

The Book of Revelation



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& Biblical Studies

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Class Syllabus

Purpose of this class:

The book of Revelation is a confusing but inspiring book of prophecy and hope for Christians. Students will learn how to properly understand and interpret the book, so that they can impart its teachings to others.

Course Objectives:

1. Students will understand the primary methods of interpreting the book of Revelation and will be able to distinguish the proper use of the book from error.
2. Students will grow in their appreciation for apocalyptic literature and the encouragement it inspires in believers.
3. Students will have a developed sense of God's justice and mercy in the world and in the after-life.

Course Requirements:

Students are required to attend class. Students who miss classes are responsible for reading the distributed material.

A term paper of five to eight pages is due on any of the topics suggested below. Papers should conform to MLA or Turabian standards. Students must cite at least eight sources in addition to the Bible.

Grades are determined by class attendance, exams, and the term paper.

Recommended Reading:

David Roper, *Revelation*, 2 Vols., *Truth for Today Commentary*, 2002.
Edward P. Myers, *After These Things I Saw*, College Press, 1997.
W. B. West Jr., *Revelation Through First Century Glasses*, Gospel Advocate, 1997.
Stafford North, *Unlocking Revelation: Seven Simple Keys*, 21st Century Christian, 2003.
Wayne Jackson, *Revelation: Jesus Christ's Final Message of Hope*, Wayne Jackson, 2004.
Ray Summers, *Worthy is the Lamb*, Broadman Press, 1951.
J. W. Roberts, *The Revelation to John*, Sweet Publishing, 1974.
Burton Coffman, *The Book of Revelation*, Coffman Commentaries.
Frank Pack, *Revelation* (Parts 1 and 2), The Living Word, Sweet Publishing, 1965.
Ferrell Jenkins, *Studies in the Book of Revelation*, Florida College Bookstore, 1993.
Gary Witcher, *The Lion and The Lamb: The Revelation of the Redeemer*, Yeomen Press, 2013.

Additional Reading:

William Hendrickson, *More Than Conquerors*, Baker, 1967.
Donald R. Taylor, *The Apocalypse: A Revelation of Jesus Christ*, WriteWay Publishing, 1996.
Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, NICNT, Eerdmans, 1977.
1992 Harding University Lectureship, *"Vision of Victory": The Book of Revelation*.
Stafford North, *Armageddon Again?*, Stafford North, 1991.
Mack Lyon, *Did You Miss the Rapture?*, Publishing Designs, Inc., 1993.
Leon Morris, *Apocalyptic*, Eerdmans, 1972.

Russell Boatman, *What the Bible Says: The End Time*, College Press, 1980.
Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium*, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1957.
James D. Bales, *Prophecy and Premillennialism*, Bales, n.d.
Robert G. Clouse, ed., *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, IVP, 1977.
B. J. Oropeza, *99 Reasons Why No One Knows When Christ Will Return*, IVP, 1994.
Richard Kyle, *The Last Days Are Here Again*, Baker, 1998.
A Study of the AD 70 Doctrine: Realized Eschatology, ed. Mike Willis, Guardian of Truth, 2006.

Term Paper Topics: (Additional topics you suggest must be approved by your instructor)

The Use of the word “Kingdom” in the Book of Revelation
The Nature of Apocalyptic Literature
The Weaknesses of the Futuristic Method of Interpreting Revelation
The Second Death
The Open Books of Revelation 20
A Comparison of the Seven Churches of Asia
A History of the Dragon
Armageddon
The Mark of the Beast
The Special Resurrection of Revelation 20
Things Revelation 20 Do Not Mention
The New Jerusalem
Recapitulation in the Book of Revelation

The Revelation of Jesus Christ (A Study of the Book of Revelation)

Introduction:

The book of Revelation is often frightening and confusing to its readers. Numerous religious groups use this book to make prophecies, to scare, and to manipulate the naïve into compliance with their agendas. Since Hal Lindsey's book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, released in the 1970s, many Christians have given more attention to Revelation. The more recent *Left Behind* series of books and films, coupled with recent conflicts in Iraq, has gendered interest in this mysterious book. For some this book is anything but a "revelation"; it remains mysterious and confusing. For this reason, it is necessary that Christians set aside their apprehensions and concentrate on the meaning of the book. By reading and understanding Revelation in its historical and spiritual context, they can receive the promised blessing of the book (1:3).

While the book of Revelation is unique in the New Testament, there are other examples of apocalyptic literature. The use of *apocalyptic* literature was actually common among Jews in the centuries prior to the writing of Revelation. Some, unfamiliar, with this type of literature, believe there is some deep, dark secret behind every detail. Frankly, those who hold the futurist interpretation of Revelation have fostered this notion by associating hard-to-understand passages with current events. Such use of the book to predict the immediate future in this century shows little attention to what the book has to say for itself. Most people in America have a notion of the futurist view of Revelation but have not investigated the history and setting of the book itself. Students who take the time to study the background will find great encouragement from this book.

In a drama there is one plot, but authors do much to create the mood surrounding the story. In the Old Testament God's appearances are coordinated with moods, e.g., lightning, thunder, trumpets, and clouds. These mood items instill fear and reverence in the hearts of those who follow God. So it is with Revelation. The Revelator, Jesus, wants to impress upon the readers not only His message of victory in the end but also to help them realize the greatness and majesty of God.

Revelation introduces itself as the "Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants" (1:1). While some think of it as the Revelation of John, it is actually the Revelation of Jesus Christ. The English title comes from the Latin *revelatio*, which in its verb form means "to reveal or unveil what was previously hidden." The Greek title "*Apokaluyi*" is taken from the first word in the text.

Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus, Victorinus, Origen, and Jerome point to John the apostle as the author. The writer calls himself John four times (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8). John speaks with authority as a prophet (1:3; 22:6-10, 18-19). Many similarities exist between Revelation (the Apocalypse) and other writings of John. Both use the term "*λογος*" or Word (John 1:1; Rev. 19:13), "the Lamb," "the water of life," "he that overcomes," and "keeping the commandments." John wrote from the Isle of Patmos, an island off the coast of Asia Minor to the seven churches of Asia (1:4,9).

No book of the New Testament is more variously interpreted, abused, and misunderstood than Revelation. Scholars understand Revelation to be "apocalyptic" literature. Apocalyptic literature was popular among the Jews from 200 BC to 200 AD. Writers used scenes from the Old Testament and reapplied them to present circumstances. Revelation is full of passages that

contain references to the Old Testament, but none are exact quotations. They are reapplications of the Old Testament events for the current situation.

What is the book of Revelation?

- A circular letter from Jesus through John to the seven churches of Asia (1:4-7).
- A book of prophecy (1:3; 10:11; 22:9, 19).
- An apocalypse or a revelation (1:1), characterized by symbols and visions.

What is the nature of apocalyptic literature?

The book of Revelation is only one of many examples of apocalyptic literature. Studying other Jewish apocalyptic writings has helped scholars and students greatly to understand the New Testament book. From 200 BC Jewish writers have used apocalyptic literature to reveal messages of hope and encouragement to one another. Some other apocalyptic books are the Book of Jubilees, 1 Enoch, 2 Baruch, 4 Ezra, the War Scroll from Qumran, the Shepherd of Hermas, the Apocalypse of Paul, and the Apocalypse of Peter.

Apocalyptic literature grew out of need for Jews to encourage one another during very difficult times. It usually tells the story of how things go from bad to worse for the people of God and how God intervenes to deliver his people (Rev. 17:14). These are tracts for hard times. On the surface they appear innocent and sometimes fanciful, but underneath they contain a valuable and meaningful message of hope.

Apocalyptic literature uses symbols or signs (1:1-2). “God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must shortly take place; and He sent and communicated (“sign”-ified) it by His angel to His bond-servant John, who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.” The Greek word for “communicated” (ἐσήμανεν) carries with it the idea of figurative representation. Strictly speaking, it means to make a message known by some sort of sign. This early statement admirably suits the symbolic character of the book. This should warn the reader not to expect a literal presentation of future history but a symbolic portrayal of that which “must shortly take place.”

Jewish apocalyptic literature takes the contemporary problems of the writer and clothes them with the language of past events. Of the 404 verses of the book, Swete says 278 allude to the Old Testament.¹ Tenney found 348 contextual connections to the Old Testament.² Perhaps ninety or more of Swete’s 278 verses contain two references, thus harmonizing Swete and Tenney. Not one of these allusions, however, is an exact quotation. If one were speaking of the fall of Rome, for instance, one would speak of the fall of Babylon. John takes scenes from Ezekiel, Zechariah and Daniel and *reapplies them to the problems of the seven churches* of his own day.

Apocalyptic literature uses “code” communication. In difficult times of war or persecution, the Jews used figurative codes to communicate things they understood among themselves but the enemy or persecutors could not understand. John, as a Jewish Christian, used this means to communicate to his brethren in the church. If the persecutors found the apocalyptic message, they would not be able to understand it. This would help ensure safety for the people of God.

¹ Henry Barclay Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1906; reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1954), p. cxl.

² Merrill C. Tenney, *Interpreting Revelation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1957), p. 101.

Some Defined Symbols in Revelation

1:20	Seven stars	Angels
4:5	Lamps	Seven spirits of God
5:6	Eyes	Seven spirits of God
5:8	Bowls	Prayers (incense)
12:9	Red Dragon	Satan
17:9	Heads	Mountains
17:12	Ten Horns	Ten Kings
17:15	Waters	People
17:18	Woman	Great City
19:14	Fine Linen	Righteous Deeds
20:14	Lake of Fire	Second Death

Miscellaneous Symbols:

Animals:

- Domestic: sheep, cows are people of God.
- Violent: goats, lions, beasts, dragons are usually enemies of God and His people
- Christ: lamb, emphasizing meekness; lion emphasizing wrath.
- Horns: power or rulers.

Important Terms:

- Seal: sign of ownership (especially by God)
- Trumpet: warning
- Bowl: pouring out of wrath
- Key: power or authority to open and close

Symbols Drawn from the Old and New Testaments		
Text	Symbol	Interpretation
2:7; 22:2	Tree of life	Symbol of eternal life (Gen. 2:9)
2:17	Hidden manna	Heavenly food, from Ps. 78:24; Heb. 9:4
2:27	Rod of iron	Judgment by Christ, from Ps. 2:9
2:28	Morning star	Reign of Christ, from Dan. 12:3
3:7	Key of David	Power of Messiah, from Isa. 22:22
4:6	Living creatures	Represent God's highest creation, from Ezek. 10:14
6:1	The four horsemen	Carrying out of God's purposes, from Zech. 1:8; Ezek. 5:17; 14:21
10:1	Mighty angel Cloud, rainbow	God's judgment, from Ps. 97:2 God's mercy, faithfulness, from Gen. 9:8-17

Symbols in Numbers:

Apocalyptic writers attributed concepts rather than giving a literal, numerical value to numbers.

One (1)	Unity or independent existence (Deut. 6:4)
Two (2)	Strength, energy, courage (Eccl. 4:9)
Three (3)	Deity, Divinity, heaven, God
Four (4)	The world (four corners, four winds, four angels, four horsemen)
Five (5)	The perfect (five fingers, five toes), well-rounded man with all members intact
Six (6)	Evil; a sinister number; since it is short of seven, it lacks something; it fails to measure up to seven, not great enough. It is somewhat like our number 13.
Seven (7)	(3 + 4 = 7) heaven and earth combined equals completeness
Ten (10)	The number of completeness, ten commandments
Twelve (12)	(3 x 4 = 12) organized completeness, 12 tribes, 12 apostles 12 x 12 = 144
Three and ½ yrs. 42 months 1260 days	Since 3 ½ is half of seven, it is incomplete, imperfect. It has restless longings not yet fulfilled. A period of time.
Multiples	Indicates intensiveness (for instance, 666 intensively evil)
Thousand	Ten is the complete number and 1,000 is a high multiple of ten. The number is to be understood as an idea of completeness not literal. (Note Psalm 50:10; 105:8)
Myriad	10,000 an unlimited number

The word “literal” is sometimes taken to mean non-figurative. The literal approach, however, recognizes the fact and use of symbolism, or figures, but attempts to understand them, as with any other literary method, on the basis of their normal and plain meaning as dictated by the normal rules of interpretation. *A literal interpretation, then, leaves room for figures of speech.* This provides a check on our imagination or prejudice.

- We should always read a passage literally and assume that the literal meaning is the prophet’s meaning unless there is adequate reason from context to read it otherwise.
- But we should always note carefully words like “as,” “like,” “as it were,” and similar expressions (cf. 6:1; 9:7) because words like “as” normally indicate a figure or symbol by way of a comparison or an analogy and *not an identification*. Compare Revelation 8:13. The text here does not say, “I heard one flying like an eagle in mid-heaven...” Some would make this refer to perhaps an angel, but I think we should take it literally. If God made a donkey speak to Balaam, why could He not, in this tremendous hour, use an eagle as a voice of woe to stress His sovereignty over creation?
- Always, where a figure of speech is suggested by the context, interpret by the analogy of Scripture. *Allow Scripture to interpret Scripture* while always bearing in mind the context and other rules of interpretation.
- Look for interpretive clues and identifications within the text itself which indicate a figure is being used. Note the following three examples:

REVELATION 9:1: All the English translations rightly view the star as a person rather than as a fragment of a star. This is indicated by the personal pronouns, “to him” in verse 1 and

“he” in verse 2. Some would say the keys were given to the fifth angel, but word order would suggest the “him” looks back to the star who fell from heaven and not the fifth angel who sounded his trumpet. The star, who is further identified as a king in verse 11, is the subject of the passage, not the angel who simply announces this judgment by blowing his trumpet.

- The star is also connected with the Abyss which is a demonic abode according to the analogy of Scripture (cf. Luke 8:30-31; Jude 6; 2 Pet. 2:4).
- Further, he is identified as the angel of the Abyss, the king of demons. This identifies him as Satan which also perfectly fits with the analogy of Scripture which in other places refers to angels as stars (Matt. 9:34; 12:25-28; John 12:31; Eph. 2:2; 6:12; Rev. 12:7f).

ISAIAH 14:12-16: Though this is a taunt taken up against the king of Babylon, most believe, due to the strong language of the passage, that it looks beyond a human being. Ultimately it must refer to Satan whom Scripture portrays as the prince of this world and the power behind many of the world rulers (Eph. 2:2; 6:12). This speaks of Satan who controlled the king of Babylon and his system of the past and will control the system of the future. In Isaiah 14:12-14, Satan is called “star of the morning,” literally, “bright, or shining one” which refers to him as a bright morning star.

LUKE 10:18: In Luke 10:18 the Lord refers to Satan as falling from heaven, like a star, and this all fits with the context and emphasis of Revelation 9 and 12. This is totally in keeping the natural use of words in language and is even found in our own English idiom. We likewise use the term “star” in both a literal and symbolical sense. We speak of the stars in heaven, but we also speak symbolically of the star of the game, of the stars in Hollywood because, like a star, they stand out among others in some particular way. It has a symbolical meaning, but it depends on the context and its normal use for its true meaning.

The literal method of approach that will be used in this study will recognize the presence of symbols, but they will be interpreted by the normal and plain meaning of the symbol derived by historical background, context, grammar, the analogy of Scripture, and general usage.

Interpreting the Book

Several principles need to guide any study of the Book of Revelation.

- **"The primary meaning of the Revelation is what John intended it to mean,** which in turn must also have been something his readers could have understood it to mean." (Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for all It's Worth*. . . , p. 209)
- **The rich and varied cultural context of the ancient world** must be the frame of reference for interpreting the names and symbols of the book, but also with a sensitivity to how creatively they are used in the book.
- **The visions and symbols should not be pressed into allegory** in which every detail has some meaning; most often the meaning is in the entire vision and its impact rather than every detail.
- **Apocalypses (or writings modeled after them) do not intend to give a detailed chronological map of the future;** the message is much more historically conditioned, and much more theologically oriented. Rather than a map of the future, it is an encouragement for the present.
- **The Bible is the best and basic interpreter of itself.** All guidance that the book of

Revelation gives to its own meaning should be followed.

- **The larger context should always interpret the immediate context since the Bible possesses unity.** To attempt to understand one isolated unit apart from the whole is to misinterpret the book. The immediate context should be taken into consideration only after looking at the larger context.
- **Do not make difficult passages in the book the key to the meaning of the entire book.** Difficult passages should always be understood as being in harmony with plain passages.
- **The principle of anticipation.** John tends to allude to a matter only to explain it at a later point. For instance the second death is mentioned in 2:11 but not explained until 20:14.
- **The principle of recapitulation.** While this book was primarily written to first century Christians, it contains specific blessing to everyone who reads and hears its message (1:3). It addresses the entire Christian age and covers it, but not in continuous succession. The principle of recapitulation holds that the book looks at the same period and the same events under different aspects in its different parts. For instance the final judgment seems to be referred to in 6:12-17; 11:15-18; 14:14-20; 16:17-21; 19:11-21; and 20:11-15.
- **The New Testament should be allowed to interpret the Old Testament.** Revelation uses Old Testament terminology with New Testament meanings.

There are many figures of speech in the Bible. Many problems occur, because uninformed students interpret a passage literally when they should interpret it figuratively. "It may truly be said that most of the gigantic errors have their root and source, either in figuratively explaining away passages which should be taken literally, or in taking literally what has been thrown into a peculiar form or Figure of language: thus, not only falling into error, but losing the express teaching, and missing the special emphasis which the particular Figure was designed to impart to them." (E.W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, p. xvi.).

"Figurative language is a pervasive feature of human discourse. It lends vivacity to expression and adds depth of meaning. In order to understand any figure, one must of course first recognize the literal meaning and then, by reflecting on the relevant points of similarity, interpret the significance of the figure."

In Revelation 1:20 John explains that the seven stars are angels or messengers and the seven golden lampstands are the seven churches. There is no further need of wondering. The Bible is indeed its own best interpreter. A plain, clear passage should always be used to make the dark and abstruse passages clear. *A difficult passage never denies or contradicts the plain teaching of the Scripture.*

"Therefore, there is no more revelation of fundamental truth in this letter that is not found in other epistles of the New Testament. God does not reveal fundamental truth through apocalyptic language. Interpreters who go to this book as their primary source for establishing doctrinal beliefs should be cautioned here concerning this point. God never revealed that which was essential to believe in order to be saved in a manner that was difficult to understand."¹

Symbolism. As in the Old Testament prophets, much of John's symbolic language is meant as evocative imagery, to elicit particular responses, rather than as a detailed literal picture of events. Readers steeped in the Old Testament and Jewish apocalyptic literature would have understood this method of interpretation; sometimes older symbols could be reapplied to new situations but

¹ Roger E. Dickson, *New Testament Commentary: Romans through Revelation*. Biblical Research Library. Cape Town, South Africa: International Bible Institute, 2001, page 1138.

were meant to evoke the same sort of response. Sometimes John simply explains what the symbols mean (e.g., 1:20); in other cases the first readers would have understood from other clues in his book or because of cultural information or knowledge of how these symbols were used in antiquity, which he and his readers both understood. John plainly expected his readers to understand his points (1:3; 22:10)²

Outline of Revelation

I. Introduction and Greeting (1:1-8).

II. Jesus in the Midst of the Seven Churches (1:9-20)

III. Letters to the Seven Churches (2:1-3:22).

1. Ephesus (2:1-7)
2. Smyrna (2:8-11)
3. Pergamum (2:12-17)
4. Thyatira (2:18-29)
5. Sardis (3:1-6)
6. Philadelphia (3:7-13)
7. Laodicea (3:14-22)

IV. God's Majesty in Heaven (4:1-11).

V. The Worthy Lamb (5:1-14).

VI. The Seven Seals (6:1-8:1).

1. The first seal: a white horse (6:1-2).
2. The second seal: a red horse (6:3-4).
3. The third seal: the black horse (6:5-6).
4. The fourth seal: the pale horse (6:7-8).
5. The fifth seal: souls under the altar (6:9-11).
6. The sixth seal: the earthquake (6:12-17).
7. God's seal on His people, keeping them from harm (7:1-8).
8. The washed multitude before the throne (7:9-17).
9. The seventh seal: silence in heaven (8:1)

VII. The Seven Trumpets (8:2-11:19).

1. The seven angels and the prayer (8:2-5).
2. The first trumpet: hail and fire (8:6-7).
3. The second trumpet: burning mountain thrown into the sea (8:8-9).
4. The third trumpet: The star Wormwood in the water (8:10-11).
5. The fourth trumpet: sun, moon and stars struck (8:12-13).
6. The fifth trumpet: locusts (9:1-12).
7. The sixth trumpet: the horsemen (9:13-21).

² Keener, C. S. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament (Re)*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

8. The little book and prophecy (10:1-11).
9. The two witnesses (11:1-14).
10. The seventh trumpet: triumph of God's kingdom (11:15-19).

VIII. Events Leading to Persecution (12:1-13:18).

1. The birth of Jesus (12:1-6).
2. The war in heaven (12:7-10).
3. Persecution of the church (12:11-17).
4. The two beasts (13:1-18).

IX. Blessing for those who follow the Lamb and Judgment for those who follow the Beast (14:1-20).

X. The Seven Bowls of Wrath (15:1-16:21).

1. The song of Moses and the Lamb (15:1-8).
2. The first bowl: foul sores (16:1-2).
3. The second bowl: sea turned to blood (16:3-4).
4. The third bowl: rivers and springs become blood (16:4-7).
5. The fourth bowl: the sun scorches men with fire (16:8-9).
6. The fifth bowl: darkness and pain (16:10-11).
7. The sixth bowl: kings from the east and Armageddon (16:12-16).
8. The seventh bowl: earthquake (16:17- 21).

X. Babylon, the Great Harlot (17:1-18).

XI. Rejoicing over the Downfall of the Harlot (18:1-19:5).

XII. The Marriage of the Lamb (19:6-10).

XIII. The Victory of the King of kings (19:7-21).

XIV. The Binding of Satan (20:1-3).

XV. The First Resurrection (20:4-6).

XVI. The Loosing and Final Assault of Satan (20:7-10).

XVII. The Final Judgment (20:11-15).

XVIII. The Adorned Bride in Heaven (21:1-22:5).

XIX. Final Warning and Encouragement (22:6-21).

Methods of Interpreting Revelation

Introduction:

The interpretation of the book of Revelation depends entirely upon the method of approach. How a student approaches this book is crucial to understanding its material. The point of view one takes in the beginning will color his interpretation throughout the book. We will examine four approaches to Revelation: Futurist, Preterist, Continuous Historical, and Idealistic.

The Futurist Method

The futurist method looks upon this book as dealing with events at the end of this world order. Futurists pride themselves on being literalists in their interpretation, taking its numbers as true mathematical values without symbolic meaning; other symbols are also seen as literal. This view is most often associated with dispensational premillennialism as set forth in the Scofield Reference Bible or in the Left Behind series. It understands the book this way:

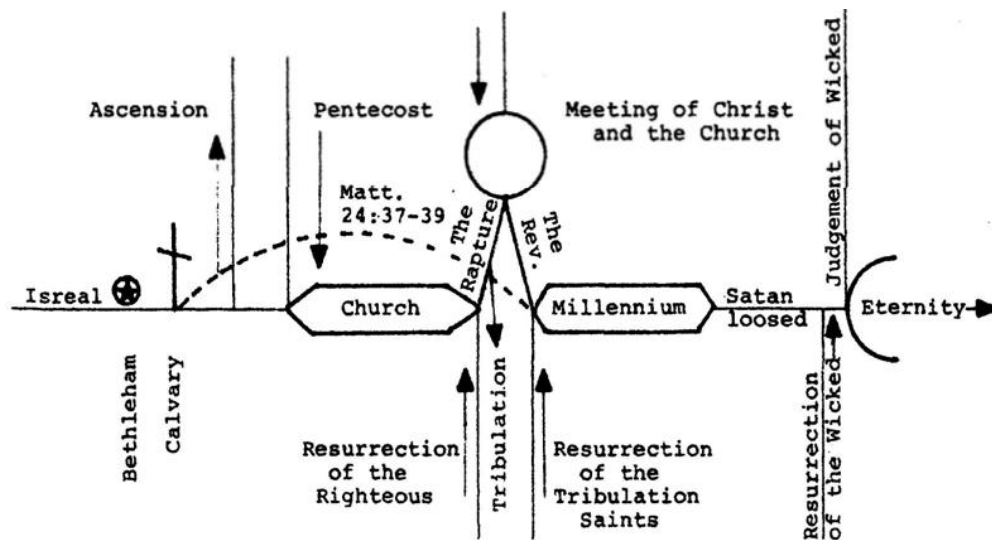
Chapters 1-3: the messages to the seven churches of Asia represent states of church history rather than a message to a specific congregation.

Chapters 4-19: give a blueprint for the seven years of the “rapture” (catching up of the saints in 1 Thess. 4:13-18), which they think immediately precedes the beginning of the millennium on earth. These seven years are the period described in Daniel 9:24-27 as the seventieth week. They separate this week from the other 69 weeks by many centuries because they regard the Jewish rejection of Jesus as automatically stopping the fulfillment of God’s plan and postponing it, till the seven year period before the second coming and the establishment of his kingdom.

Chapter 20: John describes the descent of Christ to the earth to begin His millennial reign from Jerusalem.

Other important and pertinent teachings of dispensational premillennialism:

Jesus Christ established the church as a parenthesis in history to fill the gap until the millennium is to be established.



The diagram above has been taken, with slight modification, from William E. Blackstone's book, *Jesus is Coming*, p. 72. This diagram should help to fix more clearly in the reader's mind the order of events according to the Dispensational scheme. Five of the dispensations run their course before Pentecost: Innocence, Conscience, Human Government, Promise and Law. Grace continues through the Church Age and the Kingdom during the Millennium. A similar chart for Historic Premillennialism would differ only in that the Tribulation would be included in the Church Age, there would be but one resurrection of the righteous, and the Rapture or meeting of Christ and the saints in the air would be followed almost immediately by the return of Christ with the saints to establish the millennial kingdom on earth. For futurists, the church age is our present age; and the kingdom has not yet been established.

Objections to the Futurist Approach:

1. It is inconsistent with the statements made by John throughout his book that the events predicted were in the main to take place "soon" or "shortly" (1:1,3; 3:10-11; 22:6-7, 10, 12, 20). Noticeably, this prediction occurs both at the beginning and the end of the book.
 - "must" (δεῖ) means that it is morally necessary (Matt. 16:21; 2 Cor. 5:10).
 - "shortly" (τόχρῃ) means soon, quickly, in a short time (Cf. Acts 12:7; 22:18; 25:4; Rom. 16:20; 1 Tim. 3:14).
 - "at hand" or "near" in relation to time never refers to a greatly distant time (1:3; 22:10). See Matt. 26:18; 24:32; and John 2:13.
 - John is not to seal up the book for some distant generation, whereas Daniel was to seal up his writings (Dan. 12:4).
2. The futurist method ignores the place and the needs of the seven churches of Asia, to which it is addressed. It makes the book almost entirely concerned with the end of time and offers little consolation to those enduring hardships in the first century. The first purpose of the book is to fill the immediate needs of its recipients: comfort, instruction, and warning. The futurist method pays little or no attention to these needs. (To say this is not to say that successive generations do not also have these needs or that there is no prophecy for successive generations.)

No interpretation of Revelation can be regarded as true if it fails to speak to the people to whom it was written. The persecuted saints in the seven churches (2:10) would find little meaning or consolation in a complicated scheme of things to be ushered in 2,000 years after their time. The futurist method fails to answer the question of the beheaded saints, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (6:9-11).
3. Much of the symbolism of the Book of Revelation is incompatible with the futurist method. For instance, the 12th chapter speaks not of the future but very clearly speaks of the past (the birth of Christ) in symbolic terms. This chapter is extremely difficult to fit into a "tribulation" scheme.
4. The futurist method misunderstands the spiritual nature of the kingdom and associates it with a materialistic philosophy of the kingdom. Jesus said His kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36). John believed he was already in Jesus' spiritual kingdom (Rev. 1:4-6, 9; 5:10-

11). When John refers to the “kingdom” of God in Revelation, he always speaks of it as a present reality. The futurist method denies that the kingdom has come, a view that clearly contradicts clear statements with Revelation and clear statements by other writers (Col. 1:13-14; 1 Pet. 2:9).

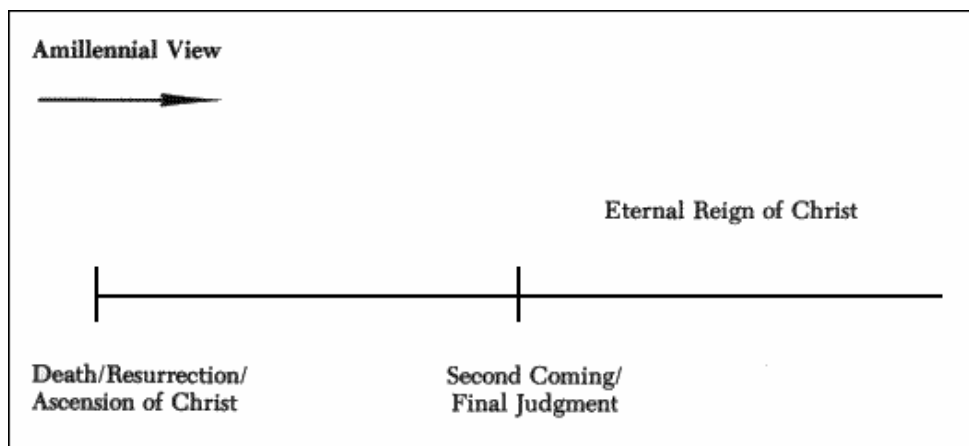
Strengths of the Futurist Method:

1. It emphasizes the second coming.
2. It encourages evangelistic fervor.
3. It takes the Word of God literally, and this is noble. A sincere study of the Bible, however, reveals that it uses different styles and methods of presenting truth. While most Biblical books should be interpreted literally, the book of Revelation gives evidence that it was written with symbols and figures.

(See Wayne Jackson’s tract, “Premillennialism: A System of Infidelity” at www.ChristianCourier.com . Search for “Premillennialism.”)

The Preterist Method

This method holds that the book speaks of the past. It was addressed only to the contemporary first century Christians, and its entire message has been fulfilled in that age. It is a monument to the history of the church at that time, but the book has no prophecy for us today. “Preter” is a Latin word meaning “past” or “beyond.”



Objection:

Many advocates find no message in the book except a message for John’s day. For them it has no application for the church today. Some passages unmistakably point to our future (20:7-22:21).

Some ultra-preterists believe that all the book of Revelation was fulfilled in 70 AD in the fall of Jerusalem. Hendricksen says: “We have not found a single, really cogent argument in support of the earlier date” (19).

Strengths:

1. It is true to the background of the work. One can understand Revelation better when he knows of the Domitianic persecution.
2. The Preterist method makes the book meaningful to those who first read and received it. The primary purpose of the book was to reveal to the persecuted Christians the nearness of Christ and the certainty of a speedy victory over the imperial policies of Rome.
3. This method yields an interpretation that is consistent with Scriptural teaching throughout the New Testament. One does not have to reinterpret the New Testament to make it fit Revelation.
4. This method also gives room for a universal application of the message of the book. Past events can bring strong encouragement to the present (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11). God is still on the throne. True principles never change. The Word of God is no less true or applicable simply because it is old.

(See the Appendix for a review of the arguments on the Date of Revelation.)

The Continuous Historical Method

This method looks upon the book as a blueprint of the history of Western Europe from the time of John to the second coming of Christ. It conceives the visions to follow one another in chronological fashion and focuses the primary attention of the book upon the Roman Catholic Church and its apostasy in the papacy. Commentators have worked out the patterns of historical happenings with great detail, paralleling these to the visions in the book. Alexander Campbell held this view, and so do John T. Hinds (Gospel Advocate commentary) and V. E. Howard. This was also the view of Wycliffe, Luther, and Albert Barnes.

As an example of this view, consider this explanation taken from Albert Barnes in his commentary. He assigned these dates to the events in Revelation:

- First Seal: Fulfilled in the state of the Roman Empire, from the death of Domitian (96 AD) to the accession of Commodus (180 AD).
 - Second Seal: From death of Commodus (193 AD) onward.
 - Third Seal: From Caracalla, 211 AD onward.
 - Fourth Seal: Decius to Gallienus (243-268 AD)
 - Fifth Seal: Persecutions under Diocletian (284-304 AD)
 - Sixth Seal: Invasion of barbarians (365 AD)
 - Seventh Seal: Fulfilled in the trumpets
-
- First Trumpet: Invasion by Goths (395-410 AD)
 - Second Trumpet: Invasion by Genseric (428-468 AD)
 - Third Trumpet: Invasion by Attila the Hun (433-453 AD)
 - Fourth Trumpet: Final conquest of Western Empire by Odoacer, King of Heruli (476-490 AD)
 - Fifth Trumpet: The Mohammedans
 - Sixth Trumpet: The Turks

- Chapter 10: The great angel is the Reformation, the little book opened is the Bible restored to general reading after its enslavement by the papacy and the Vulgate. The seven thunders heard but not recorded are the anathemas hurled against the Reformation by the Pope. They were not to be written because there was nothing in them worth reading!
- Chapter 11: The measuring of the temple, the determining of what constituted the true church at the time of the Reformation. The two witnesses represent those who testified against the errors of Rome.
- Seventh Trumpet: Final triumph of the true church.

What follows chapter 11 is not a chronological continuation but a view of the church internally. This has to do exclusively with the Catholic Church. The woman in chapter 12 is the true church. Her fleeing into the desert represents the condition of the church while the papacy was in the ascendancy. The wrath of Satan against the remnant of her seed represents the attempt of the papacy to cut off individuals when open and general persecution no longer raged.

- The First Beast: The papal ecclesiastical power that sustained the papacy.
- The Seven Vials: Seven blows at the power of the papacy, such as the French Revolution, seizure of Rome by the French, capture of the Pope himself, etc.
- The Great Harlot: The papacy.
- The Destruction of Babylon: The fall of the papacy.

Barnes' scheme gives a general idea of the "continuous historical" method. Interpreters of this school go into great detail in the development of these ideas. They compare the symbols of Revelation with the course of history so successfully that someone has observed that a study of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* along with Barnes' notes on Revelation is sufficient proof of the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures.

Objections to this View:

1. It is out of touch with the situation of the Christians to whom it was originally given. If the purpose of Revelation is to speak of the papacy, it would be of little comfort to those in Asia Minor.
2. It denies that the fulfillment of the prophecy "must shortly take place" (1:3).
3. The continuous historical method attaches an undue importance to the apostasy of the Roman Catholic Church. The pope is not the only enemy to true religion. The purpose of Revelation was not to furnish material to defeat the Roman Catholic Church. The purpose was to encourage the seven churches of Asia in a time of great persecution.
4. This method stoops to details as absurd as those of the futurist school. For instance, E. B. Elliot interprets the half-hour of silence in 8:1 as the 70 year period between Constantine's victory over Licinius (324 AD) and Alaric's revolt and invasion of the empire in 395 AD. On what basis does half an hour equal 70 years? Even Elliot does not know.
5. This method leads to calculations of times and periods that have been later falsified and refigured. This has done more harm to the Christian faith than good. It leaves faith uncertain and Biblical prophecy fallible. The day-year method of interpretation does not always figure out the way they claim (Matt. 20:19).

The Philosophy of History Method (also known as “Idealist” or Symbolic”)

This method separates Revelation almost completely from its historical background. It looks upon the book as containing a discussion of the forces which underlie events not a discussion of the events themselves. John is a revealer of true principles that are ageless. Revelation is viewed as an expression of those great principles of God’s government that may be observed in every generation. It is a book setting out the principles on the basis of which God deals with all men in all ages. Symbols are understood to refer to forces or tendencies and may thus be fulfilled over and over as these forces or tendencies are repeated in history. The belief is that we may all have an Armageddon in life.

Objections:

1. The method removes the book too far from the situation for which it was originally written. While this method gives some emphasis to God’s meeting the needs of the seven churches of Asia, its emphasis is that the principles involved are just as applicable to us today.
2. This method confines the book to too narrow a channel. It holds that the symbols refer to forces or tendencies and that there are no specific prophecies of specific events in the book. There is evidence of specific fulfillment of the events mentioned. For instance, Imperial Rome fell through a combination of three things: natural calamity, internal decadence, and outside invasion.

Strengths:

1. It recognizes that the book had some meaning to those who first received it. While this meaning is limited, it is present.
2. It recognizes the hand of God in history. He has not left the world to its own devices but is still dealing with men in ways that are consistent with His character (Heb. 13:8).
3. It recognizes that the goal toward which all history is moving is the complete triumph of the cause of God among the affairs of men. The “King of kings” will triumph (17:14; 19:11-21).

The Historical-Background Method

Introduction:

The method this study will follow is similar to the Preterist Method but not identical to it. The philosophy of history method has much to commend it. None of the previous methods are without fallacies, so it is necessary to suggest one that fits the evidence.

The Principles:

1. This method must keep in mind that the writer wrote his message primarily for the encouragement and edification of the Christians of his own time. The historical background, purpose, style of writing and other factors must be studied closely.
2. The book of Revelation is written largely in symbolic language. A symbol is that which suggests something else by reason of relationship or association. Symbols are used to picture or represent abstract ideas that the writer wants to present to his readers. Usually Scripture is to be interpreted in their plain and natural sense, unless there is some reason to take them figuratively. This is not the case with Revelation, for it was communicated by

signs and symbols (1:1). One must assume that this book, presented in a dramatic and pictorial form, has symbols to be taken figuratively, unless there is good reason for regarding them as literal.

- The defined symbols are quite clear even to the modern reader.
 - One cannot be dogmatic about that which is not so easily understood.
3. Revelation uses Old Testament terminology with New Testament meaning. The New Testament (as the final revelation) should be allowed to interpret the Old Testament. The Bible is the best interpreter of itself, and later revelation should interpret earlier revelation. All guidance that the Book of Revelation gives to its own meaning should also be followed. Similar terminology to Daniel, for instance, does not mean that Revelation is speaking of the same thing as Daniel.
 4. For the true meaning of Revelation, one must seek to grasp the visions or series of visions as a whole without pressing the details of the symbolism. Details are often given for dramatic effect and do not add to the meaning of the passage. The details of a vision may have significance; but in most instances, they are used only to fill out the scenery. (Note Rev. 6:12-17, where there is a tremendous impression of approaching doom and human terror. This is sufficient without asking the minute symbolism of each “falling” star, the removal of the heavens, and the moving of each mountain. The safest policy is to find the central truth and let the details fit in the most natural way.)
The larger context should always interpret the immediate context. To attempt to understand one isolated unit apart from the whole is to misinterpret the book.
 5. The prophetic nature of the book should be considered. As a prophet, John is more concerned with spiritual principles than with detailed predictions.
 6. One should not make difficult passages in the book the key to the meaning of the book. Difficult passages should always be understood as consistent with plain Scriptures.
 7. While this book is addressed to first century Christians, it contains a specific blessing to everyone who reads and to everyone who hears the message (1:3). It addresses and covers the entire Christian age but NOT in succession.
 - **The principle of recapitulation** (a newsman might say, “And now to ‘recap’ the news!”) holds that the book looks at the same period and the same events under different aspects in its different parts. For instance the final judgment is a recurring theme (6:12-17; 11:15-18; 14:14-20; 16:17-21; 19:11-21; and 20:11-15).
 8. Revelation addresses chiefly the imagination, somewhat like Psalms addresses chiefly the emotions. The books of the Bible are directed to different faculties of man. Romans appeals to reason, Psalms to emotions, and Proverbs to morals. As the expositor reads the book, he must seek to see in his mind’s eye the various episodes intense with drama, just as if he were standing on Patmos with John and viewing them. He must yield himself to the majesty of the moment, as Christ walks among His broken churches with healing for the hurting. Unless the reader can do this, he will miss the greatest message of the book. God gave us Revelation to create an impression of His own greatness and victory over evil. This impression becomes ever more real as one yields himself to the drama of the churches in Asia Minor holding fast to Him.

Significant Background Information:

The Social Setting of the Book of Revelation

Christians in Asia Minor were experiencing harassment from their Jewish neighbors. Judaism enjoyed privileged status under Roman rule. Josephus cites a long list of privileges extended to Diaspora Jews (Ant. 16.6.2). Ephesus, Pergamum, Sardis, and Laodicea each had Jewish communities. In the early years of the church, Rome did not see a distinction between Christianity and Judaism. Later, though, Jewish enemies could act as informants to Rome against Christians. This scenario might explain the references to “the synagogue of Satan” in Rev 2:9 and 3:9 (DeSilva, “The Social Setting of the Revelation,” 279).³

1. *John wrote Revelation during a period of suffering, trial, and persecution.*

- 1:9 John banished to Patmos
- 2:10 Some in prison, be faithful unto death
- 2:13 Antipas put to death for his faith
- 3:10 Philadelphians to be kept from the hour of trial coming on the whole world
- 6:9-10 Souls who had been beheaded for the word of God and for the witness they bore cry out for vengeance. Implied is that more persecution awaits. They are raised to reign with Jesus (20:1-4).
- 17:6 The Harlot is drunk with the blood of saints and martyrs (18:24; 19:2; cf. 16:6; 20:4).
- 13:15-18 The Mark of the Beast.

2. *The rising of Emperor worship and the imperial cult.*

- Julius Caesar boldly claimed divine honor and placed his statue among those of the gods in the temples.
 - Augustus sanctioned temples to himself in conjunction with the goddess Roma. The cult thus established continued through the following reigns, varying somewhat in the emphasis laid upon it according to the disposition of the respective emperors.
 - Caligula was not content with voluntary worship but demanded his subjects everywhere to do homage to his statue. He tried to set up a statue in the temple at Jerusalem but died before he was able to.
 - By the time of Nero, the imperial cult was firmly established and in control. Because of the great fire, Nero declared Christianity to be illegal. He began a limited persecution of Christians around Rome.
 - Not until the reign of Domitian, however, did failure to honor the emperor as a god become a political offense and punishable (Rev. 13:4, 15-18). At this time Christians became guilty of “atheism,” not believing in the “god” Domitian. Domitian’s persecution was more widespread than Nero’s. Domitian was so conceited that he would not read a letter addressed to him that failed to give him the title, “Our Lord and God Domitian.” He had images of himself erected throughout the empire.

3. *Why Rome Persecuted Christians:*

- Christianity was an illegal religion—*religio illicita*. The Roman government tolerated the religions of conquered provinces and gave a right to the conquered people to place an image of their deity in the “Hall of the Gods,” if they so desired. As long as the religion did not try

³ Seal, D. (2012, 2013, 2014). Revelation, Book of. In J. D. Barry, L. Wentz, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair-Wolcott, R. Klippenstein, D. Bomar, ... D. R. Brown (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

to proselyte or interfere with other religions, it was regarded as legal. As a religion, Christianity would not admit to being one of many or bow down to other gods. Christians sought to take the gospel of Christ to the whole world, believing that He was the only way, truth or life. One can see easily why it was an outlaw religion.

- Christianity aspired to be the universal religion. To the Romans, the State was the main thing; but Christians wanted the kingdom of God to grow throughout the whole earth. For them the Lord Jesus was the main thing. Christians had no sympathy with the idea that religion was to be promoted only as an aid to the state. Their position set them up as a dangerous rival to the best interests of the state.
- Christianity was an exclusive religion. Its adherents refused to mingle freely with the heathen social life and customs. They refused to associate with the pagan world because of its idolatrous and immoral practices. Their refusal to go to idol temples and to have idols in their homes caused them to be regarded as enemies of the gods. Nothing was too bad to be believed of such people. Christians became the curse of society.
- Pagans accused Christians of all kinds of evil. They were known to hold secret services at night and to be very fond of one another. The Romans put these facts together and decided that these meetings were for the gratification of lust on a grand scale. When the pagans heard Christians speak of “eating flesh and drinking blood” (references to the Lord’s Supper), they accused them of cannibalism—eating the bodies and drinking the blood of the offspring of their orgies. Because Christians called each other brother and sister, they were accused of incest. This popular hatred and misunderstanding created most of the persecution that Christians endured.
- Christians refused to go to war. There were two reasons for this according to Tertullian. First, a part of the oath and initiation of the soldiers included service to the idols of the State and the wearing of idolatrous insignia on their uniforms. Second, Christ had taken their sword from them and had given them the way of peace. Their reasons meant nothing to the populace. The Romans hated them and accused them of being traitors.
- Christians usually came from the poor and the outcast. There were “not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble” (1 Cor. 1:26). This fact caused Christianity to be looked down upon by pagans who regarded themselves as the “respectable” in society.
- The Romans held Jews in contempt; and that contempt was shared with the Christians. Because Christians would not compromise, the Romans actually showed greater contempt for them than the Jews.
- Because of their Christian zeal and enthusiasm, Romans regarded them as wild fanatics. They shocked the sensibilities of the passive philosophers of the day. (Those who have no allegiance to one god or to one faith can hardly endure those who have conviction.)
- Christianity came into conflict with the material interests of many of the Roman temples. Their refusal to worship at pagan temples meant a loss in revenue for priests and for maker and venders of sacrificial animals (Acts 19:24-28).
- Christians refused to worship the emperor. If they had been content to worship the emperor as the chief deity of the empire, they would have been tolerated. But Christians could not say that “*Kurios* Caesar” (Lord Caesar) was superior to their “*Kurios Christos*” (Lord Christ). Therefore, persecution and martyrdom became their lot. Domitian tried to annihilate this traitorous faith. Because of their attitude toward the Roman gods, the Christians were blamed with all the calamities which befell the empire. If there was a flood on the Tiber, the Christians were blamed. A famine, an earthquake, military reversals—all were blamed on the Christians.

Emperor Worship under Domitian

Rome was not only the center of government and wealth, it was the headquarters of religion as well. The religion of the day was a mixture of fear, superstition, and ceremony. The majority of the people believed in the existence of the gods, but their confidence was shaken when their gods failed to help them. Form and ceremony had occupied a large part of the religion of the day. For many years the failure of their religion in a practical way had led to a breakdown in the old religions. Christianity had found this condition to be fertile soil and had realized great harvests from the sowing of the gospel seed. In the background of Roman law, however, was the fact that the Emperor was considered divine. Some of the emperors capitalized on this; others did not. Domitian placed great emphasis on the belief that he as emperor was a god. Domitian delighted in being called “Lord and God” and in being worshiped. He was indeed power hungry to control the Senate, the people, and the army.

To the Christian homage to a man was idolatrous and an utter denial of faith in Christ. To the Romans the refusal to worship the Emperor was a sign of disloyalty to the State and an act of treason. Emperor worship was forced upon the Christians as a test of their loyalty to the State. At first Christians were called upon to perform the ceremonies of loyal service and worship to the emperor—the placing of a pinch of incense upon the altar. To refuse was disloyalty; to agree was to prove that one was not a Christian. There were many who saw in this meaningless act no harm done to their Christian faith and performed it so as to escape punishment. Such Christians were practically ostracized by their brethren for denying the faith. As the demand for emperor worship grew, Christians were outlawed as a body as soon as their adherence to the sect became known. Detailed methods were worked out to enforce the State religion and to punish the Christians. The emperor appointed an official body known as the *praefectus urbi* for the enforcing of worship in each town. These were responsible for punishing people in the various cities over a province. The group with the greatest authority was the *concilia*, composed of deputies sent from the various towns or divisions of a province. Their duty was to build images of the emperor, altars for his worship, and in every way sponsor the state religion and make it effective. They forced the people to worship the emperor. When people refused to worship the emperor, they identified and punished them in various ways.

Many Christians refused and were beheaded, exiled, or lost all their property. Some were tortured until they confessed “Lord Caesar.” This may explain what is said in Rev. 13:5. One can better understand and appreciate the encouragement the book of Revelation gives to Christians, if one knows this background of the conditions and the crisis facing the seven churches. One of the reasons this punishment fell heavy in Asia Minor is because this was a major stronghold of Christianity after 70 A.D. Revelation shows that even so great a power as Rome was doomed to be overthrown. In the end the kingdom of God would triumph, and Christ will reign supreme. Revelation presents a ringing call to maintain loyalty to the faith at all costs, even in the face of martyrdom (Rev. 2:10). The worship of Caesar did not begin with the deification of the Emperor but with the deification of Rome itself. They deified the success and power of Rome.

Christians Considered Themselves Loyal

Christians considered themselves loyal to the Emperor and the Roman State. They followed the teaching of Scripture and sought to be good citizens.

- Matt. 22:21 render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s
- Rom. 13:1-7 be subject to the higher powers

- 1 Tim. 2:1-2 pray for kings
- 1 Pet. 2:13-14 be subject to every ordinance.

Pilate therefore said to Him, “You do not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you, and I have authority to crucify you?” Jesus answered, “You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me up to you has the greater sin.” (John 19:10-11)

The Nero Redivivus Myth

The Nero *Redivivus* myth is another evidence for the Domitian period. This myth held that Nero did not actually die from his self-inflicted wounds but escaped to the East, where he was appreciated by the Parthians, and that he was gathering an army to come back and take possession of Rome. This myth took several years to develop; so it could not fit the Neronian period (prior to 70 AD), but could well enough be established by the Domitian period (81-96 AD) to be successfully used for the purpose of illustration by John in Revelation. Many scholars have associated this myth with Rev. 17:8.

The Destruction of the Temple

If Revelation 11:1–2 is interpreted literally, it can indicate that Jerusalem had been under prolonged attack and that the altar and outer court of the temple either had been seized or could not be kept from the Roman forces, whereas the sanctuary itself continued to be preserved by God. We think it best here, however, to interpret this passage as a literal reference to the temple in Jerusalem but a figurative reference to the church, which is now the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16-17; cf. Eph. 2:19-22; 2 Pet. 2:5).

Chapter One The Lamb

Preface 1:1-8

The revelation of Jesus Christ. Revelation is from ἀποκαλύψις, to “take the veil from, to uncover.” This book is a revelation (1:1), a prophecy (1:3), and a cyclical letter (1:4-7). The phrase “made it known” (ESV) or “communicated” (NASB) in Revelation 1:1 is a rendering of the past tense of σημαίνω (*sēmainō*), which can mean to communicate by symbols. The particular nuance of this word in Rev 1:1 is confirmed by its parallelism with “show” (δείκνυμι, *deiknymi*) in the first part of Rev 1:1. The word “show” throughout Revelation always introduces communication by symbolic vision (Rev 4:1; 17:1; 21:9–10; 22:1, 6, 8).

The revelation came from God through Christ through an angel through John to His bondservants in the seven churches of Asia (1:1-4).

God | Christ | angel | John | bondservants in the seven churches

The revelation is about the “things which **must shortly take place**” (1:1; 22:6). Jesus told John, “Write therefore the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall take place after these things” (1:19).

“**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” (1:3). There are seven blessings, seven beatitudes in the book of Revelation.

1:3	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.
14:13	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, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them."
16:15	"Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his garments, lest he walk about naked and men see his shame."
19:9	And 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."
20:6	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.
22:7	"And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book."
22:14	Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.

The author, **John**, is in tribulation, exiled to the island of Patmos (1:1, 4, 9). The island of Patmos. Patmos is a small island (ten miles by six miles) in the Aegean Sea located about thirty- seven miles southwest of Miletus. The Romans used such places for political exiles. John’s mention of the island in Revelation 1:9 probably means that he was such a prisoner, having been sent there for preaching the gospel. Eusebius (an early church father) wrote that John was sent to Patmos by Emperor Domitian in A.D. 95 and released after 1 1/2 years.

The **seven churches of Asia** are spoken of as bondservants (1:1), loved and released from sin by his blood (1:5), a kingdom (1:6), priests (1:6), and partakers in the tribulation and kingdom (1:9).

Grace to you, and peace from:

- Him who is, and who was and who is to come (1:4). See Exodus 3:14-15.
- Seven Spirits before the throne (1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6). Probably the Holy Spirit, understanding that “seven” is figurative not literal.
- Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

He has **made us to be a kingdom**. Each time the word kingdom, referring to the kingdom of God is used in Revelation, it is used in the sense of a present reality. See 1:9.

"I am **the Alpha and the Omega**," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet, and omega is the last letter. God is first and last; He always exists. He is the Almighty who can do all things (cf. 21:5-

7). The word “Almighty” argues that God, not Caesar, is the Lord of all. Jesus also speaks of himself as “Alpha and Omega” (1:17; 22:13,16).

John said he is a “**brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom**” (1:9). John firmly believed he was already a citizen in the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

John said, “I was **in the Spirit on the Lord's day**.” The Lord's (κυριακον) Supper (1 Cor. 11:20) was eaten on the Lord's (κυριακη) day (Rev. 1:10). This word κυριακη is used only twice in Scripture. Early church history confirms that the Lord's day, the day of the Supper, was the first day of the week. We have no record of the Lord's Supper being observed on any other day. ‘Lord’ here clearly signifies Christ and not God the Father. It is Christ's own day. It belongs to him because of his resurrection, when he was ‘designated Son of God in power’ (Rom. 1:4). While some scholars have suggested Easter or the Day of Judgment as possibilities for the Lord's day, we have little reason to suppose it is anything but the first day of the week.

The nature of Jesus Christ

- Faithful witness (1:5)
- Firstborn of the dead (1:5; Rom. 6:9; Col. 1:18). The term firstborn does not mean that Jesus was the first created being, for He is the creator (Col. 1:15-18; John 1:1-3). The term “firstborn” in this instance reflects the position of priority and leadership not of chronology. Jacob and Judah were the firstborn in priority of their families, but neither was firstborn in chronology. Jesus is first and last—He, like the Father, has always existed.
- Ruler of the kings of the earth (1:5). This designation would have encouraged the early Christians greatly, since they were being persecuted by the Roman kings. This reaffirmed their faith that Jesus Christ was indeed in control of everything.
- He loosed us from our sins by His blood
- He made us to be a kingdom (1:6)
- He is coming with the clouds, and every eye shall see Him. All the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him (1:7). See Acts 1:9-11.
- A loud voice like a trumpet (1:10)

- He is in the middle of the seven golden lampstands or churches (1:12-13, 20).
- One like a son of man (1:13; 14:14). See Dan. 7:13; Matt. 16:27.
- Dressed in a robe reaching to his feet, girded with a golden girdle across His breasts (1:13); in his right hand seven stars or angels (1:20); out of his mouth a sharp two-edged sword (1:16; 2:12; Heb. 4:12).
- His appearance:

Head and hair	white like white wool, like snow
Eyes	like a flame of fire
Feet	like burnished bronze, glowing in a furnace
Voice	like the sound of many waters
Voice	like a trumpet (1:10)
Face	like the sun shining in its strength
- John fell at Jesus' feet as a dead man, but Christ laid his hand on John's shoulder and comforted him (1:17). Unlike the angel of 22:8-9, Jesus does not rebuke John for falling down and worshiping.
- I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys (a sign of power) of death and of Hades. (1:17-18; 9:1; 20:1-3)

Suffering for Christ's sake

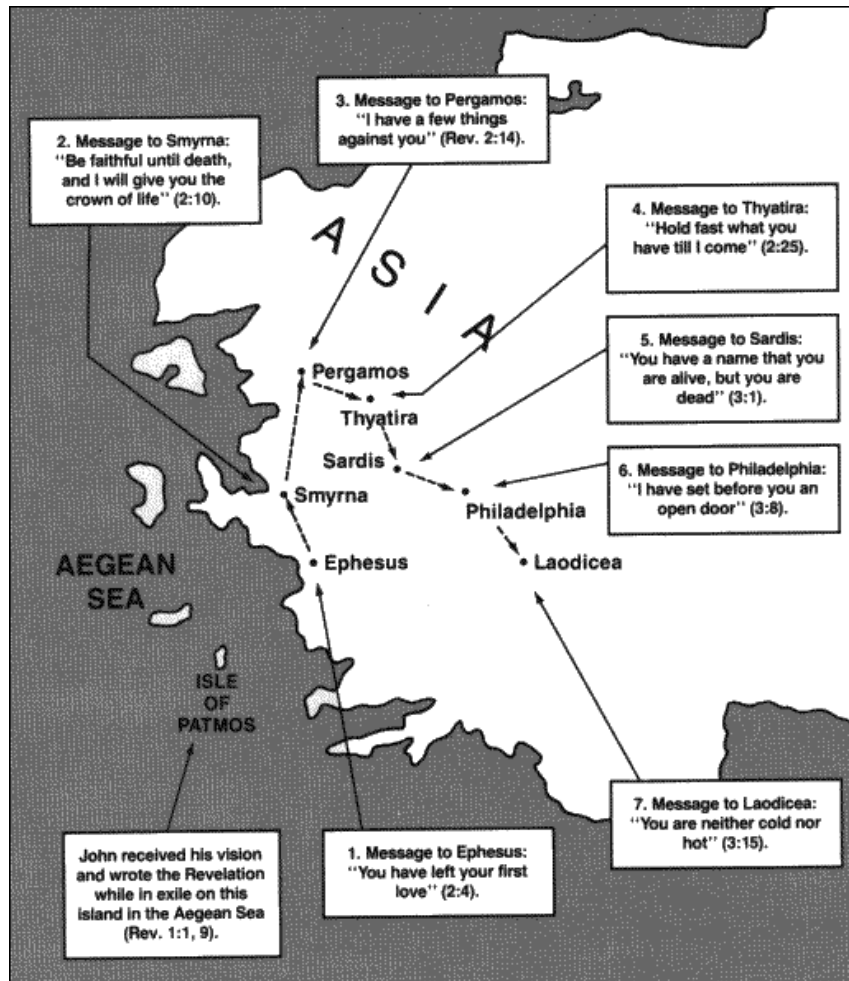
The theme of suffering runs right through the New Testament. Jesus suffered, and warned his followers that they would suffer too. As John writes down the messages of Christ for the seven churches in western Turkey, the thought of persecution and martyrdom is never far away. But Jesus himself triumphed through suffering—and now he promises to share his victory with all who keep faith till the end.⁴

⁴ Knowles, A. (2001). *The Bible guide* (1st Augsburg books ed., p. 704). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg.

The Seven Churches of Asia Chapters 2-3

Introduction:

John wrote seven letters to seven, real congregations, suffering real problems. Jesus was intimately acquainted with each congregation as One who walks in the midst of the churches. He knew their strengths, their weaknesses, and their future. There were other congregations in Asia Minor such as Troas (Acts 20:5); Colossae (Col. 1:2); and Hierapolis (Col. 4:13). "These seven were probably simply representative of the needs of God's people at large."⁵



The form of these seven letters generally follows this pattern:

1. Salutation: "To the angel of the church in ... write."
2. Self designation or description of Jesus as the author.
3. Commendation or complimentary remarks.
4. Condemnation or non-complimentary remarks.
5. Warning or threat.
6. Exhortation: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."
7. Promise(s): "to him who overcomes"

⁵ Wayne Jackson, *Revelation: Jesus Christ's Last Message of Hope*, 154.
Phil Sanders

I. The Self-Designations of Descriptions.

Notice how these descriptions in chapters 2 and 3 parallel the description in chapter one.

1:6, 13	In his right hand seven stars In the midst of the seven lampstands	Ephesus 2:1
1:17, 18	The first and the last and the Living One Was dead, am alive forever more	Smyrna 2:8
1:16	Sharp two-edged sword	Pergamos 2:12
1:14, 15	Eyes like a flame of fire, feet like unto burnished brass	Thyatira 2:18
1:4, 16	Seven spirits, seven stars	Sardis 3:1
1:5, 18	Faithful and true witness, keys of David Keys of Death and Hades	Philadelphia 3:7
1:5	Faithful and true witness, firstborn of the dead, Beginning of creation	Laodiceans 3:14

What Christ knew, he had “full knowledge of.” Christ knows all things (Heb. 6:10; Prov. 15:3). The phrase, “I know your works,” occurs in 2:2, 9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 15. Christ is not blind and cannot be deceived.

Ephesus: Strong in Doctrine But Low in Love

It was right for them to test evil men and expose the imposters but wrong for them to lose their first love. Their intolerance for the Nicolatans was commended. The Ephesians had great love for God and one another (Acts 19:19-20; 20:36-38; Eph. 1:15). The opposite of love is not hate but apathy. Ephesus was a fallen church, needing repentance and restoration. They needed to remember, repent, and do the first works, or the Lord would remove them. Ephesus was high in morals and doctrine but low in love.

Ephesus was one of the great cities of the ancient world and by far the largest in Asia Minor with a population of 250,000. It was proud of its title ‘Temple Warden’, which originally referred to the temple of Artemis (Diana) but later included two temples devoted to the worship of the Roman emperors. The temple of Artemis was a famous place of refuge for fugitives, but its vaunted ‘salvation’ was greatly abused, and the surrounding area gave the criminal a sanctuary beyond the reach of the law, becoming the headquarters of organized crime. The interest of the populace in magic and superstition is illustrated in Acts 19:13–20. Paul founded the church in Ephesus and made it the center for evangelizing the province (Acts 19:1–10). According to later tradition the apostle John and Mary, the mother of Jesus, settled there.⁶ Paul and Timothy had put many years into the church at Ephesus. Paul wrote an epistle to the church at Ephesus, and two epistles to Timothy while he worked at Ephesus.

Smyrna: Faithful in Suffering

Smyrna claimed to be the first city in Asia in beauty, in literature, and in loyalty to Rome. They were poor in possessions but rich in God (Luke 16:11). They were faithful in persecution.

⁶ Carson, D. 1997, c1994. *New Bible Commentary : 21st century edition* (electronic ed. of the 4th ed.) (Rev. 2:1). InterVarsity: Downers Grove

There is no condemnation or warning to this church. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. Their testing would last ten days but would come to an end. Smyrna was a seaport, and its prosperity on account of its position was well established before Christian times and continues (as Izmir) to this day. The first city on the site was destroyed in 600 BC, and it was rebuilt by the successor of Alexander the Great. The image of the phoenix, the legendary bird that rises from the ashes of its destruction, was applied to Smyrna. This is not the only instance of a church reflecting the history of the city in which it is set. For one theme dominates this short letter, that of suffering persecution.

Polycarp was burned here in 155 A.D. To the victors in the “Crown of Asia” goes the “crown of life” (cf. James 1:12; 2 Tim. 4:8). Of the two Greek words for “crown,” this one is *stephanos*, the victor’s crown. The second word for crown is *diadem*, which represents the power to rule. The dragon (12:3) and the beast (13:1) wear *diadems*. They are never awarded a *stephanos*. Christ wears both a *stephanos* (Rev. 6:2) and a *diadem* (19:12). Only He has both the power and the right to rule.

Pergamum: Satan’s Throne

Pergamum was the centre of the religious life of the province. The city was dominated by a huge hill that rose to 1000 ft above sea level and had many temples. The most famous was the temple of Asclepius, the god of healing, closely associated with the snake. There was also a huge altar of Zeus, built to commemorate a notable victory. Most important of all, Pergamum had the first temple in the area dedicated to Augustus and Rome, hence it became the center for the worship of the emperor in the province. Since this was as much a political as a religious affiliation, it created peculiar problems for Christians. The titles of Lord, Saviour and God were constantly applied to the emperor. Christians were forced to face Satan’s throne.

Unfortunately Pergamum held to the teachings of Balaam, involving the eating of meat sacrificed to idols and immorality. After Balaam uttered his oracles of blessing instead of cursing on Israel (Numbers 22–24), the Israelites engaged in sexual immorality with the Moabite women and ate their sacrifices and worshipped their gods (Num. 25:1–2). In Num. 31:16 it is stated that the Moabite women acted by the counsel of Balaam.

They also held to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Nicolaus of Antioch (Acts 6:5) is supposed to have given his name to a group in the early church who sought to work out a compromise with paganism, to enable Christians to take part without embarrassment in some of the social and religious activities of the close-knit society in which they found themselves. It is possible that the term Nicolaitan is a Graecized form of Hebrew “Balaam,” and therefore allegorical, the policy of the sect being likened to that of the OT corrupter of Israel (Num. 22). In that case the Nicolaitans are to be identified with groups attacked by Peter (2 Pet. 2:15), Jude (11) and John (Rev. 2:6, 15 and possibly 2:20–23), for advocating sexual laxity within the church. Eusebius states that this group lasted only a short time (*History of the Church* 3.29.1).

This sin began as “deeds” in Ephesus (v. 6) but became a doctrine in Pergamos. So it goes: deceivers introduce false activities into the church, and before long these activities are accepted and encouraged.⁷

The *white stone* is ambiguous, in that it had a variety of meanings and uses in ancient society. An individual on trial would be given by the jurors a stone, a black one indicating guilt, a white one acquittal. If this were in mind the promise would be related to that given to the Smyrneans (2:11). A custom existed when two persons wishing to seal friendship, broke a stone

⁷ Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). *Wiersbe’s expository outlines on the New Testament* (p. 799). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

into two and each retained a half, thereby giving access to each other's home. An extension of such a custom was the use of a stone for admission to a feast. There is evidence of donating to victors at the games a stone which served as a reward and was provided out of public funds.

Much would depend, in interpreting possibilities of understanding, as to whose *new name* written on the stone is in mind. If it were the Christian's, then the promise would indicate entrance into a distinctive relationship in the new life of the kingdom of God. If it were the name of God (*cf.* 3:12), or of Christ (*cf.* 19:12b), then it would denote a new and hidden relationship with the Lord.⁸

Thyatira: Tolerating sin.

Thyatira was a city of craftsmen and merchants. The first convert in Macedonia was Lydia of Thyatira, a seller of purple cloth (Acts 16:14). The major problem for the church was posed by the many trade guilds in the city. Thyatira was useful to the Romans as a supplier for their garrison in nearby Pergamum, so they could overlook the guilds that they normally discouraged. The Christians, however, could not overlook the behavior of the guilds. Guilds had a patron god; the local god of Thyatira, a representation of Apollo, probably served that purpose. The feasts of the guilds were held in a temple and were viewed as religious occasions; the meat was offered to the god, so that participators shared it with him, and the occasions not infrequently ended in drunkenness and fornication. The church at Thyatira was strong in faith, works and love but too tolerant of sin.

Jezebel is clearly a symbolic name, recalling King Ahab's queen, who introduced idolatry into Israel and threatened the continued existence of true religion (see 1 Ki 16:29–32; 2 Ki 9:22). The so-called "prophetess" Jezebel would have been of the order of the Nicolaitans and encouraged the members of the church to have no scruples about participating in the meetings of their guilds and so freely engage in sexual immorality and the eating of foods sacrificed to idols. This is typical of the 'beyond morality' attitude of the libertarian Gnostics (the deep things of Satan). Jesus gave her time to repent, but she doesn't want to. The Lord's patience does have an end.

Sardis: the Dead Church

Sardis was a city with an illustrious past of which it was proud, but it had less to be proud of in John's time. The capital of the ancient kingdom of Lydia, it reached the peak of its wealth about 700 BC under Gyges, known to the Assyrians as Gugu. The Jews called this king Gog, and he was thought of as symbolic of the evil powers to arise at the end of the age. He was slain in a surprise attack by the Cimmerians. The city sank into oblivion after the Persian conquest, but it recovered something of its prestige when, through the help of Tiberius, it was rebuilt following an earthquake in AD 17. The church in Sardis reflected the history of the city; once it had had a name for spiritual achievement, but now it was lifeless (1).

Two other elements in the city's life are echoed in the letter. Sardis was built on a mountain and had an acropolis which was viewed as impregnable. 'To capture the acropolis of Sardis' was proverbial in Greek to do the impossible. But no less than five times the acropolis was conquered, twice through lack of vigilance. The parallel with the church's lack of wakefulness and its dire situation is striking (2–3). Sardis was also a centre for woolen goods and claimed to be first in the business of dyeing wool; this, too, seems to be reflected in verses 4–5.

⁸ Carson, D. 1997, c1994. *New Bible Commentary : 21st century edition* (electronic ed. of the 4th ed.) (Re 2:18). InterVarsity: Downers Grove

If they did not repent, Jesus would come like a thief. They knew this picture all too well. When besieged by the Persians in 549 B.C., Croesus, then the king of Lydia, left unguarded the precipitous on three sides of the city. After a 14 –day siege, Cyrus offered a reward to any man who finds a way to scale the apparently unscalable cliffs. One of his soldiers, Hyeroeades, noticed a Lydian soldier accidentally drop his helmet over the battlements and noted his path to retrieve it, thus revealing an unguarded oversight. In the darkness of the following night, Hyeroeades and a Persian party climbed the cliff and clambered over the unguarded battlements to take the city. But the Sardians did not learn their lesson: in 214 B.C. the formidable cliffs again proved susceptible to a hazardous climb when Lagoras repeated the exploit of Hyeroeades and the city was similarly taken by Antiochus. Hegel said, “History teaches that man learns nothing from history.” The Sardians were not watchful.

Philadelphia: the Church of the Open Door

Philadelphia, like the neighboring town of Sardis, suffered grievously from earthquakes and, while not so badly affected as the latter in the catastrophic earthquake of AD 17, it experienced them more frequently. Of this aspect of the city’s life Strabo wrote, ‘The walls never cease being cracked, and different parts of the city are constantly suffering damage. That is why the actual town has few inhabitants, but the majority live as farmers in the countryside, as they have fertile land’. The insecurity of life in Philadelphia is contrasted in v 12 with the promise of a permanent place in the city of God, and they who live in it will not have to find a safer place outside its walls! The whole letter is dominated by the sure and certain prospect of life in the kingdom of God.

Laodicea: Affluent and Lukewarm

Laodicea was situated on the bank of the River Lycus. Its position at the junction of three imperial roads crossing Asia Minor favored its development as a wealthy commercial and administrative center. Three facts known throughout the Roman world about the city throw light on this letter: it was a banking centre, whose banks even Cicero recommended for exchanging money; it manufactured clothing and woolen carpets, made especially from the glossy black wool of sheep reared locally; and it had a medical school and produced medicines, notably an eye ointment made from a pulverized rock in the area. The stern characterization of the church’s spiritual life (17) and the call for its repentance (18) are both couched in terms of these three activities of the city. They needed true gold, white garments, and eyesalve from God. Instead they depended too much on their own power and had become lukewarm toward God. Such a state led Jesus to want to spew them out of His mouth.

Jesus rebukes those who He loves. He loved them, when they were lukewarm toward Him. He urged them to be zealous therefore and repent. Like the church at Ephesus, they had a problem of the heart. Laodicea was lukewarm, wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked *but did not know it*. Oddly, Laodicea had no problems with persecution or with heresies. Their problem was with affluence and success. This is reminiscent of Deut. 8:7-14. Jesus knocks at the door and seeks fellowship even with the most distasteful of churches.

Promises to Those who Overcome

**The following images depict ways in which God will be God to those who conquer
(Revelation 21:7)**

Promise	What Will Happen	Fulfillment
2:7	Will eat from the tree of life	22:2
2:11	Will not be hurt by the second death	20:6; 21:7-8
2:17	Will be given a white stone	21:11, 18-21
2:26-27; 3:21	Will reign with Christ on his throne	20:4
2:28	Will be given the morning star	21:23; 22:5, 16
3:5	Will be clothed in bright garments	19:7-8; 21:2, 9-10
3:5	Name will be in the book of life	21:27
3:12	Will be made a pillar in God's temple	21:22-23
3:12	Will participate in the new Jerusalem	21:10
3:12	Will have God's name written on them	22:4

The Seven Churches of Revelation

	Commendation	Criticism	Instruction	Promise
Ephesus (2:1-7)	Rejects evil, perseveres, has patience	Love for Christ no longer fervent	Do the works you did at first	The tree of life
Smyrna (2:8-11)	Gracefully bears suffering	None	Be faithful until death	The crown of life; will not be hurt by the second death
Pergamos (2:12-17)	Keeps the faith of Christ	Tolerated immorality, idolatry, and heresies	Repent	Hidden manna and a white stone with a new name
Thyatira (2:18-29)	Love, service, faith, patience is greater than at first	Tolerates cult of idolatry and immorality. Jezebel	Judgment coming; keep the faith	Rule over nations and receive morning star
Sardis (3:1-6)	Some have kept the faith	A dead church	Repent; strengthen what remains; remember	Faithful honored and clothed in white; name in book of life; Christ will confess them before the Father
Philadelphia (3:7-13)	Perseveres in the faith; a little power; have not denied My name	None	Keep the faith	A pillar in the temple; a place in God's presence, a new name, and the New Jerusalem
Laodicea (3:14-22)	None	Indifferent	Be zealous and repent	Share Christ's throne

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⁵Thomas Nelson Publishers. 1996. *Nelson's complete book of Bible maps & charts : Old and New Testaments.* (Rev. and updated ed.). Thomas Nelson: Nashville, Tenn.

The Drama of Redemption Chapters 4-5

Chapter Four: Seeing as God Sees

Verses:

1. "After these things" is a literary device for presenting the visions and their sequence. John is beginning his record of the visions that show God's deliverance of His people from the peril of Domitian's persecution. The open door (like Ezekiel 1:1) remains there until chapter 9. The first voice is Christ (1:10).
2. Come see what will happen—see it from my (God's) point of view, from the throne in heaven (3:21). John is here "in the Spirit" (1:10).
3. Jasper stone is pure white and reflects holiness and majesty. Sardius is blood red and reflects righteousness. The rainbow is a symbol of hope and mercy (Gen. 9:12-17). Emerald is green, a living color. Descriptions of heavenly images are limited to earthly vocabulary.
4. Twenty-four elders in white (pure) garments with crowns (*stephanos*) of gold (2:10; James 1:12). The leaders of Israel and the apostles number twelve. $12 \times 2 = 24$. Lightning and thunder show the power of God (Ex. 19:16).
5. Lamps bring light; the Spirit brings light (John 6:63; 16:7). Light is perfect spiritual essence.
6. A crystal sea is majestic. It separates God from people. In Rev. 15:2, the people of God are standing on the sea. Note that this sea is gone in 21:1.
7. A lion is noble and brave; a bull has great strength; a man has intelligence; and an eagle is swift.
8. The four creatures are heavenly beings (Ezek. 1:6-10) with six wings (like the seraphim of Isa. 6::2-3). They are full of eyes and see around and within (Prov. 15:3). They continually speak of God's Holiness, power and eternity.
9. The purpose of the living creatures is to give glory, honor and thanks to God.
10. The twenty-four elders fall down and worship God, casting their crowns before the throne (1 Cor. 4:7).
11. God is worthy of glory, honor, and power, because He is the creator of all things. Because of Thy will they existed and were created.

Chapter Five: The Redeeming Lamb

Verses:

1. The book in the right hand of Him on the throne has seven seals. The book had writings on the inside and on the back. What is this book? A book of justice, destiny and lamentation (cf. Ezek. 2:9-10).
2. A strong angel asks, "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. John wept greatly because no one could open the book or look into it.
5. 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." Jesus is the Lion (Gen. 49:9-10) and the Root (Isa. 11:1,10; cf. Rom. 15:12). He can open what no one else can.
6. John saw between the throne and the elders a Lamb having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. Jesus is the Lamb of God (John

- 1:29). Seven horns mean that He has perfect or complete power. The seven eyes reflect His ceaseless, perfect vigilance for His people.
7. Jesus took the book out of the hand of the One on the throne.
 8. When he took the book, the four creatures and the 24 elders fell down. Each one had a harp and a bowl of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. (If the bowl of incense is symbolic, why not also the harp?)
 9. And they sang a new (καινην) song, saying, "Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation." The blood of Jesus purchased the church (Acts 20:28). The new song was new as to kind, unique. Jesus is worthy because of His redemptive work. Jesus has redeemed us for God (Eph. 1:1-14). That purchase price is for people from every tribe and tongue and people and nation; there are no limits except belief and obedience.
 10. "And Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth." Again, the kingdom is a present reality, not a future hope. The song speaks of the making of the kingdom as a past event. If indeed Christians are priests (1 Pet. 2:5,9), then the kingdom must be a present reality. This fulfills the prophecy of John the Baptist, Jesus, the Twelve and the Seventy (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; Luke 10:1, 7), that the kingdom of heaven was "at hand" or has "come near." If indeed the kingdom of heaven was not to be a reality until the 21st century, why would the heavenly host at this time speak of it as a reality? Of course, the church is the kingdom (Col. 1:13). Hugo McCord observed that one cannot spend the same dollar twice. The blood of Jesus which purchased the church (Acts 20:28) also purchased the kingdom (Rev. 5:9-10).
 11. On the Lord's side, around the throne, are myriads of myriads (ten thousands of ten thousands) and thousands of thousands of angels. The persecuted Christians of Asia Minor, overwhelmed by power of Rome, needed to know that they were not alone. God's host (army) is greater than any army of Rome.
 12. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." The slain Lamb is worthy to receive all these, and the slaying of innocent Christians does not rob them of the blessings Christ gives to His own.
 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.

Doxology (Glorifying) to God and to the Lamb

Ascription	To God/the One on the Throne	To the Lamb
Dominion		1:6
Thanksgiving	4:9; 7:12	
Honor	4:9, 11; 5:13; 7:12	5:12, 13
Glory	4:9, 11; 5:13; 7:12; 19:1	1:6; 5:12, 13
Worth	4:11	5:9, 12
Power	4:11; 7:12; 19:1	5:12
Blessing/Praise	5:13; 7:12	5:12, 13
Salvation	7:10; 19:1	7:10
Might	7:12	5:12
Wealth		5:12
Wisdom	7:12	5:12

The Seven Seals Chapters 6-7

The First Six Seals (chapter 6)

The main action of the book begins with this vision; here the grand theme of the book begins to become clear.

Horses are generally mentioned in Scripture in connection with the concepts of strength, terror, warfare and conquest (Isa. 30:16; 31:1; Job 39:22-28).

1. **White Horse:** Outside conquest. Rider with a bow and crown is a picture of a Parthian soldier. Roman soldiers did not carry a bow nor wear a crown (as did Persians). The white horse is a sign of victory and conquest.
2. **Red Horse:** Signifies war; sword is made to draw blood, to slaughter. He will take peace from the earth.
3. **Black Horse:** Famine usually follows war. Luxuries would flow freely; what a frustration! Luxuries but no food.
4. **Pale Horse:** Death sat on it, followed by Hades. Granted authority over one fourth of the earth to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth. God has lots of power at His command.
5. **The Martyred Saints** (9-11): These are the same people mentioned in 1:9; they were persecuted because of “the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ” (1:2). They will appear again in 20:4. Wrath against sin is an essential part of the righteousness of God (Rom. 12:19). God is waiting 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, should be completed also.” They are given a white robe or purity and salvation (3:5). Be patient; God acts in His time.
6. **The Earthquake and Cataclysm:** The people of the earth will see the power of God and His wrath and be afraid; no one will be able to stand. Great men hid themselves in caves, crying out, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?"

Two Views on the “Day of the Lord”

- It is a natural calamity of judgment upon the temporal affairs of men
Joel 2:1-11 the locusts afflicted Judah and Jerusalem
Isa. 13:9-10 the destruction of Babylon
- Eternal Judgment at the end of time
2 Pet. 3:10 day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.
Rev. 20:11-12 And 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. 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.

The Provision for the Redeemed (7:1-17)

7:1-3

God holds His angels back from harming those who have His seal (protective, ownership) on their foreheads. This is similar to what happened during the ten plagues of Exodus including the Passover (Ex. 8:22; 9:4; 12:7-13). In ancient times, sealing indicated ownership. In the cult of Dionysius in Egypt, a certain sealing indicated the members of the cult who belonged to the god Dionysius.

7:4-9

The number of the sealed is 144,000 (12 x 12 x 1000). This 144,000 are on earth, unlike those in heaven, mentioned in 14:1-5. Who are the 144,000? There are two views:

- The first group (144,000 of 7:4) is the remnant of Israel; the second group (an innumerable host of 7:9) is the redeemed of the nations.
- The first group represents all true believers on earth and still subject to the storms of life; the second group symbolizes victorious believers already in heaven.

Some Observations:

1. John makes no distinction between Jewish and Gentile Christians in the book of Revelation.
2. God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:6-11).
3. The church is spiritual Israel (Rom. 9:6-8; 10:12; Gal. 3:26-29).
4. 12 = the people of God and 1000 = completeness. The enumeration of the tribes and the multiples are to emphasize God's protection of every single true believer.
5. The innumerable host are before the throne in heaven, clothed in white robes (7:13,14) with palm branches, a symbol of victory and rejoicing.

“After These Things” points to a new vision

7:10-17 The destiny of those in white robes.

- 10: The cry is “Salvation” to God and the Lamb, a shout of praise, gratitude and victory.
- 11-12: Angels and elders worship God. "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen." Amen means, “Let it be so.”
- 13-17 The ultimate destiny. The “great tribulation” is the tribulation they are already facing (1:2, 9; 2:10, 13; 6:9-11). They are now before the throne of God. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb in the center of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them to springs of the water of life; and God shall wipe every tear from their eyes."

The Seventh Seal is discussed in the Seven Trumpets.

The Seven Trumpets Chapters 8-11

The Seventh Seal contains the sounding of the seven trumpets

Chapter 8:1-13

8:1-2

There are two views of the half-hour silence in heaven. One view suggests that it is symbolic of delayed judgment, while the other suggests that it is added for dramatic effect.

8:3-5

An angel adds incense to the prayers of all the saints. "And the angel took the censer; and he 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." God shows His power in responding to the prayers of His people.

Some preliminary thoughts to the seven trumpets:

- Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* gives three causes of the fall: natural calamity, internal rottenness, and external invasion.
- Scientists at that time classified nature in four parts: land, sea, fresh water, and heavenly bodies.

The Seven Trumpets (8:6-9):

1. **The First Trumpet** (8:7): Hail and fire mixed with blood, burns a third of the earth, trees, and all green grass (remember the plague on Egypt, Ex. 9:13-35).
2. **The Second Trumpet** (8:8-9): A volcano turns sea into blood, destroying one third of the sea life and one third of the ships.
3. **The Third Trumpet** (8:10-11): A great star, named Wormwood, fell from heaven and turned a third of the rivers and springs into bitter water; and many died.
4. **The Fourth Trumpet** (8:12-13): God smote a third of the sun, stars and moon, so that darkness fell on them and on 1/3 of the day.

8:13 Three Woes. And 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!"

5. **The Fifth Trumpet and First Woe** (9:1-12): Locusts arise from the pit (Ex. 10:4-20; Deut. 28:38; Joel 1,2). They had the power to sting like a scorpion (uncommon locusts).
 - They did not hurt green things but men who do not have the seal of God (Rev. 7:4; see. Ex. 10:15).
 - They were not permitted to kill but to torment for five months (probably the life span of a locust—a limited time).
 - Men seek death and cannot find it (Jer. 8:13).
 - Men tormented (Mark 5:7; 8:28; Rev. 20:10).

- The locusts appearance and characteristics (9:7-10; see Joel 2:2-11): Like horses, like men's faces, like women's hair, like lion's teeth, like iron breastplates, with wings sounding like chariots and horse, and tails like scorpions.
 - Their king is the angel of the Abyss called "Abaddon" or "Apollyon," i.e., "Destruction" or "Destroyer." Some think this is Satan (Luke 10:18), but this is by no means certain. The abyss or Abaddon refer to the place of torment in Hades (20:1-2). Demons are kept in the abyss or pit (Luke 8:31). Some suggest that the locusts represent hellish spirits that penetrate the earth with moral rottenness and decay. Such spirits destroy the Roman Empire by corrupting the people (Luke 10:19).
 - To think of these as military helicopters (as Hal Lindsay suggests) is eisegesis and to ignore the context of the book.
6. **The Sixth Trumpet and Second Woe** (9:12-21). The four angels who were bound at the great river Euphrates are released. They had prepared for the day and hour and were to kill one third of mankind.
- Armies of horsemen numbering 200 million is devastating. 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.
 - Three plagues came from their mouths: fire, smoke and brimstone, which killed a third of mankind. Hyacinth is a dark purple or blue color somewhat like the smoke produced by brimstone and sulfur.
 - The tails are like serpents (details are for scenery).
 - The rest did not repent (9:20-21).

Chapter 10: An Interlude

A glorious and strong angel who has a book in his hand speaks with authority (10:1-3). As he speaks, seven peals of thunder uttered their voices. Instead of revealing what the peals of thunder are saying, John is charged to seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have said and "do not write them." Sealing here means the case is closed and cannot be made known. God has many unrevealed weapons in His arsenal of judgment, and they may be used at His discretion. Man will never know all of God's ways (Deut. 29:29). The angel swears by God that there will be delay no longer. "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."

The finished mystery of God, according to the gospel, is not speaking of the end time, because the third woe is yet to come. Peter notes that the prophets wanted to know of Christ and the salvation through Him (1 Pet. 1:10-12).

As in Ezekiel chapters 2 and 3, John took the book from the angel. In his mouth the book would taste sweet as honey, but it would make his stomach bitter (10:8-11). It is a joy to receive revelation from God, but hard sayings can be bitter to deliver. John's prophecy was to affect many "peoples and nations and tongues and kings." (See. Jer. 1:5.)

Chapter 11: The Two Witnesses

The temple is the true Israel, **the church (1 Cor. 3:16)**. The Jerusalem temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. If indeed the book was written in the reign of Domitian, then there is no physical temple in Jerusalem. The Lord knows those who belong to Him (2 Tim. 2:19). Interestingly, Ezekiel measured a Temple in a vision, since it had been destroyed during the

captivity of Israel (Ezek. 40:1). There was no physical temple in Ezekiel's day.

- The period of 42 months = 1260 days = 3½ years, an incomplete and uncertain period of time. The holy city is trampled by the Gentiles.
- Two witnesses prophesy clothed in sackcloth, displaying grief and repentance (Jonah 3:5-6). Two witnesses make a strong case (Eccl. 9:4; Matt. 18:16). In Zechariah's day, the two witnesses were Joshua the high priest (Zech. 3:1-3) and Zerubbabel (4:8-10). The prophets (Rev. 11:3) testify as to the truth of God. In the OT, the two great witnesses were Moses and Elijah. Some think that Revelation is speaking of the Old and New Testaments. Likely the reference is simply to true prophets as opposed to false ones. *Futurists* say these are Moses and Elijah in fulfillment of prophecy in Malachi 4:5-6, but Jesus uses this passage to point to John the Baptist (Matt. 11:1-14; 17:11-13). But how would this comfort the Christians of the first century Asia Minor to know that thousands of years later Moses and Elijah would come? The *Continuous Historical* interpreters see the 1260 days as years. They see the witnesses are the reformation leaders (Luther, Calvin, *et. al.*). What good would this do Smyrna? Note that there is to be delay no longer (Rev. 10:6).
- Two olive trees (Zech. 4:3, 11-14). The trees produce the oil, which is used in the lamps.
- Two candlesticks standing before the Lord, giving light. Zechariah saw two trees but only one lampstand.

Three parts of the ministry of the two witnesses:

1. They have remarkable success, see God's power in miracles, and have God's protection (11:4-6).
2. The beast from the abyss will overcome and kill them (11:7). Their bodies will be left unburied in the streets for 3½ days. The beast *thinks he has triumphed*, and the people rejoice (John 16:20). Isn't this Rome's attitude?
3. The witnesses resurrect, and great fear comes upon the people. The gospel survives whatever problem that comes upon it (2 Tim. 2:9). Rome did not consider the power of God (Ezek. 37:10). The witnesses ascend into heaven in a cloud, as did Jesus (Acts 1:9-11). God approves of those who speak the truth faithfully. An earthquake kills 7,000 of the great city; people fear and give glory to God (11:13). The Lord here may be punishing the city the way He did Judah in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, for failing to observe the Sabbaths of the land (cf. Lev. 26:33-35; Jer. 25:8-11; 2 Chron. 36:19-21). The number 7,000 is figurative and indicates that the complete number of those who must perish do perish.

The great city is the holy city, which was trampled under foot for 42 months (11:2). This great city is Jerusalem, where their Lord was crucified. She is also called Sodom and Egypt, reminding us that the city no longer stands for truth as it once did. The city was punished for its treatment of the witnesses (cf. Luke 19:44). The people of the "holy city" rejoiced at the "death" of God's two witnesses or prophets, because their message had long "tormented" them, even as Elijah's message had "troubled" Israel in Ahab's time (1 Kings 18:17).

The Seventh Trumpet (The Third Woe)

This trumpet signals the triumph of the Kingdom of God and of "His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever" (11:15-19). This is a picture of the triumph of Christ and his church. Christ

began to reign over his kingdom (Col. 1:12-13) when he arose from the dead. He began reigning when he sat on David's throne (Acts 2:30-33). Jesus is now on the throne. As long as the Levitical Priesthood continued to offer sacrifices according to the Law, Christ's kingship was not fully recognized. The Hebrew writer addressed the struggle many Jewish Christians had (Heb. 13:10-14). For this reason, the holy city had to be trampled and the temple destroyed. Then God's temple in heaven is open (11:19), signifying the triumph of the Messiah's spiritual kingdom. The kingdom of Christ now stands alone where once had stood the physical, worldly kingdom of men. Christ is clearly seen as Lord and King.

"Forever and ever" here needs to be understood in the light of 1 Cor. 15:24-28 and Heb. 12:26-29).

The outcome of victory is here announced even before the battle is fought. The Lord's kingdom wins and will stand. God helps His people and destroys the enemies of His saints (11:17-18). The ark is revealed to comfort the people; God has not forgotten His covenant (Heb. 8:10-12). This section is somewhat like the headline before the story. God's spiritual house, the church continues. It is an open temple, so that all men may approach God through Jesus Christ (Heb. 9:8-9; 10:20). The open veil allows the ark of the covenant to be clearly visible, reminding the church that God's promises are secure.

The Great Battle Chapters 12-20

These chapters discuss the great battle between Christ and Satan, good and evil. It answers the question, “Why does the world hate God’s children, Christians?” Satan is always battling God; *he appears to win for a while but always loses in the end*. Rev. 11:15-19 is the headline before the story: Christ Reigns! Satan Overthrown!

This chapter “concerns itself with the great confrontation between the church and the empire, between God and the devil, between Christ and the Caesars, between monotheism and polytheism, and between everything that was right and everything that was wrong.”⁹

Satanic limitations of God’s Reality

God’s Reality		Satan’s Limitation	
The real Godhead: Father, Son, and Spirit	1:4-5	The false three: dragon, beast, and false prophet	16:13; 20:10
Lamb standing as though it had been slain	5:6	Many-headed beast with mortal wound healed	13:3
Sealing of the saints	7:2-3	Mark of the beast	13:16-18
Bride in white	19:7-8	Prostitute in purple and scarlet	17:1-6

I. Satan’s Challenge against the Radiant Woman, the Christ, the Seed (chapter 12).

1. The Radiant Woman—spiritual Israel, God’s redeemed people (Gal. 4:26), those who will fill Jerusalem above.
2. The dragon is Satan (12:9). Horns = powers; heads = kings. Diadems are kingly crowns. Satan means “accuser.” Devil means “evil one,” “deceiver.”
3. The child is Christ Jesus (see 19:13-15). Herod the Great attempted to destroy the newborn Jesus after the wise men came to Jerusalem from afar and announced His birth.
4. Satan always loses. God protects His children; Christ is the victor through His blood (12:11).
5. When did the kingdom come? It came when the salvation and the power came (Matt. 28:18-20; Eph. 1:20-23). Jesus overcame at the cross and through the preaching of the Word. Notice John 12:31-32; Acts 26:18; Heb. 2:14; James 4:7,8; 1 John 3:8-9. Jesus, according to Psalm 2, was to rule with a rod of iron (cf. Acts 3:22-23).
6. Time, times, and half a time is equivalent to 1260 days and 42 months. The idea is that this will be an period of time but not last.
7. After God saves the woman (the redeemed), Satan turns his wrath upon her seed, the church (12:17).

Enemies of the Church (Revelation 12-19)

Enemy	Method of Attack
The dragon	The accuser of our brothers Makes war
The beast	Intimidating violence
The false prophet	Deceptive Heresy
The prostitute	Beguiling affluence

⁹ W.B. West, *Revelation Through First Century Glasses* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1997), 90.

II. The Beasts (chapter 13)

A. **The Beast of the Sea** was powerful; his throne comes from the dragon (Mt. 4:8-9). He was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion.

1. The beast recovers from what appears to be a death-stroke; so the world worships the beast and the dragon: “Who is like the beast? Who is able to war with Him?”
2. The beast is a blasphemer (13:5-6). “And there was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies; and authority to act for *forty-two months* was given to him. And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven.” God will only tolerate blasphemy and arrogance for a time. It cannot last.
3. The beast is allowed to make war and to rule over all the earth; he has freedom within limits (John 19:11; Jer. 18:7-10; Rom. 13:1-7).

B. **The Beast of the Earth** (13:11-18) makes people worship the first beast, whose fatal wound is healed. He has two (not ten) horns like a lamb (small), but speaks like a dragon. The land beast is not what he appears to be. The most effective counterfeits appear to be the real thing. He is neither harmless nor innocent. He exercises all the authority of the first beast “in his presence.”

1. He works signs and is able to deceive those who dwell on the earth. He is a religious con-artist, who elsewhere is called the “false prophet” (16:13; 19:20; 20:10). He made fire come down from heaven in the presence of men
2. He makes an image of the first beast and causes those who will not worship the first beast to be killed. (13:14-15).
3. The mark of the beast (666) is placed on the forehead and right hand of all who worship the beast. Without this mark, they are not able to buy or sell. (13:16-17).
4. The number “666” is an intensified way of saying an evil, evil person.

The first beast is likely Domitian himself. In the minds of man of that day he was the fulfillment of the Nero *Redivivus myth*, as the terrible tyrant Nero brought back to life. The emperor appointed an official body known as the *praefectus urbi* for the enforcing of worship in each town. These were responsible for punishing people in the various cities over a province. The group with the greatest authority was the *concilia*, composed of deputies sent from the various towns or divisions of a province. Their duty was to build images of the emperor, altars for his worship, and in every way sponsor the state religion and make it effective. They forced the people to worship the emperor, identified all who did, and punished in various ways all who refused.

Those who refused to burn incense to the royal image were disenfranchised politically, ostracized socially and boycotted commercially. If social and economic sanctions failed to accomplish their purpose, sterner methods were employed. They were exiled to die in the mountains or on islands (as John); they were thrown to wild beasts, nailed to crosses, tortured by any and every means that could be conceived in devil-possessed brains. The civil and the religious authority of the empire were thus united in a common effort to crush the followers of the Nazarene, to annihilate the church.¹⁰

The Roman officials did not believe what they required of citizens was unreasonable. They

¹⁰ Albert H. Baldinger, *Preaching from Revelation: Timely Messages for Troubled Hearts* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1960), 68.

could easily point to all that Rome had done for them. To John, bowing before an image was utter blasphemy. It was a defining characteristic as to who believed in Christ and who did not (14:9-11; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4).

David Roper gives another option in discussing “666.” He points out that in 13:18, “the number is that of a man” might also correctly be translated “the number is that of man” or “mankind.” The NIV has “it is man’s number”; and the RSV says, “It is a human number.” Elsewhere in Revelation the same expression is translated by the word “human” (21:17). The phrase is used to refer to mankind in general in Galatians 1:11; 3:15; and other texts. John did not mean, “It is the number of a certain individual”; he meant, “It is the number which rightly designates man!” The beast’s number is not that of a god or even of a superhuman. It is just the number of man. No individual or group of men, regardless of how powerful they may be, can stand up against God Almighty (cf. 2 Chron. 20:6).¹¹

III. The Lamb (chapter 14)

The Lamb and the 144,000 are before the throne in heaven (14:1-5). They are singing an unknown song. They were purchased from the earth by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 1:18-19) and so are pure and unblemished (Eph. 5:25ff.).

They have the name of the Father on their foreheads. They follow the Lamb wherever He goes. They are not defiled with women is likely a reference to the prostitutes of many pagan temples. It could also refer to their refusal to worship the beastly Roman emperor.

The **First Angel** proclaims good tidings (14:6-7): “Fear God and give Him glory.”

Here is **the turning point in the book of Revelation**. Prior to 14:7 was the hour of the Roman Empire, and Rome was punishing the children of God. The tables have now turned. Now God will start punishing Rome herself. The hour of judgment has come.

The **Second Angel**: “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!” (14:8). His proclamation is a *prolepsis* of Chapter 18. A *prolepsis* is a *rhetorical device, whereby one anticipates the future as if it were the present*. The outcome is announced; Rome will fall because she has made all the nations drink “the wine of the passion of her immorality.” In early Christian literature, writers identify Rome with Babylon and identify Babylon with Rome (cf. 1 Pet. 5:13).

The **Third Angel** proclaims eternal torment for beast worshippers. Whoever has the mark of the beast will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. “And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; and they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name” (14:10-11).

The “Mark of the Beast” (13:16-17) is the means by which those who worship the image of Domitian are identified. This mark is a sign of their deception by the false prophet (19:20). Those who were faithful to Jesus Christ and were beheaded did not have this mark (20:4).

C. S. Lewis acknowledged that hell is a detestable doctrine that he would willingly remove from Christianity if it were in his power. But, as he points out, *the question is not*

¹¹ David Roper, *The Book of Revelation*, Truth for Today Commentary, 76. Roper cites, Jim McGuiggan, *The Book of Revelation*, Looking into the Bible Series (Lubbock, Tex.: International Biblical Resources, 1976), 205.

whether it is detestable but whether it is true. We must recognize that the reality of hell has the full support of Scripture and of our Lord's own teaching.

Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. 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, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them." (14:12-13).

Jesus is sitting on a white cloud with a golden crown (*stephanos*) on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. 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, because the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe." And He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth; and the earth was reaped. Jesus swung the sickle.

Another angel had a sickle. He was told by the angel who has power over fire to gather clusters from the vine and throw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God (14:19). The grapes were ripe, meaning that *God was ready to avenge* (6:10). This type of imagery is used in Gen. 15:16 to describe the iniquity of the Amorites as being full. "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" (14:20). (1600 furlongs is 200 miles.) This stream of blood is extreme; many will die. Notice the symbolism of pressing out the wine from such passages as Joel 3:13 or Lam. 1:15. God punishes wickedness. Jesus uses a harvest to symbolize judgment (Matt. 13:24-30, 37-43).

IV. The Seven Plagues of the Wrath of God (Chapters 15 and 16). It reveals the war with the Beast.

Chapter 15 shows the glory and power of God. The victorious are with God singing the song of Moses and the Lamb. Seven angels appear with seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished. This does not mean that they are the last plagues ever to happen, but they are the last plagues to be poured out on the Empire. Hebrews 12:29 seems to summarize chapters 15 and 16, telling us "our God is a consuming fire."

The appearance of the seven angels is the third sign specifically identified in the book, the woman and the dragon being the others (cf. 12:1, 3). Now the bowls of wrath are to be poured out, but we are first shown a picture of the angels of God with these bowls, in which the work of God is finished or complete.

The sea of glass is first mentioned in 4:6 and stands before the throne. Here it is mingled with fire. The sea of glass speaks to the holiness of God and how He is separated from others. Standing on the sea of glass are *those victorious over the beast*. They sing that God alone is holy and all should worship before Him. His righteous acts distinguish Him as the true and living God (Psalm 92:5; 111:2; 98:1; 139:14).

Bowls (15:7) were vessels used in the Temple for the ministry of offerings and incense (Rev. 5:8). Other large banquet bowls were used for wine (Amos 6:6); and ritual bowls were used to collect the blood of sacrifices (Ex. 27:3). Golden bowls were often associated with the temple services (1 Kings 7:50; 2 Kings 12:13; 25:15).

The smoke which filled the temple (15:8) refers to the *shekinah* cloud first associated with the tabernacle and then the temple. It shows the solemnity of the situation. Smoke filled the temple on several occasions in the OT (cf. Ex. 40:34ff; 1 Kings 8:10-11; 2 Chron. 5:13-14; Isa.

6:4; Ezek. 11:23; 44:4). This indicates God's special presence and that He is the source of the judgments. His presence in the temple allows for the presence of no one else (Isa. 6:4; Hab. 2:20).

Chapter 16:1-21 reveals the Seven Bowls of the Wrath of God poured out on the earth.

The **first** angel's bowl: a loathsome and malignant sore on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped his image.

The **second** angel's bowl was poured out on the sea; it became like the blood of a dead man; and every living thing in the sea died.

The **third** angel poured his bowl out on the springs and rivers; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters saying, "Righteous art Thou, who art and who wast, O Holy One, because Thou didst judge these things; for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them blood to drink. They deserve it." And I heard the altar saying, "Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments."

The **fourth** angel poured out his bowl on the sun to scorch men with fire. Scorched men blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues. They did not repent so as to give him glory.

The **fifth** angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened. They gnawed on their tongues because of the pain. They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pain and did not repent.

The **sixth** angel poured out his bowl on the river Euphrates, and its water dried up. This prepared the way for the kings from the east. Three unclean spirits like frogs came from the mouth of the dragon, the beast, and the prophet. These unclean spirits are demons, performing signs (miracles), to gather the kings of the whole world for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.

("Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his garments, lest he walk about naked and men see his shame.") vs. 15.

They gathered to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Megedon. Armageddon is the hill of Megiddo near the plain of Jezreel, 45 miles north of Jerusalem. Megiddo implied combat and war in the Jewish mind. Below are some battles fought there:

- Egypt beat back Syria (ca. 1475 BC)
- Barak and Deborah win over Sisera and Canaan (Judges 5:19)
- Gideon wins over the Midianites ((Judges 6-8)
- Jehu kills Ahaziah (2 Kings 9:27)
- Pharaoh-Neco kills Josiah (609 BC; 2 Kings 23:29)

"Perhaps a greater number of bloody encounters there than have stained a like area of the world's surface." (ISBE 2:1340) The battle there is not one in which material, physical armaments will decide the issue; rather the battle is between good and evil. God (good) will win!

The Ten Plagues (Ex. 7-10)	The Terrors of the Trumpets (Rev. 8-11)	The Terrors of the Bowls of Wrath (Rev. 16)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The water turned to blood 2. The frogs 3. The lice 4. The flies 5. The murrain on the cattle 6. The boils 7. The thunder and hail 8. The locusts 9. The darkness 10. The death of the firstborn 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hail, fire, and blood, through which 1/3 trees and grass withered. 2. Flaming mountain cast into sea; 1/3 sea became blood. 3. Fall of star Wormwood into waters, making them bitter and poisonous. 4. Smiting of 1/3 part of sun, moon, and stars, bringing darkness. 5. Abyss opened, from which come the demonic and terrible locusts. 6. Four angels bind the Euphrates, and demonic cavalry come from East. 7. Announcement of God's final victory, and the rebellious anger of the nations. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Loathsome sores upon men. 2. Sea becomes like the blood of a dead man, killing all. 3. Rivers and springs become blood. 4. Sun scorches and burns hot. Men blaspheme and do not repent. 5. Darkness over the kingdom of the beast. People agonize but will not repent. 6. Euphrates dried up to open way for the hordes of kings from the east. 7. Pollution of the air, lightning, thunder, earthquake and hail. Defeat of Babylon.

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." This bowl caused lightning, thunder, and such a great earthquake, that there had never been one so mighty. The city split in three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. God gave Babylon the great special notice, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. Every island fled away, the mountains were not found. Hundred pound hailstones came down from heaven upon men. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail was so severe.

V. The Scarlet Woman, Rome (Chapter 17)

Chapter 17 reveals the judgment on the harlot that sits on many waters (the empire covers much territory; 17:15, 18). The harlot practices fornication with the kings of the earth. She sits enthroned on a scarlet beast and is colored in purple. She is adorned with gold, precious stones and pearls. She has a golden cup full of abominations (moral impurities and ceremonies accompanying idolatrous worship). Jeremiah wrote of Babylon: "Babylon has been a golden cup in the hand of the LORD, Intoxicating all the earth. The nations have drunk of her wine; therefore the nations are going mad" (Jer. 51:7).

She has a name on her forehead, a mystery, "BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." This refers to the Roman custom where prostitutes in the public brothels wore upon their forehead a frontlet giving their names. These were the signs and trademarks of the Roman prostitutes. Seneca mentions the custom of a prostitute wearing a headband on which was written her name or some descriptive

phrase showing her occupation (*Rhet. Conro. x.2; Juvenal vs. 123*). When John calls her “Babylon,” he does not mean the earthly city of Babylon but the “spiritual” Babylon of his own day, *i.e.*, Rome. By the middle of the first century there are several places where the name “Babylon” is applied to the city of Rome (cf. 2 Baruch 11:1; Sibylline Oracles V, 143).

Jim McGuiggan argues that the Harlot is Rome and gives the following reasons:¹²

1. She sits on seven hills (17:9): Aventine, Capitaline, Palatine, Esquiline, Caeline, Quirinal, and Viminal.
2. She rules the earth in John’s day (17:18)
3. She is a terrible persecutor of the saints (17:6; 18:20, 24)
4. She is the leading commercial power on earth (18:3, 11-19)
5. She is supported by the military might of Rome (17:3, 7)
6. She is destroyed by her own military power, etc. (17:16-17)

She is drunk with blood of the saints and the blood of the witnesses of Jesus (17:6). There is little doubt that this is a reference to the persecution of the Christians in the Roman Empire.

The Beast Interpreted (17:6-11)

John wondered greatly at the woman. An angel said, "Why do you wonder? I shall tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns. 8 "The beast that you saw was and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and to go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth will wonder, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come. 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 "And the beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction."

While an answer is given here, it is not at all apparent just who is meant in this vision. The only clear part of the vision is that all of the meanings are closely connected to Rome and her empire. If the woman is the city of Rome, and she sits on the beast, then it seems the beast is the Roman Empire.

The blasphemous names are a reference to the many gods of the empire. The beast is described as having seven heads and ten horns (17:3). This is identical with the beast of 13:1, only the order is changed. The seven heads are said to be two things:

- (1) V. 9: the seven heads are said to be seven hills—Rome.
- (2) Vv. 10-11: the seven heads are also seven kings. He said, “five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while.”

The beast appeared to die and come back to life. This is a reference to the *Nero Redivivus* myth. Nero is evil, and Domitian is evil like Nero. He is evil incarnate; *i.e.*, in him the evil of the Roman Empire is consummated and epitomized. Domitian, the emperor who followed Titus, revived the evil Nero began.

Suetonius painted a very grim picture of Domitian. Early in his reign he would remain secluded for hours, catching flies and stabbing them with a sharpened stylus. He formed a homosexual attachment with a famous actor called Paris. He executed any historian who wrote

¹² Jim McGuiggan, *The Book of Revelation* (West Monroe, Louisiana: William C. Johnson, Inc. 1976), 239.

anything he did not like. Domitian slaughtered Senators right and left. After a civil war broke out in the provinces, Domitian became even more cruel, and to discover any conspirators who were in hiding, tortured many of the opposite party by a new form of inquisition, inserting fire in their privates; and he cut off the hands of some of them.” He began his official edicts with: “Our lord and god bids this to be done,” and soon this was the only way in which he might be addressed. It was Domitian who first made Caesar worship compulsory and who was responsible for persecuting the church. John saw in Domitian, the reincarnation of Nero. The Roman Empire, personified in Domitian, the incarnation of Nero, is about to suffer destruction. The heathen world wonders at the history and progress of Rome. Those who are Christians do not wonder at her, because they know she is doomed.

Since Christians rebel against Domitian and Rome, they have been zealous to persecute Christians, to wage war against them.

17:14 "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."

Christ is portrayed as a Lamb. The emphasis, of course, is upon the sacrificial nature of the Lord’s work. Recall that the Lamb had been slain, but he stood up again by means of his resurrection (cf. 5:8). Enemies will wage war against the Lamb, but they will lose. Christ will overcome them. “Overcome” is the key word of the book, and this is the key verse. He will overcome, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings. *He has actually already won the victory.* Those who share in the victory are the “called,” the “chosen,” and the “faithful.” These have not yielded to the pressures of persecution (cf. 2:10; cf. 12:11).

17:15-18 And he said to me, "The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues. 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. 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 should be fulfilled. And the woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth."

The time will come when the provinces of the Roman Empire will have their part in her destruction. This was one of the greatest fears Rome had. Rome was afraid of any kind of turmoil and unrest which might possibly turn into a revolution.

VI. The Fall of Babylon the Great (Chapter 18)

Babylon is fallen because of her sin, greed, and wantonness. She is fallen due to internal corruption (18:1-3). She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird.

God’s people are told to come out of her and not participate in her evil deeds. She is to be *repaid double for her evil deeds* (18:4-6).

Her torment and grief will be as great as her self-glory and sensuous living. She boasted that she is not a widow and would never mourn. “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” (18:7-8).

Kings, merchants, ship-masters, and sailors weep and wail over Babylon’s downfall. In

one hour they see smoke and the misery of her destruction. "What city is like the great city? 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!' (18:9-19). "Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her." (18:20)

Three major things cease in Rome: amusement life, business life, and home life (18:22-23). The glory of Rome in John's day has long since vanished. Why? "And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth" (18:24).

VII. The Fall of the Beast (Chapter 19:1-20:10)

The Rejoicing Saints (19:1-10)

A great host in heaven is singing the hallelujah chorus. They rejoice that Christ has avenged the blood of the saints and that the great harlot has fallen. The church, espoused to Christ as a bride (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:23-31), is to prepare for marriage. Fine linen is in the righteous acts of the saints. And a voice from heaven said to John, "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." Men are to worship only God (19:10). The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy, i.e., the life-giving principle of prophecy.

The Victorious Warrior (19:11-20:10)

The **white horse signifies victory**. He is faithful, true, and righteous. He has **many diadems** on His head; His robe is dipped in blood; He is the "Word of God"; and His mouth has a sharp sword. He rules with **a rod of iron**; He is King of kings and Lord of lords (19:11-16). And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses (19:14).

And 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; in order 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" (19:17-18).

And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies, assembled to make war against Him who sat upon the horse, and against His army (19:19).

The beast and the false prophet were thrown alive into *the lake of fire which burns with brimstone*. And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat upon the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh. (19:20-21).

The Binding of Satan (20:1-3)

An Angel with the key to the abyss (9:1-2) and a great chain binds Satan and throws him into the abyss for 1000 years so that he will no longer deceive the nations. The abyss was shut and sealed over him. The New Testament has disobedient angels chained in Tartarus and in darkness (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). When Jesus cast the demons out of the Gerasene man, they begged Jesus not to command them to depart into the abyss (Luke 8:31). We should distinguish the abyss from the "lake" (λίμνη) of Revelation 19:20 and 20:10.

When the thousand years are completed, Satan must be released for a short period of time (cf. 20:7). We do know why this "must" happen; it is futile to speculate (Deut. 29:29).

How Is Satan Bound?

Binding is freedom within limits; Satan has been put on a leash. His power is limited by the gospel and by the death of Jesus. He is bound, cast, shut in, and sealed. Satan has always been under the control of God the Father. Whatever power he enjoyed was only allowed.

Genesis 3:14-15 And the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly shall you go, And dust shall you eat All the days of your life; And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."

Matt. 12:28-29 "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house."

Luke 10:17-18 And the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." And He said to them, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning."

John 12:31-32 "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world shall be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."

Acts 26:18 Paul appointed "to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me."

James 4:7-8 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

1 Cor. 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.

1 John 5:18-19 We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him. We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

Heb. 2:14-15 Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

1 John 3:7-8 Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

Rev. 12:10-11 And 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, who accuses them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death."

The Thousand Year Reign of Souls of Martyrs

The thousand-year reign of the souls of the martyrs was for them a respite from emperor worship. It was an answer to the question of Rev. 6:10, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" It is now these beheaded saints who are reigning instead of being persecuted. They are glorified with the Lord rather than hated by men.

This resurrection and reign is special if not figurative. There is no indication here that all the righteous were reigning with the Lord. Neither is there an indication that this reign was on earth; it is rather *in heaven*. Their reign is specified as being with Christ. Christ has already been reigning as Lord of lords and King of kings (17:14; 19:16). He has all authority (Matt. 28:18).

The number 1000 here is figurative not literal. Numbers in the book of Revelation must often be taken figuratively. The number 1000 is an intensified multiple of ten. There are many examples throughout Scripture of the number 1000 being merely an extensive number rather than taken as literally 1,000.

- Ex. 20:6 thousands of them that love Him, keep His commandments
- Psalm 90:4 a thousand years in God's sight as yesterday, as a watch in the night
- Psalm 105:8 commanded His word to a thousand generations
- Psalm 50:10 every beast, cattle on a thousand hills are Mine
- 2 Peter 3:8 a day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as a day
- Job 9:3 man cannot answer God once in a thousand times

It is the souls of those who were beheaded for the testimony (6:9-11) that lived and reigned with Christ for 1000 years; this is the first resurrection. *Because this resurrection does not entail everyone, it cannot be the general resurrection at the end of time*—the last day (John 5:28-29; 11:23-25). The general resurrection, when “the rest of the dead” are raised includes both the righteous and the unrighteous (Acts 24:15). “Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment” (Jn. 5:28-29). Consequently, this first resurrection must be either a special resurrection of just these individuals or a figurative one. This resurrection may be a figurative way of saying that they have overcome (Rev. 2:10-11) and so are not hurt by the second death. Whatever we think of this resurrection, it does not affect any living person today. It involved only those dead, beheaded saints.

When the Thousand Years Are Finished (20:7-10)

Satan will be released from his prison in the abyss. *Satan will deceive the nations and gather them from the four corners of the earth for war against the saints and the beloved city.* They are as numerous as the sand of the seashore. Satan is the deceiver of the whole world. The word “corners” suggest totality.

The nations are gathered for battle and are identified as Gog and Magog (cf. Gen. 10:2), which is an obvious development of Ezekiel 38:2, 9, 15, where Gog is from the land of Magog. The number camped against the saints is like the sand of the seashore (innumerable).

Fire will come down from heaven and devour them. “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*.” (See 14:9-11.) Those who champion the final reconciliation of all people, as well as those who champion annihilation of the wicked, have a serious problem with this passage.¹³

“The amillenialist believes that the church age is the millennium. He does not deny the millennium of Revelation 20 as the name of his system might appear to suggest. He believe the millennium as he understands it is now in the process of realization.

¹³ Jack P. Lewis, “The Millennium,” in *Vision of Victory, Harding University 69th Annual Lectureship* (Searcy: Harding University, 1992), 186.

“The amillennialist contends that Revelation 20 is a communication in figurative language no less true because of the figures. This section of the Apocalypse (the seventh) takes us back to the beginning of the New Testament era. The binding of Satan took place in the coming of Jesus at which time the strong man was bound (Mk. 3:27; Mt. 12:29) with the same verb being used that occurs in Revelation 20. His goods were despoiled. Jesus spoke of Satan’s fall as lightning from heaven with the preaching of the gospel (Lk. 10:18). He said, ‘Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out’ (Jn. 12:31). The first epistle of John speaks of Jesus’ being manifest to destroy the works of the devil (1 Jn. 3:8).”¹⁴

“Jesus began his reign at his ascension following his resurrection. His followers are transferred into his kingdom (Col. 1:13). They now sit on thrones and now judge. They reign with him (Rom. 5:17; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Tim. 2:11-12; Rev. 5:10) though they are on earth and he is in heaven, just as Enoch walked with God while God was in heaven, or as Saul of Tarsus persecuted Jesus though Jesus was in heaven. Their judging is in the present, not at the final judgment day at which time Scripture only mentions the King as judge. The amillennialist considers that we are in the last days now (Acts 2:16, 17; 1 Cor. 10:11; 1 Jn. 2:18). The kingdom is present but also future in that it will be yielded to God the Father at the Second Coming (1 Cor. 15:24).”¹⁵

“The amillennialist argues that there is no clear passage in the New Testament which ascribes a reign to Christ on earth. Neither is there one that sets the center of his kingdom to be in earthly Jerusalem. The final judgment comes after the thousand-year reign as defined above (Rev. 20:11-15) and is elsewhere also associated with the second coming of Christ (Mt. 16:27; 25:31-32; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; Jude 14-15; Rev. 22:12).”¹⁶

Things Revelation 20:1-10 Does Not Mention:

1. Jerusalem in Palestine
2. The establishment of a kingdom on earth
3. Rebuilding the Temple
4. Christ setting foot on the earth
5. The second coming of Christ
6. A bodily resurrection on earth
7. A reign on earth
8. The literal throne of David on earth
9. Saints of the twentieth or twenty-first century
10. Specifically how long Jesus Christ reigns
11. Anything about reigning over people who are living and have not died.

It is illegitimate to read “on the earth” between the lines. It is eisegesis.

The Impossibilities of Premillennialism: Things They Say are Disproven!

1. Jesus is not now reigning on His throne. (Rev. 3:21; 4-5; Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:20-23; Acts 2:30-36).
2. The kingdom of Christ is not yet existing (Rev. 1:4-6, 9; 5:9-10; 11:15; Col. 1:13; 1 Pet. 2:9-10).
3. The resurrection of the righteous before the wicked (John 5:28-29; Rev. 20:5).
4. Jesus living and reigning on earth in person (John 4:21; 18:36; 1 Thess. 4:13-18).
5. The saints reigning with Christ physically on earth (1 Thess. 4:17; John 14:1-4).

¹⁴ Lewis, 192.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 193.

6. A second chance for living at Christ's return (Matt. 25:31-46; Heb. 9:27).

Premillennialists "Add" to Revelation 20:1-6! See Rev. 22:18-19

1. They add a rapture of only the righteous to the second coming.
2. They add a thousand year reign on the earth.
3. They have Jesus Christ setting foot on the earth.
4. They have a rebuilt temple, rather than accepting the church is the temple (1 Cor. 3:16).
5. This resurrection is not parallel to 1 Thessalonians or 1 Corinthians 15:23.

VIII. The Judgment Scene (20:11-15)

1. (20:11-13) Every person from every nation, time period, and walk of life gathered before the great white throne to be judged out of the books according to their works.

2. (20:14-15) Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death (cf. 14:10-11; 20:10). Anyone whose name was not found written in the Lamb's book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

3. *What books were opened? (See Appendix B)*

- Old covenant books for those under the old covenant.
- New covenant books for those under the new covenant
- Books of remembrance (Malachi 3:16) Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name.
- Book of Life

Ex. 32:32 "But now, if Thou wilt, forgive their sin-- and if not, please blot me out from Thy book which Thou hast written!"

Isa. 4:3 And it will come about that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy-- everyone who is recorded for life in Jerusalem.

Psalms 69:28 May they be blotted out of the book of life, And may they not be recorded with the righteous.

Philippians 4:3 Indeed, true comrade, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Heb. 12:23 to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect,

Rev. 3:5 'He who overcomes shall 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.'

Rev. 13:8 And 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.

Rev. 17:8 "The beast that you saw was and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and to go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth will wonder, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come."

Rev. 20:12, 15 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....And if

anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Rev. 21:27 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.

4. The second death appears in Revelation 2:11; 20:6, 14; and 21:8. “Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire” (20:14). Those who overcome will not be hurt by the second death (2:11) and those who take part in the first resurrection will not hurt by the second death (20:6). Those whose names are written in the book of life will not face the second death (20:15). The first death is clearly physical death that happens to all (Heb. 9:27). The second death, then, is the eternal punishment of the wicked

The Destiny of the Redeemed

Chapters 21-22

The Fellowship of God (21:1-8)

The tabernacle is a symbol of fellowship, where God and man meet. Man is no longer separated from God but is in perfect fellowship with Him (21:3). This is certainly after the judgment, for the first heaven and first earth have passed away (2 Pet. 3:7-13).

The “new” heaven, “new” earth, and “new” Jerusalem are “new” in that the old has become obsolete and has passed away and burned up. They must be replaced. The word “new” here is from the Greek word *καινός*, which means new in kind or quality. It is superior to the old and better in quality. Indeed God is making all things “new.”

Other passages describe our heavenly existence as spiritual not physical or earthly. See 1 Cor. 15:42-49; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Pet. 1:3-5; and 1 John 3:2.

“He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.” The first things are earthly things; in heaven all things will be “new.”

God identifies Himself, “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. He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.”

Outside the gates: “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.”

The Protection of God (21:9-26)

The city with its walls and gates is the symbol of protection from all that is outside. The bride is shown in these passages. Notice the contrast of her beauty and purity with the immorality and corruption of the harlot (17:1). She is the wife of the Lamb, the *holy* city, and the heavenly Jerusalem (where God’s name dwells). She has the glory of God in her.

The city is described

- Brilliant as jasper (crystal clear or green)
- Twelve gates of pearl—one for each tribe, which reflects all of God’s people. At each gate was an angel (not Peter).
- Twelve foundations—the apostles (Eph. 2:19-22)
- Measures 12,000 x 12,000 x 12,000 stadia (one stadium = 600 feet); 12,000 stadia = 1500 miles. The base is 2,250,000 square miles. Palestine is only 70 x 150 miles, 10,500 square miles. The number 12,000 is symbolic.
- Wall is 144 cubits (72 yards) high, made of jasper. Jasper is a variety of quartz, found in red, brown, yellow, green, or gray.
- City was pure gold, like clear glass.
- 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; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst.

Jasper—red, brown, yellow, green or gray

Sapphire—blue

Chalcedony—various colors, has waxy luster, probably green

Emerald—green

Sardonyx—Red with a layer of white (transparent)

Sardius—blood red (transparent)

Chrysolite—golden (transparent)

Beryl—sea green (transparent)

Topaz—yellow

Chrysoprase—golden green

Jacinth—pale blue

Amethyst—purple

- Gates were pearls (most precious to the Jews), never closed

- Streets were of gold, like transparent glass

The Almighty Lord God and the Lamb are its temple (21:22). The city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. The kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it. There shall be no night there. 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.

The Provision of God (22:1-5)

The garden symbolizes enjoyment and supply of every need. Man has returned to the state in which he was created. He is in full fellowship with God. Three things are necessary for life: water, food and health. God will nurture and care for His own.

The leaves of the tree of life are for the “healing of the nations.” At the tower of Babel, man’s language was confused; and there has been confusion and conflict ever since. In heaven, however, conflict has ceased. *The problems of this earth will not be in heaven. All people will need some healing of past hurts and woes, of their imperfections, and of their bad attitudes.*

The tree of life: (Gk. *xulon tes zoes*) (2:7; 22:2, 14) The term in Greek denotes “a tree that gives life,” that is, eternal life (John 20:31). This tree symbolizes the eternal life God has made available to humankind. The tree of life was present in the Garden of Eden, but its fruit was not eaten because Adam and Eve had fallen into sin (Gen. 2:9; 3:24). Jesus came to earth to restore humankind and to again offer them the tree of life (Rev. 2:7). Those who are in the new paradise, the New Jerusalem, will partake of the tree of life forever (Rev. 22:2).¹⁷

There are no longer any curses. In Deuteronomy 28 there are curses for those who do not obey the laws of the covenant; but the curses of the “first” are no longer in the “new.” The servants of God serve or worship Him.

Some think the chapter break should have come here rather than at 21:27.

Conclusion of the Book (22:6-21)

John reassures those who read and hear the words of this book: “These words are faithful and true.” He repeats the promise that his message is about the things which must shortly take place. “And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds (keeps) the words of the prophecy of this book.” John gives his personal testimony as to the authority of this book. He had fallen down to worship an angel, but the angel forbade him to do that. The angel said he was a fellow servant; “worship God” (22:8-9).

John was *not to seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near* (22:10).

¹⁷ Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1999). *Nelson's new illustrated Bible commentary* (Re 2:6). Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers.

This is quite a contrast to what God told Daniel to do, to seal up his book (Dan. 12:4).

"Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and let the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and let the one who is holy, still keep himself holy."

Jesus the Lord said, "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star." (22:13,16).

Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying. (22:14-15).

And 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.

"I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book" (22:18-19). Adding or taking away from the book refers specifically to changing the Apocalypse itself.

By way of application, we understand that *no one has a right to change God's word or God's will; such behavior is presumptuous and condemned in every age* (Deut. 4:2; 5:32; 12:32; Prov. 30:5-6; John 8:31-32; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9).

The book concludes: He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

Appendix A

The Date of the Book of Revelation

The book of Revelation has been dated as early as Claudius (AD 41-54) and as late as Trajan (98-117 AD). Scholars of the book of Revelation have generally suggested three dates for the writing of this prophecy. One thing about which critics and scholars agree is that the book was written during a time of severe persecution in the first century. Christianity has collided with the state and with the state religion, the Christ cult with the imperial cult. While several scholars have suggested the Neronian date, the traditional date has been during the reign of Domitian. The date of the book does affect how the book is understood. These dates are:

- (1) During the reign of Nero, prior to 70 AD
- (2) During the reign of Vespasian (70-79 AD)
- (3) During the reign of Domitian (81-96 AD)

It is necessary to discuss each of these periods so that we may determine the most likely date when the book was written.

The Early Date (prior to 70 AD)

The evidences for this date are mostly internal. While this date has been popular with some, it holds many difficulties.

Some hold that chapter eleven indicates that the Temple at Jerusalem was still standing; therefore, the book had to be written before 70 AD. Foy E. Wallace Jr. also held to the early date as do preterists, who hold the AD 70 position. In speaking of the city to be destroyed, John identifies her as “the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified” (11:8). Since Jerusalem is where Jesus was crucified, this city must be Jerusalem (cf. Matt. 20:18-19). The reference in Revelation 11, however, is reminiscent of Ezekiel 40:1-42:20. Donald R. Taylor points out, “when the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel saw *his* foundation vision of the temple being measured, both the temple and the city *had already been destroyed* by the Babylonians *fourteen years earlier* [emphasis, Taylor’s].”⁹

Since it is well known that Nero persecuted Christians and caused the death of Paul and Peter, then the book should be dated at that time. There is no evidence, however, that Nero’s persecution spread beyond Rome. The persecution of Revelation is much wider and must involve the seven churches of Asia. Because there was persecution in these areas during the days of Domitian, it is more likely that the book refers to that period.

Arthur Weigall says that Nero is the one pictured in this book as the beast whose number is 666 (cf. Rev. 13:18). When Nero(n) Caesar is transcribed in Hebrew letters rather than Latin or Greek, the numerical value comes to 666. In Rev. 13:18 the beast’s number is 666, and through the years numerous candidates have been set forth as “the beast,” 666. The variant reading 616 also yield the name of Nero when the Latinized spelling is followed. (Revelation, however, is written in Greek; and there is no indication that the riddle is to be solved by transposing the letters into another language.) No ancient writer ever suggested Nero as the solution to this riddle. Irenaeus discussed a number of views as to what 666 might symbolize, yet he did not include Nero anywhere on his list.

A more likely answer to the 666 question is that this number is symbolic rather than a cryptogram. The number six falls short of seven and is thereby imperfect. For Hendrickson, it

⁹ Donald R. Taylor, *The Apocalypse: A Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Memphis, Tenn.: WriteWay Publishing, 1996), p. 11.

represents “failure upon failure upon failure.”¹⁰ As an intense multiple of six, the concept of great imperfection and evil is the main point. It may imitate God, but it always falls short and fails. Mounce observes:

In view of the widely divergent and highly speculative solutions to the riddle it seems best to conclude that John intended only his intimate associates to be able to decipher the number. So successful were his precautions that even Irenaeus some one hundred years later was unable to identify the person intended. An additional 1800 years of conjecture have not brought us any closer to an answer.¹¹

The interpretation of the seven heads of the beast set forth in 17:10-11 is sometimes presented as an argument favoring the early date. Speculation on the matter, however, makes it hard to build a chronology on it. The question of which emperor to start with is perplexing. Should we count them all, or omit some (no other ancient list does so)? The most straightforward reckoning takes us to the ‘year of three emperors’ in 68-69; but if we take this view, the prediction would seem to be untrue. The text itself seems to be more symbolic, with the seven kings also being seven hills.

The Vespasian Date (70-79 AD)

The basic argument for this date comes from internal evidence, namely a particular exegetical understanding of Revelation 17:9-11.

“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. And the beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction.”

Donald R. Taylor, of Freed-Hardeman University, argues strongly for the Vespasian date. He admits that while no ancient writer ever suggested Vespasian as the ruler during the days of John on Patmos, the internal evidence seems to indicate it. Taylor notes that this beast (13:1) is without doubt the Roman Empire. If the ten horns of the beast represent rulers of the Roman Empire, “we must only decide which ones.” Taylor begins with Augustus, recognizing that Christ was born during his reign. If the first ruler is Augustus, then the fifth would be Nero (54-58 AD). After Nero, three men (Galba, Otho, and Vitellius) struggled to become the undisputed head of Rome, but none was able to hold power for long. Vespasian should be counted as the sixth head, Titus the seventh, and Domitian the eighth. He argues that if this interpretation is correct, then John received and wrote the Apocalypse during the reign of the sixth emperor, Vespasian.

Roman Leaders/Emperors

BC	
49	Julius Caesar
44	Antony and Octavian (Augustus)
31	Augustus (first emperor)

¹⁰ William Hendrickson, *More Than Conquerors* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1967), p. 182.

¹¹ Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* in the New International Commentary of the New Testament series (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 265.

AD	
14	Tiberius
37	Caius Caligula
41	Claudius
54	Nero
68	Galba
69	Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian
79	Titus
81	Domitian
96	Nerva
98	Trajan
117	Hadrian

Those who hold the Vespasian date argue that Vespasian is that beast, the sixth head. The problem is which emperor do you begin with in your count? In the popular consensus, Julius Caesar was the first emperor. In the strict constitutional form it was Augustus. There is no evidence that Vespasian persecuted Christians. All external and internal evidence points away from Vespasian.¹²

Summers notes: “Tertullian was so sure that the book was written during the reign of Domitian that he begins with Domitian as the “one who is” and reasons forward and backward.” Tertullian makes many historical blunders in his effort, and his theory on historical grounds is worthless except that it reflects the belief of the day that “the book was written under Domitian.”¹³

The Late Date (ca. 96 AD)

The earliest external reference placing Revelation in the reign of Domitian is found in Irenaeus (ca. 140-202 AD). Speaking of the Apocalypse Irenaeus said, “For it was seen, not long ago, but almost in our generation, near the end of Domitian’s reign” (*Against Heresies* 5.30.3; cf. 2.22.5; 3.4.4). These words are later quoted by Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.18.3). Some think Mileto of Sardis in the second century understood the book to have come from that period (*Ecclesiastical History* 4.26.9). While Clement of Alexandria (*Quis Div. Salv.* 42) and Origen (*In Mt.* 16.6) early third century, do not actually name Domitian, there is little doubt that he is the emperor they have in mind. Later references quite explicitly place the Apocalypse in the time of Domitian: Victorinus in the first commentary written on the book of Revelation (*In Apoc.* 10:11; 17:10), Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.18.1; 3:20.9; 3:23.1), and Jerome (*Lives of Illustrious Men* 9).

When one turns to Revelation itself, it is evident that the background is one of conflict between the demands of a secular power and the Christian faith. The Roman Empire is personified as a beast who demands universal worship (13:4, 15-17; 14:9; 16:2; 19:20), insisting that all men bear his “mark” or be put to death (13:15-17; 14:9; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4). These references can be reasonably interpreted only in terms of the development of the imperial cult, specifically in Asia Minor. The concept of emperor worship had a natural growth in the ancient Gentile world, aided by polytheism, ancestor worship, and the subsequent deification of

¹² Edward P. Myers, *After These Things I Saw* (Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1997), p. 18.

¹³ Ray Summers, *Worthy Is The Lamb* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1951), p. 82.

legendary heroes. Emperors found they could strengthen their authority by making certain claims to divine status.

Julius Caesar accepted worship as a god during his lifetime.

Augustus was more cautious in Rome but sanctioned temples to himself in the provinces. Following his death he was worshiped widely in Asia and the western provinces.

Caligula was not content with voluntary worship. He demanded that his subjects everywhere do homage to his statue.

By the time of Nero the imperial cult was firmly established as a religious institution, although the persecution of Christians under Nero resulted not from the Emperor's claims of deity but because he needed some group on which to lay the blame for the great fire in Rome.

It was not until the time of Domitian that failure to honor the emperor as a god became a political offense and punishable.¹⁴ The first outbreak of persecution by the Roman government was under Nero in 64 AD (Tacitus, *Ann.* 15:44). This organized retaliation was apparently confined to the city of Rome and therefore distinct from the universal persecution envisioned in Revelation. Clement of Rome, a contemporary of Domitian, speaks of "the sudden and repeated calamities and adversities which have befallen us" (1.1), which agrees with what we know of Domitian from later writers who spoke of his persecution. Although the evidence for widespread persecution under Domitian is not especially strong, there is no other period in the first century in which it would be more likely. Revelation reflects a stage in the development of emperor worship which had not been reached at an earlier date.

Prior to Domitian, the state religion did not direct itself against the Christians. Nero's mad acts in Rome against the Christians had nothing to do with the imperial cult. Under Domitian, who according to the Eastern pattern laid claim to divine honors for himself as emperor during his own lifetime, there arose for the first time the persecution of Christians by the state on religious grounds. In 96 in Rome members of the imperial household were called to account for the charge of ἀθεότης (atheism or disbelief in the imperial god). Early Christians unanimously regarded Domitian as the first persecutor after Nero. That Vespasian should have laid special emphasis on the imperial cult contradicts everything we know. Under Domitian, Ephesus received a new imperial temple. Thus it was precisely in the province of Asia, the classical land of the imperial cult, that at the time of Domitian all the prerequisites were present for a severe conflict between Christianity and the state cult, which is what Revelation has in view.

There are a number of internal problems incurred by the early date but clearly resolved by a late date:

According to Rev. 2:8-11, the churches of Smyrna and Thyatira have been persevering for a long time, while according to Polycarp (*Epistle to the Philippians* 11:3) and Epiphanius (*Heresies* 51.33.1), at the time of Paul's early journeys they did not even exist. The church at Smyrna very likely was begun around 64 AD.

Rev. 3:17 describes the community of Laodicea as rich, while this city had been almost completely destroyed by an earthquake in 60 or 61 AD.¹⁵ It would have required more than eight or nine years for this city to recover from such a disaster.

¹⁴ Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* in the New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 32-33.

¹⁵ W.G. Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, trans. Howard C. Kee (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975), pp. 466-469.

The spiritual decline at Ephesus, Sardis, and Laodicea would require an extended period of time and reflect a very different picture of the church reflected in Paul's epistle. In fact, Paul commends them for their love and faith in 61 AD (Eph. 1:15). MacArthur explains:

The spiritual decline of the 7 churches (chaps. 2, 3) also argues for the later date. Those churches were strong and spiritually healthy in the mid-60s, when Paul last ministered in Asia Minor. The brief time between Paul's ministry there and the end of Nero's reign was too short for such a decline to have occurred. The longer time gap also explains the rise of the heretical sect known as the Nicolaitans (2:6, 15), who are not mentioned in Paul's letters, not even to one or more of these same churches (Ephesians). Finally, dating Revelation during Nero's reign does not allow time for John's ministry in Asia Minor to reach the point at which the authorities would have felt the need to exile him.¹⁸

The existence of a distinct heretical sect with the well-known title, the Nicolaitans, demands some distance in time from the epistles of Peter and Paul (in which there is no hint).

The absence of any reference to the pioneer work of Paul in Asia Minor or the work of Timothy is quite remarkable if the book had been written prior to 70 AD. Timothy remained in Ephesus when Paul called for him to come to Rome (67 AD, 2 Tim. 4:9-13).

Nero reportedly beheaded Paul and crucified Peter (Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* 2:25). It seems unlikely that he would have been content merely to banish their co-apostle to isolation. Domitian, however, had a fondness for banishing people (Eusebius, 3:18).

Though the evidence tends to support the latter date of Domitian, many credible scholars, such as John A. T. Robinson, R. M. Grant, and F. F. Bruce, in recent days have argued for the early date. Albert A. Bell says, "Second-century traditions about the apostles are demonstrably unreliable, and Irenaeus' testimony is not without difficulties." While no one can date the book with certainty, we believe the latter date best fits the internal evidence and the testimony of the early church fathers.

¹⁸ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2006). *The MacArthur study Bible: New American Standard Bible*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Appendix B

“And the Books Were Opened”

One of Alexander Campbell’s great sermons was based upon this text (Rev. 20:12,15); the books that he mentioned being opened were:

1. The Book of Nature

- “The heavens declare the glory of God” (Psalm 19)
- “His everlasting power and Divinity are perceived through the things that are made” (Rom. 1:18-20)
- “He left not himself without witness...He did good, gave rains and fruitful seasons” (Acts 14:17)
- But there is no such thing as forgiveness in nature. The book of nature does not reveal Christ.

2. The Book of Remembrance

- “A book of remembrance was written before him” (Malachi 3:16)
- Note it in a book that it may be for the time to come” (Isa. 30:8,9)
- “The Lord will bring to light the hidden things” (2 Cor. 4:5)
- “Nothing is secret that shall not be made manifest” (Luke 8:17; Rom. 2:16).

Note: There are some things God will not remember (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:6-12). What the record books contain is determined by what God decides to remember and what He decides to forgive (forget against).

3. The Old Testament

The great, continuing witness of all ages is the Bible. The Old Testament continues to be the most impressive witness of the Deity and Godhead of Christ in that it establishes His credentials historically for ages prior to the Incarnation.

- “Search the Scriptures, for these are they that testify of me” (John 5:39; note the context John 5:19-47).
- “All things must needs be fulfilled” (Luke 24:44)
- “And the scriptures cannot be broken” (John 10:35)
- “O, ye fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken” (Luke 24:25; Matt. 22:29).

4. The New Testament

- “hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them” (Matt. 7:24-27)
- “Whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matt. 18-20)
- “Why call ye me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46)
- “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.” (John 12:48)
- “The word of the Lord (the gospel) endureth forever” (1 Pet. 1:25; Matt. 24:35; 2 Pet. 3:2; John 6:68).

- Heb. 2:1-3 For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?

5. The Record of Every Man's Works.

All of the sacred writers make it clear that men shall be judged according to their works. Modern theology is very uncomfortable in the light of this truth; but the record of every man's deeds will surely enter into the judgment that he will receive.

- Jesus taught this (John 5:29; Matt. 25:31-46; Luke 6:46-49; Matt. 12:27)
- Paul taught this (Rom. 2:6-11; 2 Cor. 5:10; Phil. 2:12; 2 Cor. 6:1)
- Peter taught this (Acts 10:35; 1 Pet. 2:12; 3:8-11; 2 Pet. 1:10)
- James taught this (James 2:14-26)
- The apostle John taught this (1 John 2:4-5; 3:7-8, 22-24)
- Revelation teaches this (2:5; 3:15; 20:12-15; 14:13)

6. The Book of Life

- Philippians 4:3; Ex. 32:32; 1 Sam. 4:3; Psalm 69:28
- Rev. 3:15; 13:8; Heb. 12:23
- Rev. 20:12, 15
- Rev. 21:27

Appendix C

Christ in Revelation

The faithful witness (1:5) The
firstborn of the dead (1:5)
The ruler of the kings of the earth (1:5)
One like a son of man (1:13; 14:14)
The first and the last (1:17; 2:8; 22:13)
The living One (1:18)
The One who holds the seven stars (2:1)
The One who walks among the seven lampstands (2:1)
The One who has the sharp two-edged sword (2:12)
The Son of God (2:18)
He who searches the minds and hearts (2:23)
He who has the seven Spirits of God and seven stars (3:1)
He who is holy (3:7)
He who is true (3:7)
He who has the key of David (3:7)
The Amen (3:14)
The faithful and true Witness (3:14)
The Beginning of the creation of God (3:14)
The Lion from the tribe of Judah (5:5) The
Root of David (5:5; 22:16)
The Lamb that was slain (5:12)
Shepherd (7:17)
A son, a male child (12:5)
Faithful and true (19:11)
The Word of God (19:13)
King of kings and Lord of lords (19:16; 17:14)
The Alpha and the Omega (21:6; 22:13)
The beginning and the end (21:6; 22:13)
The bright morning star (22:16)¹⁶

¹⁶ David Roper, *The Book of Revelation*, Truth for Today Commentary, 246.

Appendix D
Special Study On The Mark of the Beast
John L. Kachelman, Jr.¹⁷

Introduction:

I. The topic under study is detailed in Revelation 13:16-18.

1. The Second Beast arises and deceives the majority on earth regarding the worship of the First Beast.
2. Worship to the First Beast causes people to remark on the greatness, power, and authority of the First Beast (13:4).
3. All who pay homage receive a “mark” upon their forehead and right hand.
 - a. This identifies those who worship the Beast.
 - b. This identifies those who can work and buy food.
 - c. This “mark” is NEVER described. Often this “mark” is confused with the “number of man” (666). However, “666” is NOT the mark of the Beast.
 - d. This mark is constantly associated with bitter opposition to and enmity with God (14:9, 11; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4).

II. The very hint at the phrase “the mark of the beast” reveals the prevailing hysteria that pervades today’s religious circles. 1. Many will give specific meanings to the vague terms used by Inspiration. a. The number “666” has become shrouded with mystery. 1) Some claim it is the Social Security Card 2) Some claim it is the “bar codes” (UPC symbols) on products and when all numerals are “6” the world will end. 3) Some claim that all credit cards will soon begin with “666.” b. It is sensationally suggested that Satan and the Anti-Christ are “marking” all products and people. c. We are being told there is a “global conspiracy” of slowly taking all of the “good” money out of circulation and replacing it with worthless currency.

2. Many attempt to personalize the “Anti-Christ.”

- a. Specific names are given from those who are currently causing the greatest turmoil on earth.
 - b. Somehow it is overlooked that John does NOT mention the “Anti-Christ” one time in the Book of Revelation! Even though John is silent about the “Anti-Christ,” many want to make him the “beast.”
 - c. It is claimed this Anti-Christ will rise up and force the mark (“666”) upon everyone.
 - d. The most common idea is that the Anti-Christ will arise from within the European Common Market. This leader will gain great support and through his deception or deliberate force, causes all to be “marked.”
3. The Christian must have the truthful understanding of the mark of the beast so s/he can answer the gross religious error surrounding such.

Body:

I. Basic facts about the “Mark of the Beast.”

A. The Number 666 is not the mark of the beast.

1. Inspiration clearly states this is “the number of his name” (13:17).

¹⁷ John Kachelman, <http://www.kachelman.com/Revelation/The%20Mark%20of%20the%20Beast.pdf>

Those never admit this who are deluded by the Dispensational Premillennial error. The symbolic use of numbers is common in Revelation and the use of 666 is no exception. Numbers would often stand for letters of the alphabet. Some have attempted to use the numerical/letter theory to discover just who this Beast was. These names have been suggested: Nero, Pope Leo X; Martin Luther; Emperor Trajan, etc. Using numbers to spell out alphabetical results is dangerous because numbers and letters are too easily manipulated. A good illustration of this is found in an article published in September 1924. "This riddle has puzzled the minds of Bible students for centuries but when the Ku Klux Klan is used as the key, it becomes as simple as child's play. Let us start with the magic letters K.K.K. Webster tells us that 'multiplication is often expressed by a dot between the factors,' thus $K.K.K.=K \times K \times K$. The numerical value of K is eleven, as it is the eleventh letter in both the English and Hebrew alphabets. Substituting this value for K we have $K.K.K.=11 \times 11 \times 11=1331$. This is the simple numerical value of K.K.K. But there is one lacking. The founder and first leader of the K.K.K. has been cast out and must be restored before we have the perfect symbol of the Ku Klux Klan. Adding the lost one in we have $1331+1=1332$. This is the perfect numerical value of the Ku Klux Klan. The number in verse 18 however is the number of the beast while in the chapter as a whole the Ku Klux Klan is represented by two beasts, namely the beast with the seven heads and ten horns representing the dynasty of Will Joseph, King of Ku and the beast that looked like a lamb but 'spake as a dragon' representing the dynasty of Hiram, King of Klux. Therefore, to get the number of one best we must divide the complete number by 2 ($1332 \div 2 = 666$). And this is the number by which the prophet may be known" ("Ku Klux Klan Fulfills The Scripture," The Christian Century, XLI, September 18, 1924). 2. Obviously even the most novel student of the Scripture is able to see the folly of trying to make "666" represent a specific person! 3. The best mode of this numerical interpretation is to follow John. John said this number was the "number of man." Not "a man" but "man." This generalized term includes ALL men and makes the number specific only in the sense that it represents ALL men. The number "6" symbolizes humanity. The number "7" symbolized perfection. So 7 minus 1 symbolize imperfection or failure. To the Jewish Christians the tripling of "6" would simply mean "imperfection times three"! Those who bowed before the image were perfectly imperfect! Compromise NEVER brings perfection. This interpretation eliminates the absurdity that results when specific names are attached to a generalized symbolic number!

B. The symbol of the Beast, or Anti-Christ cannot be specific.

Just as the Number "666" is general so is the beast symbolizing the general opposition and enmity toward God. All who follow this beast will have the spirit of the Anti-Christ. To make the Anti-Christ a specific person is just as foolish as trying to make "666" a specific person.

1. The specific references to the Anti-Christ never indicate just one but "many" (1 John 2:18; 2 John 7). Such a symbol refers to those who are deluded into thinking they can oppose God. "Anti" means against or opposed. Thus, it refers to anyone whose attitude opposes Christ. It NEVER is used to specify just ONE person!

2. If the Anti-Christ were a specific person that arises and leads the armies in opposition to God and His saints, how would John's readers have understood? (Rv 1:1, 3). These things were to "shortly come to pass." If the Anti-Christ is yet future, the opening verses of Revelation are error!

3. A personal Anti-Christ is opposed to the character of the book of Revelation. John deals with general principles of conflict between good and evil. These general principles apply to saints in all regions and eras of time.

The Anti-Christ in 1 John practices the attitude of rebellion and enmity symbolized by the “Beast.” This symbol refers not to specific individuals but to attitudes characterizing the ungodly!

II. A suggested interpretation in harmony with biblical principles.

The “Mark” is not the number “666” and it comes from those humans possessing ungodly, irreligious attitudes. What does the “mark” signify? There is an explanation that is much simpler than those trying to place a specific person with the Beast or the number.

A. A brief history of the Roman Emperors needs to be made.

1. The persecutions in John’s day had its roots reaching back to earlier times. Beginning with the Emperor Caligula the concept of the Emperor being deity is traced. Caligula’s sister died. The Emperor was very fond of her so he had her placed among the Roman gods as the “universal goddess.” After this had been accepted it was only a short step to reason that if his sister was the universal goddess then he must be the universal god. Caligula then sent out edicts for the citizens to consider him “divine.” This edict was opposed and the Emperor tried to move a large image into the Jerusalem Temple. Emperor Claudius followed Caligula and during the reign of Claudius the idea of Emperor deity was still kept but not enforced. Emperor Nero succeeded Claudius and toleration soon ceased. Nero’s persecution is well documented as beginning on July 18, 64 when he set fire to Rome and blamed the Christians. When Emperor Vespasian came into power the persecution ceased. Vespasian’s son was Domitian. When Domitian became Emperor the concept of the Emperor’s deity was revived with vigor. One of the severest periods of persecution followed and all who refused to worship the image of the Emperor were persecuted. Images of the Emperor were sent out to every part of the Empire. John was exiled during Domitian’s period of persecution. The book of Revelation was composed during the time of great persecution. During this persecution those who bowed and worshipped the Emperor’s image received certificates proving that worship had been offered. These certificates enabled them to participate freely in all social aspects of the Empire – shopping in the markets, working at jobs, free travel throughout the Empire, etc. Those who failed to have this certificate were denied all privileges and necessities of life. Emperor Decius revived the worship and persecution around 250 in his vain attempt to destroy Christianity. Decius proclaimed that once a year a sacrificial offering was to be made to the Roman gods and the Emperor. After the sacrifice was completed a certificate would be issued. This certificate was to be carried by all and produced when demanded showing that homage to the Emperor had been given. Failure to have the certificate meant capital punishment. Decius died before the plan could be implemented and persecution stopped. Persecution continued until 313 and the Edict of Milan.

2. This “certificate of worship” began in Domitian’s persecution and was revived under Decius. This was the “mark” that proved Emperor Worship had been performed. Such a certificate symbolized compromise, faithlessness, and worldly devotion. This “mark” clearly identified one as showing support to those opposing God.

B. Questions arising from this suggested interpretation.

1. If John meant the certificate why did he refer to a mark on the “forehead” and “right hand”? It should be recalled that such symbols are not literal. The “forehead” symbolized thought and

the “right hand” symbolized actions. Hence, to receive the “mark” in these places indicated that one was aligned with God’s opposition in thought and deed. It symbolized total rebellion to God and full identification with Satan.

2. The “mark of the beast” symbolized the certificate issued when compliance with the edicts of Emperor worship were satisfied. Those receiving the certificates were able to perform daily duties — work, purchase food, live within the city, etc. Those not possessing this “mark” were unable to do these things.
3. The principle emphasized by this symbol is eternal. When Christians remain true to God they will face persecutions. Persecutions may be avoided by compromise with Satan — receiving the mark was a token of surrender.
4. The “mark” cannot be literal. If it is literal it must be upon the “forehead” and “right hand.” These symbols indicate thoughts and actions. Those who surrender to Satan through compromise will bear the “mark” of their surrender in thoughts and deeds.

Concluding Thoughts:

- I. Believers today do not face a Roman Emperor’s image. Saints are not told they must bow before an idol and receive a certificate of worship in order to purchase food. However, Christians are tempted to compromise in other areas. There is the temptation to refuse to condemn the lie, stealing, defrauding, immorality, etc. Failure to condemn and the willing silence when these are observed, result in the same tragic consequences that happened in John’s day.
- II. The “mark on the forehead and right hand” is still being received!
 1. Satan is still encouraging compromise.
 2. Interpreting the “mark of the beast” in this sense is in harmony with Scripture and does not rest upon a wresting of Scripture to be clear.
 3. Let all beware of this danger and steadfastly refuse its acceptance (Rv 19:20; 15:2).
- III. God’s revealed Truth is very clear!
 1. Man likes to confuse the simplicity of Scriptures by the hype and hysteria of sensationalism.
 2. Such would be laughable if it did not indicate the ignorance regarding Bible knowledge.
 3. Let all give diligence to study the Scriptures and be honest and

Those receiving the certificates were able to perform daily duties — work, purchase food, live within the city, etc. Those not possessing this “mark” were unable to do these things. 3. The principle emphasized by this symbol is eternal. When Christians remain true to God they will face persecutions. Persecutions may be avoided by compromise with Satan — receiving the mark was a token of surrender. 4. The “mark” cannot be literal. If it is literal it must be upon the “forehead” and “right hand.” These symbols indicate thoughts and actions. Those who surrender to Satan through compromise will bear the “mark” of their surrender in thoughts and deeds.

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- II. The "mark on the forehead and right hand" is still being received! 1. Satan is still encouraging compromise. 2. Interpreting the "mark of the beast" in this sense is in harmony with Scripture and does not rest upon a wresting of Scripture to be clear. 3. Let all beware of this danger and steadfastly refuse its acceptance (Rv 19:20; 15:2). III. God's revealed Truth is very clear!
1. Man likes to confuse the simplicity of Scriptures by the hype and hysteria of sensationalism.
 2. Such would be laughable if it did not indicate the ignorance regarding Bible knowledge.
 3. Let all give diligence to study the Scriptures and be honest and consistent in their study.
- Beware of those who seek to "read into" this marvelous vision the sensational doctrinal error!

Appendix E
The 144,000 In Heaven
Revelation 7:4; 14:1
John L. Kachelman, Jr.

Introduction:

- I. Our Bibles are opened to an amazing section of John's vision. 4 angels stand at the four corners of the earth ready to send God's wrath upon sinful man. As they begin they are suddenly stopped with a command to wait until the saved are protected with a seal on their forehead. The number sealed was 144,000 from the 12 tribes of Israel. These are to receive the blessings of heaven (v. 15-17). As John surveys this great multitude he is asked, "Who are these?" That is the focus of our present study.
- II. The 144,000 of Revelation 7 and 14 have caused great discussion.
 - 1. Especially the Jehovah's Witness sect emphasizes this number. In fact, the entire doctrinal system of the Jehovah Witnesses is founded upon the 144,000 being a literal number. If you have ever read their literature or talked at length with them you know this is true.
 - 2. The fact of this number a topic of debate ought to motivate all believers to study it with intensity. We have an obligation to know what is meant and how it applies to us today (1 Peter 3:15).

Body:

- I. A brief discussion of the Jehovah Witness' doctrine based upon this number.
 - A. Charles T. Russell prophesied that in 1914 the world would end with Armageddon being fought. Before Armageddon destroyed the world Christ was to return and take the 144,000 to heaven. Following Armageddon the saintly dead would be resurrected and enjoy a renewed earth (New Paradise). This second group, not taken to heaven, would be called "the Great Multitude." Those living on earth would form the Kingdom of Christ.
 - B. Although Russell's prophecy failed, the error of his prophecy continues.
 - 1. Regarding the 144,000 - "These are the only ones whom Jehovah God takes to heaven with His Son. All others who gain life in His new world will live in Paradise restored here on earth" (1958).
 - 2. The two groups are supposedly found in Revelation 7:4, 9. The "heavenly class" will be the 144,000 and the "earthly class" is called "the Great Multitude."
 - 3. To offer the illusion of Scriptural support John 10:16 is cited. The "other sheep" are supposed to be the Great Multitude on earth. Such is destroyed with the last phrase "one flock," not two!
 - C. Such twisting of Scripture is effective in stirring confusion. What is a simple picture is thus distorted!
- II. The Jehovah Witness' interpretation is error, as the following points will show. If it can be shown that the 144,000 and Great Multitude are not two distinct groups but only one, the error will be clear!
 - A. They are both before the Throne and the throne is in heaven!
 - 1. Revelation 7:15, 17 – the Great Multitude is before the throne; Revelation 14:3 the 144,000 before the throne.

2. Revelation 7: 15 – the Great Multitude serve him before the throne in the Temple. The Temple is in heaven (Rv 11:19); the throne is in heaven (Rv 4:2). How can the Great Multitude serve in heaven if the Jehovah Witness' doctrine is correct?
 3. Thus, both serve God in heaven, before the throne, and in the Temple - they are the same group!
- B. The Great Multitude is dressed in "white robes" (7:9, 13, 14).
1. But the 144,000 are also clothed in white robes (Rv 22:14).
 2. Thus, all who have their robes washed in the blood of Christ will enter into heaven. There is thus only ONE group not two!
- C. To claim there are two groups of saved saints contradicts Scripture.
1. John 10:16 – does not teach two groups, but one!
 2. Ephesians 2:15,16; 4:4; Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:13 – all unite in stating there is only ONE group of saved believers!
 3. If there is a heavenly group and an earthly group then Ephesians 4:4 is wrong! Instead of one there must be two!
- D. If the Great Multitude is NOT in heaven they are lost!
1. Revelation 22:15 – One is either "within" or "without," in heaven or eternally lost! There is no other alternative.
 2. **Note:** Jehovah Witnesses say the "new city" will be on the "new earth." If you are on the earth you will be "without." But 22:3 tells us where this city is found – where God's throne is (in heaven)!
- E. A literal 144,000 demands acceptance of absurdities with other symbols in Revelation 7 and 14.
1. The Jehovah Witnesses want to pick and choose what is literal and what is symbolic. But it just cannot be reasonable!
 2. If one symbol is literal, all must be literal!
 - a. Revelation 7 – Four corners of the world; seal on the forehead; physical Israel alone saved in heaven; only 12,000 from every tribe; the tribe of Dan is excluded.
 - b. Revelation 14 – Virgin Jewish men are the only ones able to be saved in heaven.
 3. No reasonable person expects all to be literal. Why then expect the 144,000 to be literal unless you are trying to twist Scripture to fit a preconceived doctrine?
- F. A doctrine of two different groups ignores the Scriptural teaching about the establishment of the Kingdom.
1. The Jehovah Witnesses claim that Christ is not reigning and will not reign until His Kingdom is established on earth with the Great Multitude.
 2. But Acts 2:30 states that when Christ ascended He began to reign as a King! 3. If the Bible is true, and Christ began His reign on Pentecost Acts 2, then the Jehovah Witness' doctrine is false!

III. A suggested explanation of the 144,000.

- A. Revelation 7 describes two different actions and not two different groups.
1. 7:4 – John "heard" the number and in 7:9 he "saw" the group. The two are the same.
 2. How would you describe a mass of 144,000? It would be impossible to count them. The only one who would know is God.

3. Such happened to John – he first heard the number and then saw the multitudes. Only one group not two!
4. Such a meaning is correct – in heaven the occupants will be from ALL nations (21:26) as described in 7:9.

B. The numerical symbolism is a definite number for an indefinite number.

1. “Twelve” stands as a symbol of God's people – 12 tribes of Israel represented ALL of God's covenant people, even though the tribe of Dan is omitted. A multiplication would express all of God's saved, not one was missing.
2. “Ten” stands for completeness and 10 x 10 represented total completeness – nothing lacking.
3. Thus 12 x 12 x 10 x 10 x 10 is a way of simple stating that all of God's saved believers were present – none were missing!

C. When viewed as symbolic, and not literal, this number unites with the other symbols in Revelation 7 and 14 to provide cheer and comfort for struggling saints.

1. It reveals the care of God for all who obey Him.
2. It shows that God provides for His church in spite of this world's tribulations.
3. In the end God and His children who remained devoted to God's will and refuse to compromise with sin will stand victorious over Satan. All faithful will be saved none will be missing!

Conclusion:

- I. Scripture teaches there are only two groups in the spiritual realm – the saved and the lost. This is a tragic point to contemplate if you are among the unsaved. It is a beautiful fact if you have been washed pure in the blood of the Lamb.
- II. One of the worse facts about a literal 144,000 as advocated by the Jehovah Witnesses is that they ONLY have an "earthly hope." How terribly sad! (Colossians 1:5).

Appendix F
The Battle of Armageddon
Revelation 16:13-19; 19:11-21
John L. Kachelman, Jr.

Introduction:

- I. "Russia's invasion of Afghanistan and its moves in Iran could signal the beginning of the last days by triggering the great war of Armageddon." Such is the lead-in sentence for an article written October 1980. It states the pandemonium of those in prophecy circles who see modern political events as fulfillment of biblical prophecy.
 1. This flair for fulfillment is a dangerous threat because it undermine simple Scriptural truths and erects entire doctrinal philosophies upon "coulds," "maybes," and "probably."
 2. In the past these "prophecy freaks" fixed 1988 as the date of Armageddon and the Lord's return to establish in Jerusalem His supreme Throne. Those in positions of great influence peddled this sensationalism to millions. One well-known radio preacher has stated that Christ would set up His Kingdom in 1988 as a result of a world-wide military conflict occurring at the end of Armageddon.
 3. The "Battle of Armageddon" is the sensational doctrine of Premillennialism. It is the topic under consideration every time something happens in the Middle East region.
- II. The biblical account of this great battle is found only in Revelation 16:13-19; 19:11-21; 20:8,9. The references in Rv 19 and 20 describe the final phases of the battle but are not described as "Armageddon" in the text.
 1. John saw an unholy alliance between the dragon, the sea-beast, and the false prophet.
 2. From the mouths of these three came unclean spirits like frogs. These frogs led the armies against God and His saints.
 3. The two forces gathered together for final combat at "Har-megdon".
 4. 19:19ff reveals the evil forces gathered but were destroyed by Christ's great power.
 5. A further reference is found in 20:8,9 when the battle of Armageddon is pictured as world- wide in scope. God's saints are surrounded and Satan's final blow was about to be given when Christ's power destroyed all evil forces.
- III. These symbols make sensational pictures. When they are taken out of context and made to fit together they present a very believable error. There is a great obligation for believers to look at this battle and make sure they understand it.
 1. Is "Armageddon" a harbinger for WW III and a nuclear holocaust?
 2. Is "Armageddon" political or spiritual?
 3. How does "Armageddon" apply to John's readers as well as to modern readers?

Body:

I. The two general theories of Armageddon discussed.

- A. It refers to a literal, political war in Israel.
 1. This is the common interpretation. Denominational preachers like Billy Graham believe and teach this point.
 2. Texts used to support their position –
 - a. Revelation 9:16-18. But this refers to those slain that were not sealed of God; hence it cannot be a world-wide event (4b). Also it is absurd to take this text literally (v. 7-10, 17-19).

- b. Revelation 14:20. This refers to the Final Judgment when Christ returns. It shows the harsh penalty awaiting all the wicked.
 - 3. In summary here is the program for a political Armageddon. (Notice that this changes as the world's governments change and new political leaders arise.)
 - a. Russia will invade Israel having gathered allies (Libya, Ethiopia, Iran). These will briefly conquer Israel.
 - b. Red China begins to mobilize its forces and marches on Russia who is in Israel. Before Red China gets to Palestine, Russia has been destroyed by a nuclear attack from Europe. Now the forces of Europe unite with Red China and fight a final battle in the Valley of Megiddo.
 - c. In this battle 200 million soldiers fight and blood runs as high as horses' bridles for 200 miles. The final battle spreads over all the earth and at the very last minute Christ returns to save His saints.
- B. It refers to a figurative battle and the term symbolizes the conflict between good/evil; Christ/Satan.
 - 1. This conflict began in Genesis 3:15 and continues even today (2 Timothy 2:3, 4).
 - 2. This conflict will end when Christ returns and consigns all enemies to Hell (Rv 16:15-17).

II. The key to understanding Revelation 16 is the term "Armageddon".

- A. The word refers to battles fought by Israel.
 - 1. "Har" in Hebrew signifies "mountain"; hence John refers to "the mountains of Megiddo."
 - 2. "Megiddo" was a city in Northern Israel where a number of important battles in Jewish history had been fought.
 - a. Deborah and Barak defeated Sisera even though outnumbered (Judges 4).
 - b. The "boy king" Josiah was killed in battle by Pharaoh Neco (2 Kings 23) and King Saul's defeat at Gilboa was nearby (1 Samuel 31).
 - c. At Megiddo Israel had won her greatest victories and suffered her greatest defeats. To any Jewish reader the mention of "Har-megedon" would mean the history of conflict and war. When John's readers saw the term they did not look for a literal battle but understood the symbolism.
- B. It is not unusual for John to use a physical place to symbolize a spiritual concept.
 - 1. He had done this before – Egypt and Sodom (11:8) symbolized worldliness; Euphrates (16:12) symbolized boundaries and limits of God's punishments; etc.
 - 2. In our day we do the same – one who is going to meet his "Waterloo" does not have to travel to Belgium. The place symbolizes utter defeat such as Napoleon suffered in 1815 at that place.
 - 3. Why should we make John's reference to Armageddon literal when we know he refers to other places in a symbolic manner?

III. The symbolic concept of Armageddon expresses the correct interpretation because of two facts.

- A. Such is in harmony with Scripture.
 - 1. Throughout the Bible conflict is presented. Those who follow God are in a war! They stand as ancient Israel at Megiddo, outnumbered and overpowered. This battle is constant (2 Corinthians 10:3-5; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8,9; etc.).
 - 2. Numerous references are given which encourage saints to be steadfast in this battle with Satan (2 Timothy 2:3, 4; Ephesians 6:10-18).

3. The symbolism of Armageddon is in harmony with Scripture. God saved Israel before at Megiddo when all seemed hopeless and He will do so again.
- B. A literal, political battle at Megiddo in Palestine involves too many absurdities to be true.
 1. We must accept these absurd facts if it is to be a literal war –
 - a. The invading armies must ride horses (14:20).
 - b. The implements of war must be ancient weapons such as bows and arrows, swords and spears (Rv 14:20; Ezekiel 38:4, 15).
 - c. The commander-in-chief of God's enemies (Gog) would use a bow and arrow (Ezekiel 39:3).
 - d. That FROGS would lead the enemy (Rv 16:13).
 - e. The cavalry would ride grasshoppers (Rv 9:7-10, 17-19).
 - f. Over 200 million men could fight a war on a portion of land 14 x 20 miles long! **Note:** There would be 200 million enemies and we are not told the number in God's army (cf 9:16).
 - g. That the ultimate blow would be struck by One riding a white horse whose only weapon was a sword sticking out of His mouth! (Rv 19:15).
 2. Such absurd conclusions make a literal, political Battle of Armageddon a comical suggestion!

IV. Observations arising from our study.

- A. If Armageddon is a literal war then . . .
 1. We are forced to accept absurdities in God's Word.
 2. We remove the relevancy of the text from John's readers, thus contradicting the promise of God to "all" who read and obeyed (Rv 1:3; 22:7).
 3. We make God a liar because He said the things in Revelation would "shortly" come to pass (Rv 1:3; 22:6).
 - B. The logical, consistent, and reasonable conclusion is that the Battle of Armageddon is figurative. It presents, in well-known symbols, the constant conflict between Christ and Satan. It assures us that on the final day of the battle, Satan and his evil forces will be destroyed.

Conclusion:

- I. Satan is adept at leading innocent hearts away from God (Acts 20:30; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12). The sensationalism and date fixing by modern interpreters of prophesy must be exposed for what it is – a perversion of God's divine Truth.
 1. Sensationalism has found the car (Nahum 2:3, 4); the airplane (Isaiah 31:5); the submarine (Amos 9:3); the radio (Ecclesiastes 10:20); and now WW III by 1988!
 2. Those who pervert the simple message of victory, in the book of Revelation, will stand damned on the Judgment Day by Almighty God!
- II. The challenge of Armageddon – Revelation 16:15. "Watch your garments!" This means we must be vigilant and dedicated to God. We are thus prepared for the war and will not be put to shame!

Appendix G

Allusions to the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation

278 passages of Revelation allude to OT Scriptures

This list is not exhaustive, but it does show the heavy reliance of motifs and concepts found explicitly in the Old Testament and used with new meaning in the New.

- 1:1 Daniel 2:28-29
1:4 Isaiah 11:2
1:5 Genesis 49:11; Psalm 89:27
1:6 Exodus 19:6; Isaiah 61:6
1:7 Daniel 7:13; Zechariah 12:10-14
1:8 Isaiah 41:4
1:12 Exodus 25:37; 37:23
1:13 Daniel 7:13; 10:5, 16
1:14 Daniel 7:9; 10:6
1:15 Ezekiel 1:7, 24; 43:2; Daniel 10:6
1:16 Judges 5:31; Isaiah 49:2
1:17 Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; 48:12; Daniel 8:17-18; 10:9, 10, 12, 15, 19
1:18 Job 3:17; Hosea 13:14

2:4 Jeremiah 2:2
2:7 Genesis 2:9; 3:22-24; Proverbs 11:30; 13:12; Ezekiel 31:8 (LXX)
2:12 Isaiah 49:2
2:14 Numbers 25:1-3
2:17 Exodus 16:33-34; Isaiah 62:2; 65:15
2:18 Daniel 10:6
2:20 I Kings 16:31-32; II Kings 9:7, 22
2:23 Psalm 7:9; 26:2; 28:4; Jeremiah 11:20; 17:10
2:27 Psalm 2:7-9; Isaiah 30:14; Jeremiah 19:11

3:4 Ecclesiastes 9:8
3:5 Exodus 32:32-33
3:7 Isaiah 22:22
3:9 Isaiah 43:4; 49:23; 60:14
3:12 Isaiah 62:2; Ezekiel 48:35
3:14 Genesis 49:3; Deuteronomy 21:17
3:18 Isaiah 55:1
3:19 Proverbs 3:12 2

4:1 Ezekiel 1:1
4:2 Isaiah 6:1; Ezekiel 1:26-28; Daniel 7:9
4:3 Ezekiel 1:26, 28; 10:1
4:5 Exodus 19:16; 25:37; Isaiah 11:2; Ezekiel 1:13
4:6 Ezekiel 1:5, 18, 22, 26; 10:1, 12
4:7 Ezekiel 1:10, 10:14
4:8 Isaiah 6:2-3; Ezekiel 1:18; 10:12
4:9 Deuteronomy 32:40; Daniel 4:34; 6:26; 12:7
4:11 Genesis 1:1

5:1 Ezekiel 2:9-10; Daniel 12:4
5:5 Genesis 49:9-10; Isaiah 11:1, 10
5:6 Isaiah 11:2; Zechariah 3:8-9; 4:10
5:8 Psalm 111:2
5:9 Psalm 40:3; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isaiah 42:10;

Daniel 5:19
5:10 Exodus 19:6; Isaiah 61:6
5:11 Daniel 7:10
6:2 Zechariah 1:8; 6:3
6:4 Zechariah 1:8; 6:2
6:5 Zechariah 6:2
6:8 Jeremiah 15:2-3; 24:10; 29:17; Ezekiel 14:21; Hosea 13:14; Zechariah 6:3
6:12 Isaiah 50:3; Joel 2:10
6:13 Isaiah 34:4
6:14 Isaiah 34:4; Nahum 1:5
6:15 Psalm 48:4-6; Isaiah 2:10-12, 19
6:16 Hosea 10:8
6:17 Psalm 76:7; Jeremiah 30:7; Nahum 1:6; Zephaniah 1:14-18; Malachi 3:2

7:1 Isaiah 11:2; Jeremiah 49:36; Ezekiel 7:2; 37:9; Daniel 7:2; Zechariah 6:5
7:3 Ezekiel 9:4-6
7:4 Genesis 49:1-28
7:9 Leviticus 23:40
7:10 Psalm 3:8
7:14 Genesis 49:11
7:15 Leviticus 26:11
7:16 Psalm 121:5-6; Isaiah 49:10
7:17 Psalm 23:1-2; Ezekiel 34:23

8:3 Psalm 141:2
8:4 Psalm 141:2
8:5 Ezekiel 10:2
8:5-6 Exodus 19:16
8:7 Exodus 9:23-24; Psalm 18:13; Isaiah 28:2
8:8 Exodus 7:17-19
8:10 Isaiah 14:12
8:11 Jeremiah 9:15; 23:15
8:12 Isaiah 13:10 3

9:1 Isaiah 14:12-14
9:2 Genesis 19:28; Exodus 19:8
9:3 Exodus 10:12-15
9:4 Ezekiel 9:4
9:6 Job 3:21
9:8 Joel 1:6
9:9 Joel 2:5
9:11 Job 26:6; 28:22; 31:12; Psalm 88:11; Proverbs 15:11
9:14 Genesis 15:18; Deuteronomy 1:7; Joshua 1:4

10:1 Ezekiel 1:26-28
10:4 Daniel 8:26; 12:4-9

10:5 Deuteronomy 32:40; Daniel 12:7
10:6 Genesis 1:1; Deuteronomy 32:40; Nehemiah 9:6;
Daniel 12:17
10:7 Amos 3:7
10:9 Jeremiah 15:16; Ezekiel 2:8-33
10:11 Ezekiel 37:4, 9

11:1 Ezekiel 40:3-4; Zechariah 2:1-2
11:2 Ezekiel 40:17-20
11:4 Zechariah 4:1-3, 11-14
11:5 Numbers 16:35; II Kings 1:10-12
11:6 Exodus 7:19-25; I Kings 17:1
11:7 Exodus 7:3, 7, 8, 21
11:8 Isaiah 1:9-10; 3:9; Jeremiah 23:14; Ezekiel
16:49; Ezekiel 23:3, 8, 19, 27
11:9 Psalm 79:2-3
11:11 Ezekiel 37:9-10
11:15 Exodus 15:18; Daniel 2:44-45; 7:13-14, 27
11:18 Psalm 2:1-3; 46:6; 115:13

12:1 Genesis 37:9-11
12:2 Isaiah 26:17; 66:7; Micah 4:9-10
12:3 Isaiah 27:1; Daniel 7:7, 20, 24
12:4 Daniel 8:10
12:5 Psalm 2:8-9; Isaiah 66:7
12:7 Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1
12:9 Genesis 3:1; Job 1:6; 2:1; Zechariah 3:1
12:10 Job 1:9-11; 2:4-5; Zechariah 3:1
12:14 Exodus 19:4; Deuteronomy 32:11; Isaiah 40:31;
Daniel 7:25; 12:7; Hosea 2:14-15
12:15 Hosea 15:10
12:17 Genesis 3:15

13:1 Daniel 7:3, 7, 8
13:2 Daniel 7:4-6, 8
13:3 Daniel 7:8
13:4 Daniel 8:24 4
13:5 Daniel 7:8, 11, 20, 25; 11:36
13:7 Daniel 7:21
13:8 Daniel 12:1
13:10 Jeremiah 15:2; 43:11
13:11 Daniel 8:3
13:13 I Kings 1:9-12

14:1 Psalm 2:6; Ezekiel 9:4
14:2 Ezekiel 1:24; 43:2
14:3 Psalm 144:9
14:7 Exodus 20:11
14:8 Isaiah 21:9; Jeremiah 51:7-8
14:10 Genesis 19:24; Psalm 75:8; Isaiah 51:17
14:11 Isaiah 34:10; 66:24
14:14 Daniel 7:13
14:18 Joel 3:13
14:19 Isaiah 63:1-6
14:20 Joel 3:13

15:1 Leviticus 26:21
15:3 Exodus 15:1-18; Deut. 31:30-32:44; Psalm 92:5;

Psalm 111:2; 139:14
15:4 Psalm 86:9; Isaiah 66:23; Jeremiah 10:7
15:5 Exodus 38:21
15:6 Leviticus 26:21
15:7 Jeremiah 25:15
15:8 Exod. 40:34-35; Lev. 26:21; I Kings 8:10-11; II
Chron. 5:13-14; Isaiah 6:1-4

16:1 Psalm 79:6; Jeremiah 10:25; Ezekiel 22:31
16:2 Exodus 9:9-11; Deuteronomy 28:35
16:3 Exodus 7:17-25
16:4 Exodus 7:17-21; Psalm 78:44
16:5 Psalm 145:17
16:6 Isaiah 49:26
16:7 Psalm 19:9; 145:17
16:10 Exodus 10:21-23
16:12 Isaiah 11:15-16; 41:2, 25; 46:11; Jeremiah
51:36
16:13 Exodus 8:6
16:14 I Kings 22:21-23
16:16 Judges 5:19; II Kings 23:29-30; II Chronicles
35:22; Zechariah 12:11
16:19 Jeremiah 25:15
16:21 Exodus 9:18-25

17:1 Jeremiah 51:13; Nahum 3:4
17:2 Isaiah 23:17
17:3 Daniel 7:7
17:4 Jeremiah 51:7; Ezekiel 28:13
17:8 Exodus 32:32-33; Daniel 12:1
17:12 Daniel 7:24-25
17:16 Leviticus 21:9 5

18:1 Ezekiel 43:2
18:2 Isaiah 21:9; 34:13-15; Jeremiah 50:30; 51:37
18:3 Jeremiah 51:7
18:4 Isaiah 52:11; Jeremiah 50:8; 51:6, 45
18:5 Jeremiah 41:9
18:6 Psalm 137:8; Jeremiah 50:15, 29
18:7 Isaiah 47:7-8; Zephaniah 2:15
18:8 Isaiah 47:9; Jeremiah 50:31-32
18:9-19 Ezekiel 26:16-18; 27:26-31
18:9 Jeremiah 50:46
18:10 Isaiah 13:1
18:12 Ezekiel 27:12-25
18:20 Jeremiah 51:48
18:21 Jeremiah 51:63-64
18:22 Isaiah 24:8; Jeremiah 25:10; Ezekiel 26:13
18:23 Jeremiah 7:34; 16:9; 25:10; Nahum 3:4

19:2 Deuteronomy 32:43; Psalm 119:137; Jeremiah
51:48
19:3 Isaiah 34:9-10; Jeremiah 51:48
19:5 Psalm 22:23; 134:1; 135:1
19:6 Psalm 93:1; 97:1; Ezekiel 1:24; 43:2; Daniel 10:6
19:11 Psalm 18:10; 45:3-4; Isaiah 11:4-5; Ezekiel 1:1
19:13 Isaiah 63:3
19:15 Psalm 2:8-9; Isaiah 11:4; 63:3-6

19:16 Deuteronomy 10:17
 19:17 Isaiah 34:6-7; Ezekiel 39:17
 19:18 Isaiah 34:6-7; Ezekiel 39:18
 19:19 Psalm 2:2; Joel 3:9-11
 19:20 Isaiah 30:33; Daniel 7:11
 19:21 Ezekiel 39:19-20

 20:2 Genesis 3:1, 13-14; Isaiah 24:21-22
 20:4 Daniel 7:9, 22, 27; 12:2
 20:5 Isaiah 26:14
 20:6 Exodus 19:6; Isaiah 26:19
 20:8 Ezekiel 38:2; 39:1, 6
 20:9 Deuteronomy 23:14; II Kings 1:9-12; Ezekiel
 38:22; 39:6
 20:11 Daniel 2:35
 20:12 Exodus 32:32-33; Psalm 62:12; 69:28; Daniel
 7:10
 20:15 Exodus 32:32-33; Daniel 12:1

 21:1 Isaiah 65:17; 66:22
 21:3 Leviticus 26:11-12; Ezekiel 37:27
 21:4 Isaiah 25:8; 35:10; 51:11; 65:19
 21:9 Leviticus 26:21
 21:10 Ezekiel 40:2
 21:11 Isaiah 60:1-2; Ezekiel 43:2
 21:12-13 Ezekiel 48:31-34 6
 21:15 Ezekiel 40:3, 5
 21:19-20 Exodus 28:17-20; Isaiah 54:11-12
 21:23 Isaiah 60:19-20
 21:24 Isaiah 60:3-5, 16
 21:25 Isaiah 60:11; Zechariah 14:7
 21:26 Isaiah 60:5, 16
 21:27 Isaiah 52:1; Ezekiel 44:9; Zechariah 14:21

 22:1 Psalm 46:4; Ezekiel 47:1; Zechariah 14:8
 22:2 Genesis 2:9; 3:22-24; Ezekiel 47:12
 22:3 Genesis 3:17-19; Zechariah 14:11
 22:4 Psalm 17:15; Ezekiel 9:4
 22:5 Isaiah 60:19; Daniel 7:18, 22, 27; Zechariah 14:7
 22:10 Daniel 8:26; 12:4, 9
 22:11 Ezekiel 3:27; Daniel 12:10
 22:12 Psalm 62:12; Isaiah 40:10; 62:11
 22:13 Isaiah 44:6
 22:14 Genesis 2:9; 3:22-24; Proverbs 11:30
 22:15 Deuteronomy 23:18
 22:18-19 Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32
 22:19 Deuteronomy 29:19-20