about His Son and to be prepared for His return.

**8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things. 9 But he \*said to me, "Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God."**

John echoed what he said in chapter one that he is the one who heard and saw this revelation from God. He is a credible witness, for he is the same man who walked and talked with Christ when He was on earth the first time. He saw Him die and then saw His resurrected body. He saw Him ascend into heaven, and he was part of the apostles who helped lay the foundation of the early church (Ephesians 2:20). John made the same mistake twice (Revelation 19:10) of being so overwhelmed by the angel that he bowed before him. The angel quickly rebuked him and told him not to worship him but only God. Angels are also servants of God and servants of the saints. They are not to be worshipped. That John was open and honest about his own errors also lends veracity to his testimony. He faithfully related the events exactly as they happened, even when it cast himself in a poor light. Jesus Himself testified to the truthfulness of this prophecy (v. 20).



**10 And he \*said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. 11 Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy.”**

John was told not to seal up the words of the prophecy as if they could be filed away indefinitely and rendered useless, irrelevant, and not immediately applicable. The reality is that the time of Christ's return is near such that those of John's day and of the present day need to study this vision and be prepared for Jesus' return (see also v. 16). The message of verse 11 is not that Jesus doesn't want people to repent (2 Peter 3:9). Rather, the idea is that justice is coming. Heaven rejoices when a sinner repents, God is glorified when the righteous serve Him, and there is also joy in heaven when God's just wrath is finally poured out. Verse 11 is a call and desire for the end to come so that all will get their just due and be recompensed according to their deeds, the righteous to life and the wicked to hell (v. 13). As Isaiah 3:10-11 says, "Say to the righteous that it will go well with them, For they will eat the fruit of their actions. Woe to the wicked! It will go badly with him, For what he deserves will be done to him."

**12 “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”**

Jesus tells John that He is coming quickly (see also v. 7 and 20). His return is not way off but nearer than most people think and recognize. People need to take heed to the words in this book and consider where they stand in regard to eternity. Christ will judge every man according to what he has done (Romans 2:6). The only hope of being found by God as righteous is to trust in Christ for forgiveness and to turn from sin to life (v. 14). He is the eternal God with no beginning or end, and He will have the final say. This means judgment is sure for unbelievers, but eternal life is equally sure for believers. Believers also can be excited about eternal rewards on account of their faithfulness (2 Corinthians 5:10, 1 Corinthians 3:10-15). Thus, there is great hope for believers, and they can be excited that His return is sooner rather than later. Their coming inheritance should motivate them to purify themselves as He is pure (James 4:8) and to want to use every opportunity to advance the kingdom of God on earth (1 Corinthians 9:24, Proverbs 11:30).

**14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. 15 Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.**

Jesus wants people to understand that the only way to gain entrance to the glory and paradise that is heaven is to wash their robes in His blood by confessing Him as Lord (Romans 10:9-10) and trusting in Him to forgive them (1 John 1:9) and make them new in Him (2 Corinthians 5:17). That is how they can enjoy the fruit of the tree of life and have eternal life with Jesus in heaven forever (Revelation 22:2). That is the only way that they can gain entrance to the New Jerusalem. Those who are outside of heaven are those who did not trust in Christ for salvation, and they are not known as belonging to Christ and as those who are pure in Him. Rather, they are known and measured by their deeds which include sorcery, immorality, idolatry, murder, and lying. They lie because they are children of the devil (1 John 3:10), and they love and enjoy the wickedness that they do. Their sin defines them, and it is who they

are and what they do (1 John 3:8-9). They have no part with Jesus in heaven, and their only chance is to repent while they are still alive on earth. After that, it is too late.

**16 “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.”**

Jesus Himself sent His angel to give John this prophetic vision so that he could declare it to the churches at his time and for the present time. Jesus is coming back as King. He is the root and descendant of David (Matthew 1:6), the fulfillment of prophecy (Isaiah 9:7, 11:1; Ezekiel 37:24). He is the bright morning star, the One Who will light the New Jerusalem on His own. His Words are true and will come to pass. They are not merely John’s words (2 Peter 1:21) or the words of a rogue angel (Galatians 1:8-9), but the Book of Revelation is the very word of God.

**17 The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.**

The bride in this verse is the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:9), the dwelling place of the saints in eternity. Its glory, beauty, and wonder beckon the believer to stand firm in the present and to live for Jesus, looking forward to His return and the coming rewards. The Spirit of God Who testifies to the hearts of believers that they belong to God also beckons them to look forward to going there. Any who know Christ should beckon others to look forward to heaven and to flee the wrath to come (Matthew 3:7). Jesus wants His church to leave reading this prophecy with an eager anticipation for what is to come. Those who do not yet know Jesus and who thirst in their souls need to come and drink of the living water by turning from sin and putting their faith in Christ. The water that gives eternal life has no cost because Jesus paid it all. Salvation is not bought or earned, but Jesus made it possible because of His sacrificial death on the cross. The work of God is to believe in Him Whom He has sent (John 6:29, Romans 10:9-10). These will be granted of God to become His children (John 1:12, Ephesians 2:8-9).

**18 I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.**

A critical test of salvation and genuine heart change is how a person receives the Word of God. Some people add to the Scripture or read their own interpretation or agenda into it. Others ignore certain verses because they are difficult, they make them uncomfortable, or they do not resonate with the culture of the day. Others come up with revelation outside of the Scripture and use it to, as they say, rightly interpret the Scripture. Any form of adding or taking away from the Scripture is a sign of a lack of faith and a heart that is held captive by the devil (Matthew 5:18, Luke 16:17). Those who can’t accept the Scripture at face value even though God has promised that His Word will endure forever (1 Peter 1:25) will find themselves outside of the gospel and salvation. They will have no part in eternal life and the New Jerusalem. In God’s mind, His preserved Scripture is sufficient to save (Luke 16:29-31), and it should be heard, listened to, and received.

**20 He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**

Jesus testifies to the veracity and integrity of this prophecy, and He reminds both believers and unbelievers alike that He will return to the earth soon. There are not millions and millions of years to sort things out, nor is there some netherworld or purgatory for a second chance to repent. People must make a choice before they die, and their eternal fate will be judged accordingly. The response of the believer to Christ's promised imminent return is "let it be, come soon, for You are Lord, Jesus." Eternal life is a weight of glory (2 Corinthians 4:17) that far outweighs the entanglements (Hebrews 12:1) and passing pleasures of sin (Hebrews 11:25). His pleasures endure forever (Psalm 16:11), and they are worth persevering for in faith no matter the cost (Luke 14:25-33).

**21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.**

John's closing benediction is to pray that the grace of God will sustain believers in faith and that they will keep their focus toward the glory of the coming age. It is also a petition and prayer for unbelievers to respond to the grace of God and be saved. God wants none to perish, and He will keep spreading the gospel to the ends of the earth, even during the tribulation period (Revelation 14:6-7). He is a gracious God, and believers everywhere ought to echo John's prayer for grace to come to more and more. May it be.