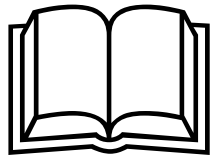


A Study of the

Book of Revelation



Questions and Notes by
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Introduction

I have taught the Book of Revelation three times, and each time I have taken a different view! While the ultimate lessons of the book remain constant, my thinking has evolved over the last 13 years, and over the last four years I found myself drawn more and more to what scholars call the “preterist” position, the belief that most of what this book describes was fulfilled in the past. In particular, I believe the book was written during the reign of Nero, and the imminent destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 is its primary focal point. I have enjoyed my study of the book this time more than ever before. This does not mean that I encountered no serious obstacles to my view; I certainly did (and I tried to deal with them fairly in the notes). Nor does it mean that I am unwilling to re-think these issues, or that I think we should ever be arrogant or dogmatic. Indeed, as I tried to stress to my class time and again, the overall message of the book is the same regardless of the specifics: *God’s people will be vindicated against their enemies!*

The questions for each lesson are basically designed to familiarize the student with the text, nothing more. To prepare for each lesson the student should read the biblical text repeatedly, answer the questions on the text, and then review the notes. The questions and notes are based on the *New American Standard Bible* (1995 updated edition).

Here are the sources I consulted most often in my study of the book.

Four Views on the Book of Revelation, ed. C. Marvin Pate (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998). Four authors each present an overview of the book.

The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation, by David Chilton (Ft. Worth, TX: Dominion Press, 1987). Excellent commentary by a very conservative Presbyterian. Complaints: Calvinistic, “high church,” and occasional reference to the Zodiac (?).

Biblical Apocalypics: A Study of the Most Notable Revelations of God and of Christ, by Milton S. Terry (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988, reprint from 1898). This is the single best work on Revelation I have read. I found myself agreeing with Terry’s overall approach more than anything else I have read. The section on Revelation is 230 pages. My only major criticism of Terry is that he casually accepts the conclusions of higher criticism on certain issues on other chapters.

Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation, by Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr. (Atlanta: American Vision, 1998 revised edition). Gentry’s examination of the historical background of the book is tremendous, though tedious and repetitive at times.

Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary, by Homer Hailey (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979). Though I disagree with many of his conclusions, I still found brother Hailey’s work tremendously helpful due to his encyclopedic knowledge of the Old Testament.

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An Introduction to Revelation

“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 (Rev. 1:3).

While some Bible students shy away from studying the final book of the New Testament, the Bible promises a blessing on those who hear the words of this amazing book. While there may be specific details of Revelation that elude our grasp, the over all point of Revelation is clear: Jesus will triumph over all those who oppose Him and His people. What a blessing this truth is!

Revelation is an intimidating book. In our study we will focus on the first rule of Bible study: what did this book mean to its original readers? Grounding our study in its original context will protect us from the hysterical speculation that so often has dominated the interpretation of this book throughout church history.

Keys To Interpretation

Here are some keys to understanding the Book of Revelation:

1. *Revelation is a book of visions.* John’s visions are dramatic and highly picturesque. A great dragon with a tail powerful enough to remove a third of the stars of the sky (12:3-4); a seven-headed sea monster (13:1-2); a harlot intoxicated with the blood of God’s people (17:4-6). It is crucial to visualize what these pictures must have looked like to John to get the full impact of this dramatic book.
2. *Revelation is based on the Old Testament.* One estimate is that of the 404 verses in Revelation, 278 are allusions to the Old Testament. Particularly influential are Daniel and Ezekiel.
3. *Revelation is about events in the first century.* John repeatedly says that the events of Revelation “must soon take place” (1:1, 3; 3:11; 22:6, 7, 10, 12, 20). This does not mean that everything is Revelation is past. There is a reference to a time frame extending far beyond the first century (20:4), as well as the judgment and eternal state (20:4, 11-15). But the farther we move into the 21st century, the further we move from the earlier judgments described in Revelation 1-19.

Crucial Questions of Interpretation

Scholars are divided over two key questions: the date of the Book of Revelation, and the identity of the great city Babylon (featured prominently in Revelation 17-18).

A. *The date of Revelation*

The two most commonly proposed dates are some time during the reign of Nero (AD 54-68) and some time during the reign of Domitian (AD 81-96). The reason for these suggestions is that both emperors persecuted Christians, and Revelation was written during a time of “tribulation” for Christians (1:9). I believe the correct date is some time late in the reign of Nero, for the following reasons:

Roman Emperors

1. *Julius Caesar*
(49-44 BC)
2. *Augustus*
(31 BC-AD 14)
3. *Tiberius*
(AD 14-37)
4. *Gaius*
(AD 37-41)
5. *Claudius*
(AD 41-54)
6. *Nero*
(AD 54-68)
7. *Galba*
(AD 68-69)
8. *Otho*
(AD 69)
9. *Vitellius*
(AD 69)
10. *Vespasian*
(AD 69-79)
11. *Titus*
(AD 79-81)
12. *Domitian*
(AD 81-96)

1. There is actually very little evidence that Domitian persecuted Christians to the degree described in Revelation. This is in contrast to the overwhelming ancient testimony of Nero's bloody persecution of Christians.
2. Nero, and not Domitian, matches the description found in Revelation 17:10: "they are seven kings; five have fallen, *one is*, the other has not yet come." The first five Roman emperors were Julius Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius, Gaius (Caligula), and Claudius. The sixth emperor was Nero. While some dispute whether Julius Caesar should be regarded as an emperor, nearly every early historian counted him as such, including Suetonius, Dio Cassius, and Josephus.
3. The strongest evidence for a date during the reign of Domitian is the testimony of an early church leader named Irenaeus (AD 130-202). He wrote: "It would have been announced by him who beheld the apocalyptic vision. For that was seen no very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's reign." However, the subject of the verb "was seen" (*eorathe*) could either be the Revelation itself ("that was seen") or John ("he was seen"). Irenaeus also referred to "ancient copies" of Revelation, which implies its original composition was quite earlier than his own day. To me these mitigating factors, combined with the strong internal evidence for the time of Nero, shift the preponderance of the evidence to the earlier date for Revelation.

B. The identity of the harlot city, Babylon

One of the key prophetic images in Revelation is "Babylon the Great" (14:8), a harlot city guilty of persecution (17:1-7), which is eventually destroyed by God (16:19; 17:16-18). Scholars have suggested the following identifications: Rome, Jerusalem, the Roman Catholic Church, a future restored Babylon. I will present the view that Babylon is a reference to Jerusalem and its destruction in AD 70. Throughout our study I will make the case more completely, but here are some observations:

1. In Revelation 11:8 the "great city" is identified as the place "where also their Lord was crucified."
2. While other cities are called "harlots" in the Old Testament (Nineveh in Nahum 3:1-7; Tyre in Isaiah 23:15-17; and Babylon in Isaiah 47:5-15), Jerusalem is described as a harlot in detail in the Book of Ezekiel, the primary prophetic backdrop of Revelation (see Ezek. 16 and 23).
3. The emphasis on "the holy city, new Jerusalem" in Revelation 21-22 makes better sense in light of a contrast with the old earthly Jerusalem.

I will concede that a good case can be made for Rome as the harlot city if the record of Revelation 17-18 is considered distinct from the overall content of the book. But I hope to show that the first half of Revelation is clearly a reference to the Jewish War with Rome, and thus tips the scales in favor of the Jerusalem view by the time we reach Revelation 17-18.

The Message of Revelation

The theme of the book is found in Revelation 1:7: “BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.” This language is reminiscent of Jesus’ prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, which was fulfilled in the generation of the first century (Matt. 24:34). In Matthew 24:30, Jesus said: “And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.” Therefore we should read Revelation as an expanded version of the Olivet Discourse.

The New Testament clearly teaches that because the Jews rejected Christ, God would execute His judgment on Jerusalem and the Jewish state. “His blood shall be on us and on our children” (Matt. 27:25). The first century generation of Jews rejected both John the Baptist and the One whose way he paved, despite the great miracles Jesus performed (Matt. 11:16-24). Jesus described that generation as “an evil and adulterous generation” (Matt. 12:38-40), an appropriate image for a city which played the harlot by rejecting the bridegroom (John 3:29) and pledging itself instead to Caesar (John 19:12, 15).

This evil alliance between Jerusalem and Rome extended to the persecution of the apostles and early Christians. As the Book of Acts demonstrates, opposition to Christianity was instigated by the Jews, first by the Sadducees (Acts 4-5), then by Pharisees like Saul (Acts 8:1-3). This opposition was particularly virulent among Jews in Asia (Acts 21:27-31). Further, the Jews often appealed to the Roman government to intervene and stop the preaching of Christianity (Acts 18:12-17; Acts 24:1-9; Acts 25:6-12).

The years just prior to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 were tumultuous. In AD 64 a great fire devastated the city of Rome, and Nero pinned the blame on Christians. This led to the first official persecution of Christians by Rome, which lasted the remaining three and a half years of Nero’s reign (see Rev. 13:3-5). Additionally, in AD 66, the Jews revolted against the Romans, leading to three and a half years of war (see Rev. 11:2), culminating in the destruction of Jerusalem by the empire it had once pledged loyalty to instead of the Christ (see Rev. 17:16-17). And in AD 68 Nero committed suicide, throwing the empire into convulsions (see Rev. 13:3).

Throughout Revelation the judgment upon Jerusalem is described in terms of the judgment on Israel’s two arch enemies in the Old Testament, Egypt and Babylon. In Revelation 11:8 Jerusalem is “mystically” described as Egypt, and in Revelation 14:8 (et

al) it is described as Babylon. The Egyptian backdrop is evident with the frequent references to “plagues” such as “sores” (16:2); water turning to blood (16:3-4); darkness (16:10); and frogs (16:13). The Babylonian backdrop is evident in the overwhelming number of allusions to Ezekiel, which was written at the time of the Babylonian captivity. How ironic it is that Israel had become just as wicked and worthy of destruction as its ancient enemies.

The people of God in this period were therefore under great duress. Jewish opposition to the gospel had already taken many lives. Nero’s persecution placed the full weight of the empire against Christianity. And the political scene was very turbulent. The primary message of Revelation is to assure Christians that the great enemies of the Lord will be destroyed, and that the righteous will be delivered.

An Outline of Revelation

Introduction to the Prophecy (1:1-20)

- I. The Seven Churches (2-3)
- II. The Throne Scene (4-5)
- III. Judgment on the Enemies of God (6-20)
 - a. The Seven Seals (6:1-8:1)
 - b. The Seven Trumpets (8:2-11:19)
 - c. Pictures of God’s enemies (12-14)
 - i. The Dragon (12:1-17)
 - ii. The Sea Beast and Land Beast (13:1-18)
 - iii. Babylon the Harlot (14:1-20)
 - d. The destruction of God’s enemies (15-20)
 - i. The Seven Bowls of Wrath (15:1-16:21)
 - ii. The destruction of the Babylon (17:1-19:10)
 - iii. The destruction of the Beasts (19:11-21)
 - iv. The destruction of the Dragon (20:1-15)
- IV. The New Jerusalem (21:1-22:5)

Conclusion to the Prophecy (22:6-21)

Jesus Among the Lampstands (Rev. 1:1-20)

Questions

Introduction (1:1-3)

How does John indicate that the events described in Revelation are about to take place?

Who is “blessed”?

The Theme of the Book (1:4-8)

John gave greetings to the seven churches

From:

From:

From:

What has Christ made us to be?

What phrases found in Rev. 1:7 are also found in Matthew 24:30?

John's Commission (1:9-11)

What three things did John say he was a fellow partaker in?

-
-

-

Where was John, and why?

The Vision of Christ (1:12-20)

At the end of the chapter the seven lampstands which John saw are identified as what?

Complete the description of the “son of man”:

- What was girded across his chest?
- What were his head and hair like?
- What were his eyes like?
- What were his feet like?
- What was his voice like?
- What was in his right hand?
- What came out of his mouth?
- What was his face like?

What happened to John when he saw this man?

What did the man say he had the keys to?

What three things was John to write about?

-
-
-

Notes

It is very common for prophets to give an account of their call as a spokesman for God. Ezekiel describes his call in Ezekiel 1-3, and Isaiah describes his call in Isaiah 6. John explains his call here in chapter 1. As in the case of Ezekiel and Isaiah, John's call comes in the form of a wondrous vision of the Lord.

Introduction (1:1-3)

- This prophecy was **communicated by an angel**. The word angel means “messenger,” and angels often were messengers of judgment (as in Gen. 19).
- In 1:1 and 1:3 John emphasizes the nearness of the events at hand; **which must soon take place...for the time is near**.
- 1:3 contains the first of seven “**Blessed...**” statements in the book, sometimes called the beatitudes of Revelation:
 - 1) 1:3 – “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy”
 - 2) 14:13 – “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord”
 - 3) 16:15 – “Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes”
 - 4) 19:9 – “Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb”
 - 5) 20:6 – “Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection”
 - 6) 22:7 – “Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book”
 - 7) 22:14 – “Blessed are those who wash their robes”

The Theme of the Book (1:4-8)

- This prophecy is addressed to the **seven churches of Asia**, listed by name in 1:11. This is the first of many “sevens” in the book. That number represents a completed cycle, such as the seven days of the week, seven Sabbath years, and so on. There were other churches in Asia Minor, such as Colossae, but these seven are representative of the complete picture of what first century churches were going through.
- John gives greetings from all three members of the Godhead:
 - God the Father, **Him who is and who was and who is to come**. This title reflects the eternal nature of the great “I AM” (Ex. 3:14; see also Ps. 90:2).
 - The Holy Spirit, identified as **the seven Spirits who are before His throne** (also in 3:1; 4:5; 5:6).
 - Jesus, described as the...
 - **Faithful witness** (see John 18:37).
 - **Firstborn of the dead** (see Col. 1:18).
 - **Ruler of the kings of the earth** (see Ps. 2).
- The last part of verse 5 through verse 6 contains a doxology (a statement of praise) to Jesus:
 - **Who loves us**. The verb is continual action.

- **And released us from our sins by His blood.** This is another way of describing redemption (see Eph. 1:7).
- **And made us a kingdom, priests to His God.** This language originally referred to Old Testament Israel, whom God made a kingdom of priests (Ex. 19:6). The New Testament applies this language to the spiritual Israel, the church (1 Peter 2:4-10).
- 1:7 is a crucially important verse, because it summarizes the theme of the book.
 - **BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS** is a quotation from Daniel 7:13, which depicts the “Son of Man” coming on the clouds to the “Ancient of days.” Jesus applied this passage to Himself (Matt. 26:64). **Coming with the clouds** is judgment language, indicating not a personal coming but a coming in judgment. It is used in Nahum 1:3 to describe God’s judgment on Assyria, and in Isaiah 19:1 with reference to Egypt. Its presence here means that Revelation is a book about judgment, but against whom? This same language is used in Matt. 24:30 with reference to the Lord’s judgment on Jerusalem.
 - That this book is a judgment on Jerusalem is further established by the phrasing **every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him.** This echoes Zechariah 12:10-14, which refers to “the inhabitants of Jerusalem” (12:10). John quoted from this same passage in his gospel in John 19:37. The Book of Revelation promises judgment upon **the tribes of the earth** (the Greek word also means “land,” as in the land of Palestine), the first century generation of Jews responsible for the death of the Lord (see Matt. 23:34-36; Matt. 27:25; Acts 2:23).
- Jesus is the **Alpha** (first letter of the Greek alphabet) and **Omega** (last letter). Another depiction of His eternal nature. It is the Lord’s timeless and eternal nature that enables Him to explain the future.

John’s Commission (1:9-11)

- John was a **partaker** in:
 - **Tribulation**, persecution which Jesus said His disciples would face (Matt. 24:9). **Patmos** was a rocky island used as a place of banishment by the Romans.
 - **Kingdom**, as those who reign with Christ. The persecution of the Jews and Romans was an attack on the reign of God, but it is destined to fail.
 - **Perseverance**, the quality of patient endurance essential to withstand persecution.
- Being **in the Spirit** means John was inspired (see Matt. 22:43; 2 Peter 1:21).
- The **loud voice** John heard was like a **trumpet**, implying an announcement of solemn importance (see Ex. 19:16-19). Pay attention to John’s many descriptions of the heavenly voices in this book.

The Vision of Christ (1:12-20)

- John now sees the one **speaking** to him, none other than Christ! 1:12-16 contains a highly picturesque vision of the Lord, reflecting various Old Testament visions (compare Daniel 7:9-10; 7:13-14; 10:5-11). Rather than dissecting each element of this picture, just try to envision the sheer radiance and glory of the Lord.
- The tabernacle contained one lampstand (Ex. 37:17-24), and the prophet Zechariah saw a vision of one lampstand with seven lamps (Zech. 4:1-2). Here John saw **seven lampstands**, which are later identified as seven churches (Rev. 1:20).
- This is a book of judgment, and in the vision of Jesus this is indicated by the **sharp two-edged sword** coming **out of His mouth**. The Lord will “make war” (Rev. 2:16) and “strike down the nations” (Rev. 19:15) with this sword. See also Isaiah 11:4.
- John’s reaction, collapsing **as a dead man**, is a common reaction when prophets see the Lord (compare Ezekiel 1:28 and 3:25; also Daniel 8:17). How glorious the Lord must be for these holy men to collapse in His presence!
- Jesus **placed His right hand** on John to relieve His fear. More descriptions of Jesus:
 - **The first and the last**, quoted from Isaiah 44:6.
 - **The living One**, which here seems to refer to the resurrection.
 - **I have the keys of death and of Hades**, meaning the Lord controls both. Later in the book He brings them to an end (20:13-14), which will take place at the resurrection (John 5:28-29).
- 1:19 outlines the rest of the book. **The things which you have seen** are the visions of 1:9-20; the **things which are** refers to the status of the seven churches in Rev. 2-3; and **the things which will take place** are the judgments in Rev. 4-22.

The Seven Churches, Part 1 (Rev. 2:1-29)

Questions

Overview

In Rev. 2-3 Jesus gave John letters to the seven churches of Asia. Though the details are different in each letter, there is a common pattern:

- *Jesus' identity*: "The One who..."
- *Commendation*: "I know your..."
- *Condemnation*: "This I have against you..."
- *Admonition*: "Therefore..."
- *Warning*: "Or else I will..."
- *Promise*: "To Him who overcomes..."
- *Conclusion*: "He who has an ear to hear let him hear..."

Ephesus (2:1-7)

- *Jesus' identity*:
- *Commendation*: (be sure to look at 2:6)
- *Condemnation*:
- *Admonition*:
- *Warning*:
- *Promise*:

Smyrna (2:8-11)

- *Jesus' identity*:
- *Commendation*:
- *Condemnation*:

- *Admonition:*
- *Warning:*
- *Promise:*

Pergamum (2:12-17)

- *Jesus' identity:*
- *Commendation:*
- *Condemnation:*
- *Admonition:*
- *Warning:*
- *Promise:*

Thyatira (2:18-29)

- *Jesus' identity:*
- *Commendation:*
- *Condemnation:*
- *Admonition:*
- *Warning:*
- *Promise:*

Notes

Overview

There were more than seven churches in Asia Minor, such as Colossae. These seven churches represent the complete picture of challenges facing the early church. Emperor worship was extremely popular in Asia Minor. Further, the Jews in Asia were particularly hostile to Christianity. These problems, combined with the threat of false teaching and hypocrisy, led the Lord to address the seven churches.



Though the details are different in each letter, there is a common pattern of seven parts:

- *Jesus' identity*: "The One who..." These descriptions come from the vision in Rev.1.
- *Commendation*: "I know your..."
- *Condemnation*: "This I have against you..."
- *Admonition*: "Therefore..."
- *Warning*: "Or else I will..."
- *Promise*: "To Him who overcomes..." The promises and warnings often anticipate blessings and judgments mentioned later in the book.
- *Conclusion*: "He who has an ear to hear let him hear..."

Ephesus (2:1-7)

- **Ephesus** was the chief city of Asia. It was a hotbed of occult activity and pagan worship (see Acts 19). "Ephesus also maintained its religious importance under Roman rule. It became a center of the emperor cult, and eventually possessed three official temples, thus qualifying thrice over for the proud title *neokoros* ('temple-warden') of the emperors, as well as being a *neokoros* of Artemis" ("Ephesus," by Green and Hemer in the *New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd ed. p. 337).
- *Commendation*: the church did not **tolerate false** teachers. Apparently they heeded Paul's warning in Acts 20:28-30. Further they had **endured** opposition.
- *Condemnation*: they **left** their **first love**. Since loving God is the first and greatest commandment (Matt. 22:37-38), this probably means they had let their love from God grow cold, serving Him out of grudging duty rather than love. Paul's last word to the Ephesians was "grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love" (Eph. 6:24).

- *Admonition:* Three commands: **remember**, **repent**, and **do**.
- *Warning:* If they do not **repent** Jesus will come in judgment and **remove** their **lampstand**, which means He will no longer count them as His people. After this warning Jesus commends them for hating the **deeds of the Nicolaitans**. No one is sure who these people were. One early tradition connects them with Nicolas, one of the servants in Acts 6:5. More is said about them in 2:14-15.
- *Promise:* Anticipates the picture of heaven in 22:2, 14.

Smyrna (2:8-11)

- **Smyrna** claimed to be the “first city” of Asia, in beauty, literature and loyalty to Rome. It was chosen as the site for a temple in honor of Caesar Tiberius (Gentry, *Before Jerusalem Fell*, 3rd ed., p. 269). Jews at **Smyrna** were reported to be numerous and hostile to Christianity (Gentry, p. 223).
- *Commendation:* Three trials: **tribulation**, **poverty** (perhaps due to confiscation of property, see Heb. 10:34), and **blasphemy** (slander). The source of these trials was **Jews**, who because of their rejection of the Messiah had become a **synagogue of Satan**. The Bible consistently teaches that only those Jews who accepted Christ can be truly counted as Abraham’s heirs (see Luke 3:7-9; John 8:39-44; Acts 24:14; Rom. 2:29; Gal. 3:28-29).
- *Condemnation:* One of only two churches which receive none.
- *Admonition:* **Do not fear**. They will face **tribulation for ten days**, which means it will be only temporary.
- *Warning:* None.
- *Promise:* The **crown of life**, and exemption from the **second death**, which is defined in 20:14 as hell.

Pergamum (2:12-17)

- **Pergamum** was the political capital of Asia, and hosted several pagan shrines. “The first temple of the imperial cult was built in Pergamum (c. 29 BC) in honor of Rome and Augustus. The city thus boasted a religious primacy in the province, though Ephesus became its main commercial center” (“Pergamum,” by Rudwick and Hemer in the *New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd ed . p. 912).
- *Commendation:* **Dwell where Satan’s throne is**. Since John later shows that the power behind the Roman Empire was Satan (13:4), this phrase probably refers to the strong presence of emperor worship there. They held **fast**, following the example of a martyr named **Antipas**.
- *Condemnation:* They tolerated two false teachings, that of **Balaam** and that of the **Nicolaitans**. Balaam was a false prophet who tried to lead Israel into idolatry and fornication (see Numbers 22; 25:1-9; 31:16). These sins were commonplace in the pagan worship of the first century. Interesting, the names Nicolaitan (in Greek) and Balaam (in Hebrew) mean the same thing: “conqueror of the people.”

Through pagan worship these sinister teachers tried to conquer God's people. This is why the churches are told to conquer, to "overcome."

- *Admonition:* **Repent.**
- *Warning:* Or the Lord **will make war** on them.
- *Promise:* Three blessings: **hidden manna**, a **white stone**, and a **new name**. **Manna** calls to mind God's miraculous provision for the Israelites in the wilderness. It was hidden in the ark of the covenant (Heb. 9:4). Jesus is the true manna from heaven, our ultimate source of spiritual sustenance (John 6:33-35, 50-59). The meaning of **the white stone** is unclear, but it suggests purity. The **new name** is a reference to the promise in Isaiah 62:2, and means God will have a special and exclusive relationship with those who overcome.

Thyatira (2:18-29)

- **Thyatira** was "an important center of manufacturing; dyeing, garment-making, pottery and brass-working are among the trades known to have existed there...Pursuance of a trade was almost impossible without belonging to the guild; yet their meetings were inextricably bound up with acts of pagan worship and immorality" ("Thyatira," by Rudwick and Hemer in the *New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd ed. p. 1197).
- *Commendation:* Many virtues, they were more faithful now than before.
- *Condemnation:* Tolerated a false prophetess named **Jezebel**. In all likelihood this is a symbolic name. Jezebel was a Phoenician princess who introduced Baal worship into Israel (1 Kings 16:31; 2 Kings 9:22). There seems to be a connection between her teaching and that of Balaam and the Nicolaitans.
- *Admonition:* The Lord gave her time to repent, but she refused.
- *Warning:* Jezebel and **her children** (followers) will be cast into **great tribulation**. They made their **bed** of **adultery** with her, now they will share the deathbed of punishment. The **deep things of Satan** may refer to the boastful pride of false teachers who claimed to have superior knowledge, but whose teachings were from the devil.
- *Promise:* If they hold fast they will **rule** over the nations with the Lord. We reign now as those who have been raised from spiritual death and seated with Christ (Eph. 2:4-6; Rev. 5:9-10), and we will reign with Him forever in the eternal kingdom (2 Tim. 4:8; 18). The **morning star** is Christ Himself (Rev. 22:16), and when we overcome we will bask in the eternal day of His light (21:23).

The Seven Churches, Part 2 (Rev. 2:1-29)

Questions

Sardis (3:1-6)

- *Jesus' identity:*
- *Commendation:*
- *Condemnation:*
- *Admonition:*
- *Warning:*
- *Promise:*

Philadelphia (3:7-13)

- *Jesus' identity:*
- *Commendation:*
- *Condemnation:*
- *Admonition:*
- *Warning:*
- *Promise:*

Laodicea (3:14-22)

- *Jesus' identity:*

- *Commendation:*
- *Condemnation:*
- *Admonition:*
- *Warning:*
- *Promise:*

Matching

Match the following details with the correct church (each church may be used more than once or not at all):

<p>A. Ephesus B. Smyrna C. Pergamum D. Thyatira E. Sardis F. Philadelphia G. Laodicea</p>	<p>___1. Tolerated a woman called Jezebel. ___2. Christ put an open door before them. ___3. Hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans. ___4. Had a name that they were alive but were dead. ___5. Where Satan's throne was. ___6. Claimed to be wealthy and in need of nothing. ___7. Opposed by synagogue of Satan (more than one). ___8. Needed eye salve from the Lord. ___9. Deeds of late were greater than at the first. ___10. Will have tribulation for ten days.</p>
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Application

Compare the kinds of problems the seven churches faced with the problems we face today.

Notes

Sardis (3:1-6)

- Though **Sardis** was situated among dangerous cliffs, the city fell twice to conquerors who scaled the cliffs and marched straight into the weakly defended city. The letter in Rev. 3 “suggests that the early Christian community there was imbued with the same spirit as the city, resting on its past reputation and...failing, as the city had twice failed, to learn from its past” (“Sardis,” by Green and Hemer in the *New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd ed. p. 1073).
- *Commendation*: The light commendation of the church is that a **few people** had **not soiled their garments**.
- *Condemnation*: Otherwise, this church was living on its past reputation. In actuality it was **dead**, and had left some work unfinished.
- *Admonition*: Three words: **remember**, **keep**, and **repent**. They need to live up to what they had once been, and finish what they had started.
- *Warning*: Several times in Scripture Christ’s coming in judgment is compared to that of a **thief**, meaning it will be unexpected (see Matt. 24:42-44; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10). Remember, a coming in judgment may not refer to the end of time, but to a temporal judgment, such as the fall of Jerusalem.
- *Promise*: (1) **Clothed in white garments**, looking forward to the picture of glory found in 7:9-17. (2) **Not erase name from the book of life**, which is mentioned in 13:8; 17:8; 20:12; 21:27. (3) **I will confess his name**, in keeping with Jesus’ promise in Matt. 10:32.

Philadelphia (3:7-13)

- **Philadelphia** “lay at the threshold of a very fertile tract of plateau country, from which much of its commercial prosperity derived...The city was remarkable for the number of its temples and religious festivals” (“Philadelphia,” by Rudwick and Hemer in the *New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd ed. p. 925-926).
- *Jesus’ identity*: In a break with the general pattern of the letters to the seven churches, none of these titles are found in Rev. 1.
 - **Holy and true** is used again in 6:10. Since this book is a prophecy of the future, there is great emphasis placed on the truthfulness of Jesus’ message (see also 19:11).
 - **Who has the key of David**. Jesus is the ultimate Davidic king (2 Sam. 7:12-17; Ps. 110:1-4). As such He has the power to grant or exclude entry into that kingdom (Matt. 8:11-12), symbolized by the **key**. This imagery is borrowed from Isaiah 22:15-25.
- *Commendation*: The church has persevered in the face of testing, possibly from the Jewish community. The reference to **little power** may be an ironic statement; even though they were not mighty in worldly status they had power in the Lord (as in 1 Cor. 1:26-27).

- *Condemnation:* As with Smyrna, there is no criticism made of this church.
- *Admonition:* They are told to **hold fast** in view of a coming hour of testing. It is my view that this hour was the tumultuous time of AD 68-70, as the Empire rocked with civil war while the Jews made war against Rome. Compare the promise to be kept by Christ during this time with Matt. 24:22.
- *Warning:* There is no warning, in keeping with the lack of condemnation.
- *Promise:* There are several promises in this letter:
 - Christ put an **open door** before them (3:8). Just as their city was the doorway to fertile country, they now have an opportunity in the Lord's work (see also Col. 4:3).
 - Christ will **cause the synagogue of Satan to bow** before them (3:9). As I explained in 2:9, I believe this refers to unbelieving Jews. They will be defeated, a judgment which took place in AD 70.
 - They will be kept from **the hour of testing** (3:10).
 - The final blessing, to be made **a pillar in the temple of My God**, anticipates the vision of the glorified church in Rev. 21-22 as one gigantic temple-city. In that vision "the tabernacle of God is among men" (21:3), and the Lord is the temple (21:22). In that city His **name** will be on our forehead (22:4), indicating an intimate relationship.

Laodicea (3:14-22)

- **Laodicea** was located at a major crossroads in the Lycus Valley. "This strategic position made Laodicea an exceptionally prosperous commercial center, especially under Roman rule...It was an important center of banking and exchange...Its distinctive products included garments of glossy black wool, and it was a medical center noted for ophthalmology" ("Laodicea," by Rudwick and Hemer in the *New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd ed. p. 681).
- *Jesus' identity:* More descriptions not found in Rev. 1:
 - **The Amen.** This word means "so let it be, truly." Here it refers to the truthfulness of Jesus' message.
 - **The faithful and true Witness**, used slightly differently in 1:5 and 19:11.
 - **The Beginning of the creation of God**, meaning not that Christ was created but that He is the creator, the one who began the creation (see John 1:1-3; Col. 1:18).
- *Commendation:* There is none.
- *Condemnation:* **Lukewarm** and proud. Interestingly, because of where Laodicea was situated, the city did not have access to warm or cold water. "For all its wealth, it could produce neither the healing power of hot water, like its neighbor Hierapolis, nor the refreshing power of cold water to be found at Colossae, but merely lukewarm water...The church was charged with similar uselessness" (Radwick and Hemer, p. 681).
- *Admonition:* The church in this wealthy city needed to know that true riches come only from Christ, who alone could give them the **gold, white garments**, and **eye salve** they needed. Simply put, **be zealous and repent**.

- *Warning:* The Lord warned that he would **spit** them **from** His **mouth** (3:16). This echoes the warning God gave to Israel that the land would vomit them out if they committed the same atrocities as the Canaanites (Lev. 18:24-30).
- *Promise:* In spite of the harsh condemnation of this church, there are several hopeful statements as well.
 - **Those whom I love I reprove and discipline.** This is what all fathers do, and our heavenly Father is no different (Heb. 12:5-7). Despite their flaws, the Lord still loved the Laodiceans.
 - **I stand at the door and knock.** In this case the invitation is not to non-Christians, but to half-hearted Christians. Those who respond **will dine with** Christ. Later the glorification of the church is described as the marriage supper of the bride and Lamb (Rev. 19:9).
 - **I will grant to sit down with Me on My throne.** While we reign with Christ now (1:9), there is a future sense in which we will reign with Him in heaven.

Some Final Thoughts

A good way to analyze the trials these early churches faced is to divide them into external threats and internal threats.

What external and internal threats do we face?

Which church, if any, do we most resemble?

Vision of God's Throne (Rev. 4:1-5:14)

Questions

The Throne of God (4:1-11)

What was the appearance of the One on the throne like?

What was around the throne?

How many elders did John see?

What sights and sounds came out of the throne?

Describe the "four living creatures."

The prophet Ezekiel received a similar vision of God's throne in Ezekiel 1. Look especially at Ezekiel 1:4-10 and 1:26-28 and make note of the similarities with John's vision.

What did the four living creatures say about God?

What did the twenty-four elders do with their crowns?

Why, according to the elders, is God worthy of praise?

The Scroll with Seven Seals (5:1-7)

Describe the book (or scroll) John saw.

What did John do when no one could be found to open the book?

Who did one of the elders say would open the book?

Ezekiel also saw a scroll (read Ezek. 2:9-10). What was written on his scroll?

The Lamb of God (5:8-14)

Describe the Lamb which John saw.

What did John say the bowls of incense represented?

In the “new song,” why was the Lamb worthy to open the book, according to the heavenly beings?

How many angels did John see around God’s throne?

Every created thing in what four locations gave praise to the Lamb?

Notes

Having described the conditions of the first century churches, John now sees a grand vision of God on His throne (a *theophany*). In the face of such disturbing times it was important for the early Christians to know that God still ruled in heaven, and that His will would be done. That is the purpose of this vision of the divine throne.

This vision has much in common with two Old Testament visions of God's throne. In Isaiah 6 the prophet sees God on His throne in the heavenly temple (6:1). Surrounding the throne are six-winged creatures (6:2), the seraphim, who praise God as "Holy, holy, holy" (6:3).

The other Old Testament vision is Ezekiel's vision of God's chariot-throne (Ezekiel 1). This throne is surrounded by four living beings, described as a lion, calf, man, and eagle (1:5-6, 10). A sea of glass stands beneath the throne (1:22), which is surrounded by a rainbow (1:28). Like, John, Ezekiel saw lightning from the throne (1:4, 13-14).

The Throne of God (4:1-11)

- The **voice** like a **trumpet** (and the **lightning** and **thunder** in verse 5) brings to mind the sound Moses heard at Sinai (Ex. 19:16-17). It indicates an announcement of solemn importance, **what must take place**. This follows the outline of 1:19. What Moses saw and heard as he was called up to Sinai, John sees and hears as he is caught **up** to heaven.
- The description of God on His **throne** is one of great beauty.
- **Around the throne were twenty-four elders**. This number is highly symbolic. There were 24 divisions of priest in the Old Testament (1 Chron. 24:7-19). Later, John sees a vision of the heavenly temple with the names of the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles inscribed on the gates and foundation stones (Rev. 21:12, 14). I think the elders represent the foundation of God's people in the old and new covenants (see also Matt. 19:28).
- Also around the **throne** were the **seven Spirits**, which we have identified as the Holy Spirit, and the **four living creatures**. In Ezekiel, these four beings are identified as cherubim (see Ezek. 10:1). There are differences between this vision and Ezekiel's. John's four beings have six wings and are full of eyes. Probably the best way to understand these four beings is as a composite of Isaiah's seraphim and Ezekiel's cherubim.
- Both the **living creatures** and the **twenty-four elders** give constant praise to God. The four beings praise God as **Holy, holy, holy**. The elders **cast their crowns** before God, a sign of subordination, and praise God for His work of creation. In many ways, Revelation is a book of worship.

The Scroll with Seven Seals (5:1-7)

- The **book** (or scroll) John sees in God's **right hand** was written on front and **back**, and **sealed**. Ezekiel saw a similar scroll (Ezek. 2:8-10), which contained judgments against Jerusalem. In John's case, it is **sealed**, meaning the contents of the scroll are yet to be revealed. The **seven seals** may suggest seven pages, each one sealed individually.
- John **began to weep greatly** when no one could be found to reveal the contents of the scroll.
- One of the elders told John to stop weeping because the **Lion from the tribe of Judah** would open it. This description of Jesus was foreshadowed in Gen. 49:8-10 and implies Jesus would be a great conqueror. He is also called the **Root of David**. Jesus was a descendant of David, and is sometimes called a "shoot" or "branch" from the line of David (Isaiah 11:1). To call Him the root implies His existence before David. As God Jesus existed before David and was his Lord (and root), and as human He existed after David and was a branch (Matt. 22:41-46).
- John then sees a **Lamb standing, as if slain**. Jesus was the lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29). The **seven eyes** indicates He sees everything (omniscience). **Seven horns** represent awesome power.
- Only Jesus is worthy to take the scroll and break the seals.

The Lamb of God (5:8-14)

- At this the living creatures and elders fell down before the Lamb in praise. The **harp** and **golden bowls of incense** reflect the temple imagery common in Revelation. The identification of the incense as the **prayers of the saints** symbolizes our prayers rising to God (see Psalm 141:2). Luke 1:10 indicates that the Jews prayed at the time of the incense offering in the temple.
- The Bible uses the term **new song** nine times (Psalm 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isaiah 42:10; Rev. 5:9; 14:13). New acts of divine judgment or mercy deserve a new song of praise. In this case, Jesus is praised for His work of redemption, purchasing people from all backgrounds to be a **kingdom and priests**. I prefer the American Standard Version's rendition of 5:10: "and they reign upon the earth." This more accurately captures the present reality of our reign with Christ (see Rev. 1:6).
- This scene of praise builds to a grand climax. Multitudes of **angels** join the living creatures and elders in praise of the Lamb, and then all creation (**in heaven and on the earth and under the earth**) swell the ranks of those praising God and the Lamb.

The Seven Seals (Rev. 6:1-17)

Questions

The First Seal (6:1-2)

When the Lamb broke the first seal, what did one of the four living creatures tell John?

Describe the rider of the horse:

- What kind of horse?
- Had what weapon?
- What was given to him?
- Went out to do what?

The Second Seal (6:3-4)

Describe the rider of this horse:

- Color of horse?
- Granted to take what from the earth?
- What weapon was given to him?

The Third Seal (6:5-6)

Describe the rider of this horse:

- Color of horse?
- What was in his hand?
- For a denarius how much wheat and barley could be purchased?

The Fourth Seal (6:7-8)

Describe the rider of this horse:

- Color of horse?
- Name of the rider?
- Who was following with him?
- Given authority over how much of the earth?
- Kills with what four means?

The Fifth Seal (6:9-11)

Who did John see when the fifth seal was broken?

What did they cry for?

What were they told?

The Sixth Seal (6:12-17)

What happened to the...

- Earth?
- Sun?
- Moon?
- Stars?
- Sky?
- Mountains and islands?

What did the people on earth say to the mountains and rocks?

Notes

The Lamb now begins to break the seals on the scroll John saw in the throne vision. What is revealed at the loosing of these seals is a series of judgments. But against whom? The options are either imperial Rome or apostate Jerusalem. In my view, a stronger case can be made that these judgments reflect the opening of the Roman war against Judea, which began in AD 66. The reason for this conclusion is the strong correspondence between the seven seals and the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21). Notice these parallels:

Luke 21	Revelation 6
Wars and disturbances (21:9)	Seal 1: War (6:2)
Nation vs. nation (21:10)	Seal 2: Peace taken from earth (6:4)
Earthquakes (21:11)	Seal 6: Earthquake (6:12)
Plagues and famine (21:11)	Seals 3 and 4: Famine and pestilence (6:5-8)
Persecution (21:12)	Seal 5: Persecution (6:9-11)
Signs in sun, moon, and stars (21:25)	Seal 6: Signs in sun, moon and stars (6:12-14)

I believe Revelation is an extended version of the Olivet Discourse.

The First Seal (6:1-2)

- John is invited to behold the revelation of the first seal by one of the **four living** beings.
- The first four seals involve the four horses of the apocalypse. Zechariah also saw four horses of varying colors (Zech. 6:1-8).
- The **white horse** could either refer to Christ Himself (see Rev. 19:11-12), or to the Roman army making its way into Judea. Since the judgment on Jerusalem was ultimately Christ's will, it doesn't make that much difference.

The Second Seal (6:3-4)

- The **red horse** is the color of blood, indicating great bloodshed is to come.
- **Peace** is taken **from the earth**. The Roman historian Tacitus said of the period of AD 66-70: "The history on which I am entering is that of a period rich in disasters, terrible with battles, torn by civil struggles, horrible even in peace. Four emperors fell by the sword; there were three civil wars, more foreign wars, and often both at the same time."

The Third Seal (6:5-6)

- The rider of the **black horse** had **scales** to measure food in hand. The price of the **wheat** and **barley** indicates a severe shortage, a famine.
- Why the **oil** and **wine** are undamaged is unclear. Perhaps it means that only luxury items are available, but basic food stuffs cannot be found.

- Josephus says of the Jewish War: “Then did the famine widen its progress, and devoured the people by whole house and families” (*Wars*, 5.512).

The Fourth Seal (6:7-8)

- The color of the fourth **horse** is usually rendered “pale” or **ashen**, but the word in Greek (*chloros*) means green. The idea is “green around the gills,” nauseated and deathly sick.
- The name of the rider is **Death**, and **Hades** (the realm of the dead) **was following** (they meet their end in 20:14). They are given power over a **fourth of the earth**. In the next series of judgments, a third of the earth is punished (see 8:7-13). The four judgments listed reflect the curses of the Law of Moses (Lev. 26:22-26), and were used by Ezekiel to warn ancient Israel (Ezek. 14:12-21).

The Fifth Seal (6:9-11)

- At the breaking of the **fifth seal** John saw under the **altar the souls of those who** died for Christ. The altar in the old temple was the place of sacrifice, and these believers have made the ultimate sacrifice. The Book of Acts describes in detail the Jewish persecution of Christians (see also Matt. 23:34-36).
- Their cry for vengeance is eerily similar to Jesus’ own description of the fall of Jerusalem as “the days of vengeance” (Luke 21:22). In just a **little while** justice will be done.

The Sixth Seal (6:12-17)

- At the breaking of the sixth seal a series of seven catastrophes occur: a **great earthquake**, the **sun** is darkened, the **moon** turns to **blood**, the **stars** fall to **earth**, the **sky** is **split apart**, every **mountain and island** is **moved**, and seven classes of men **hid** themselves. This list of catastrophes is drawn from a rich array of Old Testament prophetic passages, some of which are directed against Israel (Joel 2:1, 10, 30-31; Amos 8:9; Jer. 4:23-29), while others refer to Israel’s enemies (Isa. 34:4-5), like Babylon (Isa. 13:10) and Egypt (Ezek. 32:7-8).
- The desperate effort to **hide** from God’s judgment calls to mind Adam and Eve in the garden (Gen. 3:8), judgments against Israel (Isa. 2:19-21; Hos. 10:8), and Jesus’ somber warning to the daughters of Jerusalem (Luke 23:28-30).

Lesson 7
The 144,000 (Rev. 7:1-17)

Questions

The Four Angels (7:1-3)

What were the four angels holding back?

From where did another angel ascend?

What did this angel have?

What did this angel say must happen before harming the earth, sea or trees?

The 144,000 Sealed (7:4-8)

What commonly used symbolic numbers are multiplied to get the total of 144,000?

Which of the twelve tribes from the Old Testament is not mentioned in the list of those who were sealed?

Which tribe in this list is not in any Old Testament list?

The Great Multitude (7:9-17)

From what tribes were the great multitude which John saw?

How were those in the great multitude clothed?

What did the great multitude cry out with a loud voice?

What other beings stood around the throne giving praise to God?

According to one of the elders, those in the great multitude had come out of what?

What does God spread over them?

What physical hardships will they no longer experience?

Who will be their shepherd?

Further Study

The 144,000 are also described in Rev. 14:1-5. List the qualities of the 144,000 found in that passage.

Notes

In Rev. 6 a series of devastating judgments is unleashed upon the earth. It would be logical to wonder about the fate of God's people during this time of judgment. The visions here in Rev. 7 are designed to reassure God's people that although terrible things are about to happen, God's people will be protected. If I am correct in connecting the events in Revelation with the Olivet Discourse, then the purpose of these visions is similar to the Lord's statement that "not a hair of your head will perish" (see Luke 21:18-21).

The Four Angels (7:1-3)

- Three fours are mentioned here: **four angels, four corners of the earth, and four winds**. The angels are restraining further judgment, symbolized by the winds. This restraint will end when the seventh seal is broken, and judgment resumes (8:1).
- **Another angel** coming **from the rising of the sun** (the east), instructed the four angels not to **harm the earth, sea, or trees** until the **servants of God** are **sealed**. The background of this imagery is Ezekiel 9:1-8, where Ezekiel sees a vision in which God's executioners put all the inhabitants of Jerusalem to death except for those an angel marks on the forehead.

The 144,000 Sealed (7:4-8)

- The **number** of those **sealed** was **144,000**. Some details:
 - The number consists of **12,000** from each of the twelve tribes.
 - The listing of the tribes is unusual. **Judah** is probably mentioned first since that is the Lord's tribe. Two tribes are not mentioned. Dan migrated from its original territory to the north, where it later became a center of Jeroboam's idolatry (Judges 18; 1 Kings 12:28-30). The other tribe not mentioned is Ephraim, replaced instead by Joseph. Since Jeroboam was an Ephraimite (1 Kings 11:26), and the capital of the northern kingdom was in Ephraim, perhaps that is why that tribe is not listed.
 - Later the 144,000 are further identified as those who have not defiled themselves with women (14:1-4).
- Who are the **144,000**? Since they are contrasted with the great multitudes from all tribes and peoples in 7:9, I believe the 144,000 represent Jewish Christians of the first century. In 14:4 they are called God's "first fruits." Particularly, it is those who live in Judea and Jerusalem who must bear up under the awful period of tribulation about to occur. And as they follow the Lord's instructions, they will be saved from that judgment.

The Great Multitude (7:9-17)

- Next John sees a **great multitude** from **every nation**, and all **tribes** and **tongues**. They are **before the throne** of God, **clothed in white robes**. Along with the angels, elders and four living creatures they give praise to God.
- When John wants to know who they are, **one of the elders** explains that they have **come out of the great tribulation**.
 - Remember, not only was there persecution by the Jews against Christians (2:9-10; 3:9), there was also persecution by the empire (Rev. 1:9; see Rev. 13). Many Christians would lose their lives during this time (6:9-10; 13:7).
 - I believe what John now sees are those who remained faithful unto death, and have been rewarded. Compare this picture of blessings with 3:5 and 21:3; 22:1-5).
- In summary, the 144,000 represent Jewish Christians on earth, and the great multitude represents Christians from all backgrounds who have died and are now with the Lord.

The Seven Trumpets (Rev. 8:1-13)

Questions

The Seven Angels (8:1-6)

What happened when the Lamb broke the seventh seal?

What were the seven angels given?

Another angel stood at the altar holding what?

After the angel filled the censer with fire, what did he do with it?

The First Trumpet (8:7)

What was thrown down to the earth?

How much of the earth and trees were burned up?

How much of the green grass was burned up?

The Second Trumpet (8:8-9)

What was thrown into the sea?

What happened to the sea?

What portion of the sea and those in it were affected?

The Third Trumpet (8:10-11)

What fell from heaven?

What happened to the waters?

What was the name of the star?

The Fourth Trumpet (8:12-13)

How much of the sun, moon, and stars were struck?

What did the eagle pronounce upon those who dwell on the earth?

Further Study

Many of the judgments in the Book of Revelation, and especially this chapter, are reminiscent of the plagues against Egypt (found in Exodus 7-12). Make a list of similar plagues found here in Rev. 8:

Notes

After the reassuring visions of Rev. 7 the prophet now continues with the judgments against the enemies of God's people. Many of these judgments are similar to the plagues brought against Egypt. This is fitting since in Rev. 11:8 the "great city" opposed to God's people is called Egypt.

The Seven Angels (8:1-6)

- **When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence for about half an hour.** This silence is in contrast to the noisy scene John has described thus far, with loud voices praising God (7:9-12). This period of silence serves to heighten interest in what happens next.
- John sees **seven angels** with **seven trumpets**. Trumpets could be used for many purposes, such as worship (1 Chron. 15:24); preparing for war (Num. 10:1-9); and even destroying cities, such as Jericho (Josh. 6). Here they will announce Israel's own judgment as God makes war against her.
- **Another angel** served at the **altar of incense**. The symbolism here is striking. No sooner do the **prayers of the saints** reach the throne than the angel throws the **fire** from the **altar** back down **to the earth**, followed by **thunder, lightning, and earthquake**. In Deut. 13:12-18, God commanded the children of Israel to destroy any apostate cities among them with fire, as a burnt offering to the Lord. Now Jerusalem has itself become the apostate city which will be burned. See also Psalm 18:6-15.

The First Trumpet (8:6-7)

- The **first** trumpet blast sends **hail and fire** on the earth, just as God punished the Egyptians (Ex. 9:22-23). This is **mixed with blood**, perhaps the blood of the martyrs who had been crying for judgment (6:10).
- This plague (and the other trumpet blasts) affects one **third** of the **earth**, compared to the fourth part affected by the seals. These trumpet blasts are telling the same story as the seals, but with greater intensity.
- It is not hard to imagine the ravages of war scorching the land of Israel. "And truly the very view itself of the country was a melancholy thing; for those places which were before adorned with trees and pleasant gardens were now become a desolate country every way, and its trees were all cut down: nor could any foreigner that had formerly seen Judea and the most beautiful suburbs of the city, and now saw it as a desert, but lament and mourn sadly at so great a change: for the war had laid all the signs of beauty quite waste: nor if any one that had known the place before, had come on a sudden to it now, would he have known it again; but though he were at the city itself, yet would he have inquired for it notwithstanding." (Josephus, *The Jewish War*, VI.1)

The Second Trumpet (8:8-9)

- A **great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea**, causing a **third of the sea** to turn to **blood**. Think of a volcano to get this picture in mind. The sea turning to blood is also reminiscent of the plagues (Ex. 7:20-25). In Jer. 51:25, 42 God used similar language to prophesy against Babylon. This may also be an allusion to the Lord's comment about casting a mountain into the sea (Matt. 21:20-22). Jerusalem, once the mountain of the Lord, will be destroyed.
- Against, the effects of this plague touch a **third** part of the environment.

The Third Trumpet (8:10-11)

- A **great star** falls from heaven. In Isaiah 14:4, 12 the fall of the king of Babylon is compared to a falling star. This is another example of applying language once directed at a pagan enemy of Israel to Israel herself.
- The name **Wormwood** refers to a **bitter** root common in Palestine. In the Bible it is a symbol of bitter sorrow, often the result of God's judgment (Deut. 29:18; Prov. 5:4; Jer. 9:15; 23:15; Lam. 3:15; 3:19; Amos 5:7; 6:12).

The Fourth Trumpet (8:12-13)

- Once again mention is made of chaos among the **sun, moon and stars**, as in the sixth seal (6:12-13). Perhaps we can make another connection with the Egyptian plagues, particularly the ninth plague, darkness (Ex. 10:21). Again, a **third** part is damaged by this plague.
- After the fourth trumpet an **eagle** announces that there is more to come. The three **woes** correspond to the three **remaining trumpet blasts** (9:1, 12; 9:13; 11:14, 15). This eagle may be one of the four living creatures identified as "like a flying eagle" (4:7). As horrific as these scenes of judgment are, it will get worse!

The Seven Trumpets, continued (Rev. 9:1-21)

Questions

The Fifth Trumpet (9:1-12)

What was given to the star which had fallen to the earth?

What came out of the pit?

Only those who did not have what mark would be hurt?

How long were the locusts permitted to torment?

What was their torment like?

In those days what would men seek but not find?

Describe the locusts:

- Like horses prepared for...
- On their heads appeared...
- Faces like...
- Hair like the hair of...
- Teeth like the teeth of...
- Breastplates of...
- Tails like...

Give the Hebrew and Greek names for their king:

How many woes are still to come?

The Sixth Trumpet (9:13-21)

Where were the four angels who were released?

How much of mankind would they kill?

What was the number of the armies of the horsemen?

Describe the horses and those who sat on them:

- Breastplates the color of...
- The heads of the horses were like the heads of...
- Out of their mouths came...

By what three plagues was a third of mankind killed?

What were the tails of the horses like?

After these plagues what did the rest of mankind not repent of?

Notes

Revelation 9 is a continuation of the description of the seven trumpets. The background to the fifth and sixth trumpets is the first two chapters of the book of Joel. The fifth trumpet portrays a plague of locusts swarming the land (as in Joel 1:4-7), and the sixth trumpet portrays swarms of horsemen sweeping over the land (as in Joel 2:1-17).

The Fifth Trumpet (9:1-12)

- At the end of the fourth trump the eagle said three woes remained (8:13). The fifth trump is the first of these three woes.
- At the sounding of the **fifth angel** John saw a **star fallen** from **heaven**, to whom was **given** the **key to the pit**. Other Scriptures suggest that this is a picture of Satan (Luke 10:17-18; Rev. 12:9).
- From this pit came **locusts**, but in an unusual twist, instead of destroying vegetation, these locusts will inflict suffering on men not sealed as God's servants. They cannot **kill**, though the **scorpion** like stings they inflict lead men to seek death. They do this for five months (the usual period locusts were a problem in Palestine, May through September). This is yet another of the Egyptian plagues (Ex. 10:3-8) used in Revelation.
- The description of their appearance has given rise to all kinds of fanciful speculation. This is due to ignorance of Joel's vision, from which some of the descriptions come, such as their **appearance like horses prepared for battle** (Joel 2:4); **teeth like lions** (Joel 1:6); the **wings like the sound of chariots** (Joel 2:5). The **crowns** suggest a level of authority, and the **hair like women** refers to the hairy surface of the locusts (see Jer. 51:27).
- The identification of these locusts is made clear by the mention of the king, called **Abaddon in Hebrew** and **Apollyon in Greek**, meaning Destruction and Destroyer (for **Abaddon**, see Job 26:6; 28:22; 31:12; Ps. 88:11; Prov. 15:11; 27:20). Their leader is Satan, and this implies that the locusts represent demons. In Matt. 12:43-45 Jesus warned unfaithful Israel that their last state would be worse than their first because of unclean spirits. "That is the way it will also be with this generation." Of course, Christians would be unaffected by the onslaught of demons, which explains why the locusts were not to touch those who were sealed. Here was Josephus' opinion: "I suppose that had the Romans made any longer delay in coming against these villains, the city would either have been swallowed up by the ground opening upon them, or been overflowed by water, or else been destroyed by such thunder as the country of Sodom perished by, for it had brought forth a generation of men much more atheistical than were those that suffered such punishments; for by their madness it was that all the people came to be destroyed (*The Jewish Wars*, Book V.13).

The Sixth Trumpet (9:13-21)

- When the **sixth angel** sounds John hears a **voice** from the **golden altar**. This is the altar where the prayers of the saints were heard which unleashed these trumpet judgments (8:3-6).
- The voice says to release the **four angels** at the **river Euphrates**. This apparently refers back to 7:1. The Euphrates was the northern border of Israel, and in its history its enemies always came from the north, such as Assyria and Babylon (see Isa. 7:20; Isa. 8:7-8). Interestingly, the Roman army began its march from the north.
- Suddenly this vision becomes one of countless horsemen (“twice then thousand times ten thousand,” ASV) sweeping across the land. The colorful depiction of these horsemen is again a reflection of Joel’s vision in Joel 2. They can do damage coming (**in their mouths**) and going (**tails are like serpents**).
- This vision is a highly symbolic picture of the military judgment facing Israel as Rome marched. As is always the case it is a mistake to try to press the details of this stylized picture into literal reference to bows, arrows, or uniforms.
- The **rest of mankind did not repent** after these judgments. The reference to idolatry is a problem for the overall interpretation I have suggested, since the Jews did not engage in idolatry after the exile and return. At the same time, in this highly symbolic vision it might be a mistake to interpret this idolatry literally. One suggestion I would make is that Israel had turned the temple into an idol by trusting in it rather than the one who is greater than the temple. This would fit the overall message that Israel has become Egypt and Babylon, and therefore will receive the judgments those pagan nations received.

Lesson 10
The Little Book (Rev. 10:1-11)

Questions

The Strong Angel (10:1-7)

Describe the strong angel:

- Clothed with a ...
- Upon his head was a ...
- His face was like the ...
- His feet were like pillars of ...

What was in his hand?

Where did he place his right foot and left foot?

What was his voice like?

When the strong angel cried out, who (or what) uttered their voices?

What was John about to do when he heard the seven peals of thunder?

What did the angel standing on the sea and land lift up his hand and do?

What would there no longer be?

When would the mystery of God be finished?

John Eats the Little Book (10:8-11)

What did the angel say the book would taste like?

What would the book do to John's stomach?

What did the angel tell John he must prophesy concerning?

Further Study

The prophet Ezekiel received a similar vision in which he was given a book (a scroll) to eat. Read Ezekiel 2:8-3:3, and record the similarities between the two visions:

What do you think the angel meant when he said the book would taste sweet but make the stomach bitter?

The Little Book (Rev. 10:1-11)

Just as there was an interlude between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals (7:1-8:1), there is also an interlude between the sounding of the sixth (9:13) and seventh trumpets (11:15). This serves to build the tension leading up to the revelation of the final vision in each series.

The Strong Angel (10:1-7)

- Many commentators believe this **strong angel** is none other than Christ himself, due to the similarity between the descriptions of Christ in 1:12-16. I believe this is an angel, comparable to the “strong angel” of 5:2, who is on a special mission representing Christ.
- Is the **little book** the same as the scroll John saw with the seven seals in 5:1? There is no way to know for sure.
- The strong angel, spanning **sea and land, cried with a loud voice like a lion** (is this a hint that the angel is to be identified with one of the four living creatures (4:7)? He was answered by **seven peals of thunder**, but John was not allowed to record what was spoken by the thunder. At the least this shows that God has other plans and purposes aside from what is mentioned in this book. It might be possible to connect the seven peals of thunder of the seven mentions of the “voice of the LORD in Psalm 29.
- Then John saw the strong angel swear that **there will be delay no longer**. The seventh trump would soon sound! There are many similarities between this vision and what Daniel sees in Dan. 12:1-13.
- The angel also explained that at the seventh trump **the mystery of God is finished**. The term “mystery” refers to something that was once hidden but is now revealed. In the Old Testament the prophets said that God would some day bless the Gentiles (see for example Isa. 56:6-8; Amos 9:11-12). But the specifics of this plan were unrevealed (as in 1 Peter 1:10-11). In Paul’s writings he specifically defines the mystery as God’s plan to unite Jews and Gentiles together in Christ through the gospel rather than through the Law (see Rom. 16:25-27; Eph. 3:1-6; Col. 1:25-27). However, one very tangible obstacle to this union stood in the way: the Temple, and the Law it supported. For God’s plan to be finished, the Temple had to be removed. Christ’s death on the cross made the Law obsolete, but the continuing presence of the Temple was still an issue. “Has has made the first [covenant] obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear” (Heb. 8:13). The destruction of the Temple would be the final stroke in God’s plan to unite Jew and Gentile together. For this reason, the New testament writers often described themselves as living in the end of an era, the era of the Temple (1 Peter 1:20; Heb. 9:26; 1 Cor. 10:11).

John Eats the Little Book (10:8-11)

- John was instructed to **take** the little book and **eat it**. It was **sweet as honey** to taste, but it made his **stomach bitter**. Compare this vision with Ezekiel (3:1-3) and Jeremiah (15:16). The sweetness may refer to the joy all men of God experience when they receive His word, and the bitterness may refer to the emotional response all prophets feel as they are rejected for the messages of judgment.
- John is told that there is more prophecy to come, concerning **many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings**. The second half of Revelation will indeed focus lots of attention of the Roman Empire.

The Seventh Trump (Rev. 11:1-19)

Questions

The Two Witnesses (11:1-6)

What was John told to measure?

What was he not to measure?

To whom has the holy city been given, and for how long will it be trodden under foot?

How long will the two witnesses prophesy?

The two witnesses are also identified as what two things that stand before the Lord?

What flows out of their mouth to devour their enemies?

What powers do they possess over the sky, the waters, and the earth?

Death and Life (11:7-14)

Who comes out of the abyss to make war with the two witnesses?

How is the great city where the bodies of the two witnesses lie identified?

How long will the peoples of earth look at their bodies?

How will the people of earth respond to the death of the two witnesses, and why?

After three and a half days, what happened to the two witnesses?

What three consequences followed the great earthquake?

What is coming quickly?

The Seventh Trumpet (11:15-19)

What did the loud voices in heaven say concerning the kingdom of the world?

For what reason did the twenty-four elders give thanks?

What was opened in heaven?

What appeared in the temple?

What four things also occurred?

Notes

Just as there was an interlude between the sixth and seventh seals, there is also an interlude between the sixth and seventh trumps. The vision of the “little book” in chapter ten is part of this interlude; and the visions of the measured temple and two witnesses in this chapter continue that pause before the seventh trump.

The Two Witnesses (11:1-6)

- The command to **measure** the **temple** is an allusion to Ezekiel 40:1-4, where the prophet sees an angel measure a new temple. This new temple in Ezekiel’s prophecy is a highly stylized picture of the glorious new temple, the church. Here in Rev. 11, there is a contrast between the inner sanctuary and the outer **court**. The outer court was called the “court of the Gentiles,” and here that takes an ironic meaning. The outer court is compared to the **holy city**, which the **nations** will trample for **forty-two months**. Let’s break this down:
 - The **holy city** is a reference to Jerusalem (Matt. 4:5; 27:53).
 - The reference to **nations** trampling the **holy city** refers to the destruction of Jerusalem. Notice the language of the Lord in the Olivet Discourse: “And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Luke 21:24).
 - The time frame **forty-two months** has a rich biblical background. It is equivalent to 1260 days (assuming 30 days per month), and to three and a half years (and probably to “time, times, and half a time”). Of course that is half of seven, the number of completed cycles. Thus, forty-two months (and its equivalents) refers to a limited period of time. Usually this time is one of judgment and/or persecution (see also Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 12:6; 13:5). As it happens, the Roman siege of Jerusalem lasted approximately 42 months.
 - This contrast to the heavenly temple and Jerusalem with the earthly temple and Jerusalem is also found in Galatians 4:21-31; Heb. 12:22-29.
 - This vision parallels the interlude vision of the 144,000 in Rev. 7. While the rest of Israel will be punished, God’s people are measured or numbered and protected. Here, God’s true temple (the church) is measured and protected, while the rest of the temple, symbolizing unfaithful Israel, is left unprotected.
- Next we are introduced to God’s two witnesses, identified as **the two olive trees** and **lampstands before the Lord**. This is a complex symbol, containing the following elements:
 - As these witnesses are further described, there are unmistakable parallels with the two great figures of the Old Covenant, Moses (representative of the Law), and Elijah (representative of the prophets). The power to **devour enemies** with **fire** (Num. 16:35; 2 Kings 1:10-12), to **shut up the**

sky (1 Kings 17:1), to **turn water to blood** (Ex. 7:17-19), and to **strike the earth with plagues** (Exodus 7-12).

- There is also an allusion to Zechariah's vision of Joshua and Zerubbabel in Zech. 4. In that vision they are represented by **two olive trees**, feeding oil to the golden **lampstand**. Joshua was the high priest and Zerubbabel was the king during the time of the restoration from captivity. These are appropriate images for Christians, who have been made to be "a kingdom, priests to His God and Father (Rev. 1:5).
- So who are the **two witnesses**? I will suggest that they represent the apostles, for the following reasons:
 - The primary role of apostles was to be witnesses (Acts 1:8).
 - They were sent out by twos (Luke 10:1; Acts 8:14).
 - Christ gave them power to work miracles.
 - As they spread the gospel they were persecuted, with many of them giving their lives (such as Paul and Peter during Nero's reign).

Death and Life (11:7-14)

- Suddenly we are introduced to **the beast** from the **abyss**. It has been typical for John to anticipate symbols that are explained later in the book. We will learn in Rev. 13 that this beast represents Rome.
- When God's witnesses are killed by the beast, **their bodies lie in the great city**. This **great city** is also mentioned in Rev. 14:8; 16:19; 17:18; 18:2, 10, 16, 18, 19, 21. Here it is identified as:
 - Mystically (or spiritually) called **Sodom**. This infamous city of the Old Testament was used as a symbol of utter rebellion. Several times in the OT it is used to describe Israel and Jerusalem (Isa. 1:10; Jer. 23:14; Ezek. 16:46-52).
 - Also mystically called **Egypt**. I have suggested that many of the plagues described in Revelation reflect the plagues of Egypt. Ironically, Israel has become an enemy of God's true people just as Egypt oppressed physical Israel. This imagery can really be expanded in the gospels, where Jesus is portrayed as the leader of a New Israel, leading His people in an exodus, an escape from bondage.
 - **Where also their Lord was crucified**. This would seem to decisively identify the **great city** as Jerusalem. This phrase modifies the preceding phrase (**which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt**). The term **mystically** does not refer to this phrase. Jerusalem has a bloody history of persecution (Matt. 21:33-43; 23:34-38; Luke 13:33).
- Mankind disgraces the two witnesses further by not burying them (see Ps. 79:1-3), and by rejoicing over their death. This is because the **two prophets tormented** sinful mankind. This can be illustrated by Acts 2:37, where Peter's preaching "pierced" the hearts of his listeners, or Acts 7:54, where Stephen's hearers were "cut to the quick."

- **After three and a half days**, the two witnesses came to life and were invited up to heaven. This seems to be a parallel to the Lord's death and resurrection, which we will share in. The two witnesses have overcome their enemies! A similar picture is seen in Rev. 20:4. Though the apostles were persecuted and even martyred, this picture assures us that they have triumphed in heaven.
- The **great earthquake** reminds us of the sixth seal in 6:12 (and remember, we are still in the phase introduced by the sixth trumpet). **A tenth of the city fell**, a judgment "tithed," and **seven thousand people** were killed. In Elijah's day the faithful were numbered as seven thousand; here it is the number of the unrighteous (and probably indicates a great number, combining seven and one thousand). The rest give glory to God. God's judgments can induce the survivors to repentance or to greater stubbornness (see 1 Peter 2:12).

The Seventh Trumpet (11:15-19)

- Now it is time for the **third woe**. But this woe takes the form of an announcement that the **kingdom of the world** has become God's **kingdom**.
 - The term **kingdom** (*basileia*) refers primarily to "kingship, royal power, royal rule" and in a secondary sense to the "realm" over which a king exercises his power (*BAG*).
 - The destruction of Jerusalem was a display of God's kingly power, freeing His true subjects from the oppression of Jewish persecution. Notice that in the Olivet Discourse Jesus said, "So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place" (Luke 21:31-32).
- The **twenty-four elders** join in this praise and God's power and judgment.
- This vision concludes with the appearance of the **ark of the covenant** in the heavenly temple, accompanied by the **lightning, thunder, earthquake** we have seen several times in the book (4:5; 8:5). The addition of a **hailstorm** intensifies the grandeur of the vision.

Summary:

The seven trumpets clearly parallel the seven seals, though they intensify the pictures of judgment. Just as the Lord divided the Olivet Discourse into the signs that indicated the beginning of birth pangs (Matt. 24:4-8) and those signs that indicated "desolation is near" (Luke 21:20), so also the seven trumps are divided. The last three trumps, the three "woes" indicate the rapid climax to God's judgment on Israel. As the angel says before the sounding of the seventh trump, "there will be delay no longer" (Rev. 10:6).

The Woman, The Man-Child, and the Dragon (Rev. 12:1-17)

Questions

The Birth of the Man-Child (12:1-6)

What was the woman clothed with?

What was under her feet?

What was on her head?

Why did she cry out?

Describe the dragon:

- What color was it?
- How many heads did it have?
- How many horns did it have?
- How many diadems did it have?
- What did it do with its tail?

Why did the dragon stand before the woman?

Who is the male child to rule?

Where was the child taken?

Where did the woman flee, and for how long?

War in Heaven (12:7-12)

Who waged war with the Dragon?

How is the dragon identified?

What did the loud voice in heaven say about the dragon?

How did the brethren overcome the dragon?

Upon whom is woe pronounced, and why?

The Dragon on Earth (12:13-17)

For how long was the woman nourished in the wilderness?

What did the serpent do to cause the woman to be swept away?

How did the earth help the woman?

Who did the dragon go off to make war with?

Notes

Rev. 12 begins the second half of the book, which is in some ways very different from but in other ways much the same as Rev. 1-11. Whereas Rev. 1-11 primarily focuses on the various judgments and trials taking place on earth (or the land), Rev. 12-22 explains the heavenly background behind what took place in Rev. 1-11. Many images in this section correspond to Rev. 1-11:

- The angel of the abyss, Abaddon/Apollyon (9:11) = the great dragon (12:3, 9)
- The 144,000 (7:4-8) = 144,000 (14:1-5)
- The seven trumps (8-11) = the seven bowls of wrath (16)
- The great city (11:8) = the great city, Babylon (14:8)
- The heavenly temple (11:19) = the heavenly city (21-22)

The Birth of the Man-Child (12:1-6)

- John saw a **woman in heaven**.
 - While many commentators attempt to dissect the meaning of the **sun**, **moon**, and **stars**, I think it is more important simply to see the great glory of this heavenly **woman** (Songs 6:10).
 - Because **she was with child**, it is hard not to immediately think of Mary the mother of the Lord. I think this approaches her meaning, but does not exhaust it.
- Another sign appeared, a **great dragon**. Later this dragon is identified as Satan (12:9).
 - **Red** is the color of bloodshed, appropriate for one who was a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44).
 - **Seven heads** indicates great intelligence and cunning (2 Cor. 2:11).
 - **Ten horns** portray great power.
 - **Seven diadems** represent authority, which the devil has as the ruler of this world (John 12:31).
- With his **tail** the dragon **swept a third of the stars of heaven**, indicating tremendous strength and size. The mention of a third of the stars calls to mind the trumpet judgments, which involved thirds of heaven and earth. Some commentators see a reference to the angels who fell with Satan.
- This fierce monster hovers around the **woman** to **devour her child** when she gives birth. But when she gives birth to the **male child** (“man child,” ASV) the child is **caught up to God and His throne**, and the dragon is thwarted. What does this represent?
 - The first clue is the reference to the **male child who is to rule the nations with a rod of iron**. This is quoted from Psalm 2:7-9, a clear messianic passage (as interpreted by Paul in Acts 13:33; see also Heb. 1:5). The male child is therefore Christ. As His followers, we will share in this victorious reign (Rev. 2:26-27).

- Then who is the **woman**? Since the woman is threatened both before and after the birth of Christ, I would suggest she represents the righteous remnant that both produced the Messiah and then followed the Messiah. Think of the many instances in the Old Testament where a foreign power threatened the very extinction of the remnant (Athaliah, Sennacherib, Xerxes) culminating of course in the threats of Herod the Great. And think of the great women who composed the remnant: Sarah, Ruth, Esther, and of course, Mary.
- The frustration of the dragon's plans indicates Christ's conquest over the devil, which began during His ministry (Luke 11:20-22), and reached fruition in His death and resurrection (Heb. 2:14-15; Col. 2:14-15; 1 Peter 3:21-22). This is exactly what God promised the first woman, Eve (Gen. 3:15).
- The woman then **fled** to the wilderness for **one thousand two hundred and sixty days**, protected and cared for **by God**.
 - The backdrop of the flight of Israel from Egypt into the wilderness. It also brings to mind the flight of Mary and Joseph to Egypt during the threatening days of Herod (Matt. 2:13-15). There is also a comparison with Acts 8:1-3, when the church scatters because of persecution. God will not let His people perish.
 - **One thousand two hundred and sixty days** is three and a half years, or forty two months. It is consistently seen as the period of persecution and judgment.

War in Heaven (12:7-12)

- The Bible consistently teaches that the spiritual conflicts on earth reflect a cosmic struggle taking place in the heavenly places. A good passage to illustrate this point, and that serves as the backdrop to this text, is Daniel 10:1-13. It is possible that Rev. 12:7-12 is not in chronological order with 12:1-6, and that it explains how the dragon was thrown from heaven to earth.
- As in Daniel 10, it is **Michael** who wages war on behalf of God against the devil **and his angels**.
- In this text the devil is identified as:
 - One **who deceives the whole world**. This deception will be explained in Rev. 13.
 - **The accuser of our brethren**. See Job 1:9-11; 2:4-6; Zech. 3:1-10. But with God on our side, the devil's accusations are of no avail (Rom. 8:33).
- The devil can be overcome! John explains that he can be overcome through the **blood of the Lamb** and the **word**, if we are willing to love God more than **life** itself (see 2:10; 7:13-14). Those persecuted in the first century experienced this first hand.
- The **heavens** are to **rejoice** at the devil's fall, though the **earth** and **sea** will face the devil's **great wrath**. He is furious since he has only **a short time**, probably in view of his binding in Rev. 20:1-3.

The Dragon on Earth (12:13-17)

- The dragon now turns to **the woman who gave birth to the male child**, but she is protected in the **wilderness**, carried on eagle's wings (Ex. 19:4; Deut. 32:10-11). This is parallel to 12:6.
- The serpent tries to sweep her away with a **flood** from his mouth, but the **earth** helps the woman by absorbing the water. I see no specific sign in this other than God's providential care of His people (see Ps. 124:1-5), though it is possible to connect this with the flight of Christians from Jerusalem during the Roman siege.
- Unable to harm the woman, the dragon **went off to make war with her children**, identified as those **who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus**. If the woman is the remnant, her children would simply be future generations of the righteous, just as the "children of Zion" are future generations of Jews (see Ps. 149:2).

The Sea Beast and Land Beast (Rev. 13:1-18)

Questions

The Sea Beast (13:1-10)

Where did the dragon stand?

Describe the sea beast:

- How many horns?
- How many heads?
- How many diadems?
- What was on his heads?
- Like what three animals?

What happened to one of the heads of the beast?

Who gave the beast authority?

What did those who worshipped the beast say about him?

For how long was the beast given authority?

Who did the beast blaspheme?

All of the earth worshipped the beast except for whom?

What is to happen to those who kill with the sword?

The Land Beast (13:11-18)

The beast from the land had two horns like what animal?

Whose authority does the land beast exercise?

The land beast can even perform what sign?

What does the land beast tell those on earth to make?

The land beast gave breath to the image of the sea beast to make it do what?

What does the land beast cause every one, small or great, to be given?

Only those with this mark can do what?

What is the one with understanding to calculate?

The number of the beast is also that of what?

What is his number?

Notes

Having introduced the dragon to us in Rev. 12, now John introduces the two allies the dragon uses against God's people. These allies are portrayed as monsters, just as the Devil himself is pictured as a monster. The imagery of a monster from the sea and land may come from the Old Testament allusions to the Leviathan (a sea monster) and Behemoth (a land monster) in places like Job 40-41.

The Sea Beast (13:1-10)

- The **dragon** summons the **beast** from the **sea**. From the perspective of Judea (or Asia Minor), the Mediterranean Sea was between Rome and Palestine (or Asia Minor). The sea may also have symbolic significance as the tumultuous world of international politics (see 17:15).
- The picture of this **beast** is drawn from Daniel 7, where the prophet saw four world empires symbolized by four animals: a **lion** (Babylon), a **bear** (Medo-Persia), a **leopard** (Greece), and a dreadful beast (Rome). The beast here in Rev. 13 combines those images into one monster. This represents the Roman Empire.
- **One** of the seven **heads** of the beast received a **fatal wound** which **was healed**.
 - Later, in Rev. 17:9-11, these seven heads are identified as kings, five of which were fallen, and the sixth one presently reigned. Nero was the sixth emperor of Rome (Julius Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius, Gaius, and Claudius were the first five).
 - The **fatal wound** probably refers to Nero's eventual suicide. That suicide, in June of AD 68, sparked a period of intense turmoil as different leaders tried to take control of Rome. It was nearly a fatal blow from the empire, but the empire recovered when the general Vespasian took control of Rome and solidified his position.
- The **beast** is **worshiped** by the **whole world**. This refers to the practice of emperor worship, which was particularly popular in Asia Minor. Of course, emperor worship, like all pagan idolatry, is of the Devil (see 1 Cor. 10:20).
- The **beast** was given **forty-two months** to **speak blasphemies** and **make war with the saints**. This corresponds to the period of Nero's persecution of Christians, the first official persecution sanctioned by the empire itself. Remember that 42 months is the same as 1260 days or three and a half years, a period of judgment or calamity. Coincidentally, Nero's persecution lasted from November of AD 64 to his death in the summer of AD 68.
- The **perseverance of the saints** was the promise of justice by God, that anyone who **kills with the sword** would be **killed** with the **sword**. This is in fact exactly what happened to Nero, who committed suicide with a sword.

The Land Beast (13:11-18)

- Satan summons a second monster, **out of the earth**. This monster in some ways resembles a **lamb**, yet **spoke as a dragon**. Since lambs were such an integral part of the religious system of the Jews, it seems apparent that this monster from the land must represent some kind of false religious power. In 16:13 and 19:20 this beast is called the “false prophet.” There are two possibilities as to who this beast is:
 - This beast represents apostate Jerusalem.
 - This beast represents the *Commune Asiae*, or Commune of Asia (cf. the “Asiarchs” of Acts 19:31). Each province has a congress, or Commune, which organized and promoted the practice of emperor worship. The Commune of Asia was particularly aggressive, and I tend toward this identification of the land beast.
- This beast **deceives the world** with **great signs** to promote making an **image** for the first beast. The mention in 13:15 of the land beast giving **breath to the image** of the sea beast is of course symbolic, and means that the land beast propped up the practice of emperor worship. The reference to the **image** of the beast speaking may refer to the false signs of the pagan priests (see 2 Thess. 2:8-10), or it may be a more general symbol of the role the Commune played in speaking for and promoting emperor worship.
- Emperor worship was enforced to the point that those who did not cooperate were boycotted economically, unable to **buy** or **sell**. The **mark** on the **head** or **hand** may refer to some kind of official identification used by the Commune, or it may symbolize a spiritual mark of ownership, just as the seal on the heads of the 144,000 was a spiritual mark of ownership.
- Finally, we are given the **number of the beast**, referring to the first beast from the sea. It is identified as the number **of a man**, and specifically **six hundred and sixty-six**. I believe this clearly refers to Nero for these reasons:
 - Ancient alphabets used letters for numerals (think of Roman numerals). One rendering of Nero’s name in Hebrew is spelled *Nrwn Qsr*, which in Hebrew numbering adds up to 666.
 - A textual variant puts the number at 616, which just happens to be the Latin form of Nero’s name written in Hebrew.
 - This identification makes perfect sense in light of the time context of Revelation, the Hebrew background of Revelation, and what is known historically about Nero.

Summary: This chapter pictures the opposition to the church instigated by the Roman Empire and propagated by the emperor cult.

Babylon the Great (Rev. 14:1-20)

Questions

The Lamb and the 144,000 (14:1-5)

Where was the Lamb standing?

What did the 144,000 have on their foreheads?

What did they sing?

List four characteristics of the 144,000:

- They have not been...
- They follow the...
- They have been purchased as...
- No lie...

The Eternal Gospel (14:6-7)

To whom was the eternal gospel preached?

What hour has come?

Fallen Is Babylon (14:8)

The second angel described Babylon as what kind of city?

What had Babylon made all the nations drink?

The Cup of God's Wrath (14:9-12)

Who will drink the wine of the wrath of God?

Those who drink this cup will also be tormented with what?

What do they not have either day or night?

Blessed Are the Dead in the Lord (14:13)

What may they rest from?

What follows with them?

The Harvest of Earth (14:14-16)

Who was sitting on the white cloud?

What did the angel out of the temple say to him?

The Grapes of Warth (14:17-20)

What was the angel with the sickle told to gather?

Where were the clusters thrown?

For what distance did blood flow from the wine press?

Notes

After introducing the evil allies of the Dragon, John now gives us pictures of hope, triumph, and judgment. Some commentators see this chapter as a series of seven visions, comparable to the others series of sevens in the boom (letters, seals, trumps, bowls).

The Lamb and the 144,000 (14:1-5)

- In this first vision John sees Jesus the **Lamb** on **Mount Zion**, standing with the **one hundred and forty-four thousand**. As also portrayed in Rev. 7:3, these followers of Christ were sealed on the **forehead**.
- John also heard a great **voice**, with the **sound of many waters, loud thunder**, and **harpists**. It is uncertain what this voice said; perhaps it announced the identification of the 144,000 in 14:4.
 - This voice apparently represents the voice of the great multitude in heaven, which was mentioned in connection with the 144,000, crying out with a “loud voice” in 7:9-10.
 - Only the **one hundred and forty-four thousand** could **learn this song**. The world cannot understand the joy of praise and worship; only those **purchased from the earth** by the blood of Christ can.
- The **one hundred and forty-four thousand** are further described:
 - **Not defiled with women**, which I take to mean more than simply celibacy, but moral purity and faithfulness to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2).
 - They **follow the Lamb wherever He goes**; they are loyal disciples.
 - **Purchased as first fruits**. On the basis of this statement I identify the 144,000 as the first converts to the gospel, who of course were Jewish.
 - **No lie found in their mouth**, another symbol of holiness (Zeph. 3:12-13). The particular falsehood may be the false worship of the beast.
- What does this picture represent? As is common in Revelation, it is a picture of God’s protection and preservation of His people in the face of great enemies and hardship, much like the vision of the 144,000 in Rev. 7 right after the first six seals were loosed in Rev. 6; and just like the measuring of the temple in Rev. 11 after the first six trumps in Rev. 8-9.

The Eternal Gospel (14:6-7)

- The second vision is of an **angel** with an **eternal gospel** to preach to the earth.
 - It is eternal because God’s plan for man’s salvation dates back to eternity (1 Peter 1:19-20).
 - It is for **every nation tribe and tongue**.
- This angel also announced that **the hour of His judgment has come**. I see this in regard to the fall of Jerusalem. Interestingly, Jesus alluded to the preaching of the gospel in the midst of the Olivet Discourse: “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matt. 24:14).

Fallen Is Babylon (14:8)

- In the third vision an **angel** announced the fall of **Babylon**. This is a preview of the main topic of Rev. 17-18. It is my belief this is a figure of Jerusalem, but I will hold off until those more pertinent chapters to explain why, and address the problems with this interpretation.
- Notice the order of events: the protection of God's people (14:1-5), the preaching of the gospel (14:6-7), and the fall of the great city (14:8).

The Cup of God's Wrath (14:9-12)

- The fourth vision portrays a common Old Testament symbol, drinking the **cup** of God's wrath (Isa. 51:17; Jer. 25:15-16; Ps. 75:8; Ezek. 23:31-34). Those who **worship the beast** will drink this cup.
- This judgment is further described as being **tormented with fire and brimstone**, with **no rest day and night**. Compare Sodom's destruction (11:8; Gen. 19:28).
- The fact the God will some day punish those who do evil is the **perseverance of the saints**. We can bear up under any stress knowing that God will some day bring evil to justice.

Blessed Are the Dead in the Lord (14:13)

- In contrast to the punishment without rest for those who worship the beast, the fifth vision announced that those who **die in the Lord** will **rest**. Their **deeds** were proof of their faith. What a great message of encouragement for those who died for their faith.

The Harvest of Earth (14:14-16)

- The sixth vision is another vision of judgment, **the hour to reap has come**. The one doing the reaping was **one like a son of man, having a golden crown**-an obvious reference to Christ (see Daniel 7:13-14).
- Notice the similarity of this language with that of John the Baptist (Matt. 3:7-12).

The Grapes of Wrath (14:17-20)

- The seventh vision is that of the **great wine press of the wrath of God**, the "grapes of wrath." For Old Testament parallels, see Isaiah 63:1-6; Joel 3:13.
- These grapes are **trodden outside the city**. I believe there are two hints in this passage suggesting Jerusalem as the city:
 - The phrase outside the city is suggestive of the crucifixion, in which Jesus "suffered outside the gate" (Heb. 13:12).
 - The distance of **two hundred miles** (literally "1600 stadia") is the approximate dimension of the length of Israel.

The Seven Angels (Rev. 15:1-8)

Questions

Another Sign in Heaven (15:1)

How did John describe the sign in heaven?

What did the seven angels have?

In these plagues what is finished?

The Song of Moses and the Lamb (15:2-4)

John saw a sea of...?

Who was standing on this sea?

What were they holding?

List the ways God and His works are described in the song of Moses and the Lamb:

The Heavenly Temple (15:5-8)

How were the seven angels clothed?

What did one of the four living creatures give them?

What filled the temple?

Notes

This chapter sets the stage for the final series of judgments in the book, the seven bowls of wrath.

Another Sign in Heaven (15:1)

- The scene of this sign is **heaven**, unlike the vision of the two beasts in Rev. 13.
- The **seven angels** with **seven plagues** are the last series of seven judgments; **in them the wrath of God is finished**.

The Song of Moses and the Lamb (15:2-4)

- In this heavenly picture John sees a **sea of glass**. This was also mentioned in the vision of God's throne in 4:6. The **fire** may refer back to 14:20, where the land under God's judgment is bathed in blood. The redness of the fire may be the appearance of the blood as view through the sea of glass.
- John sees those who have **been victorious** over the **beast, his image, and his number**. This would refer to those saints against whom the beast made war and were overcome. They lost their lives, but in losing their lives they have found eternal life in heaven.
- These overcomers are full of praise, **holding harps** while singing the **song of Moses** and the **Lamb**.
 - **The song of Moses** is the song recorded in Exodus 15:1-19, celebrating the crossing of the Red Sea and deliverance from Pharaoh. The sea of glass here in Rev. 15 is also red, and they have crossed the Red Sea from death into life.
 - This is also **the song of the Lamb**. It is the Lord who has made this new exodus possible.
 - The song is rich with Old Testament allusions, praising God:
 - **Great and marvelous are Your works O Lord God, the Almighty** (Ps. 111:2; 139:14; Gen. 17:1).
 - **Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations! Who will not fear...for You alone are holy** (Deut. 32:4; Jer.10:7; Isa.6:3)
 - **All the nations will come and worship before You, for Your righteous acts have been revealed** (Ps. 86:9-10; Mal. 1:11).

The Heavenly Temple (15:5-8)

- The **seven angels** with the plagues are dressed in **linen** (priestly garments, Lev. 16:4) and girded with a **gold sash** (1:13).
- These **bowls** (*phialae*) may refer to the cups used to pour the libation at the daily sacrifices.

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

Questions

The First Bowl (16:1-2)

From where did John hear a loud voice?

What happened to those who had the mark of the beast and who worshipped his image?

The Second Bowl (16:3)

Where did the angel pour the bowl?

It became blood like what?

The Third Bowl (16:4-7)

What did the angel of the waters say those who were judged had poured out?

How did the altar describe God's judgments?

The Fourth Bowl (16:8-9)

What did the sun do to men?

How did the men respond?

The Fifth Bowl (16:10-11)

What happened to the beast's kingdom?

What did they do because of pain?

What did they not do?

The Sixth Bowl (16:12-16)

On what river was this bowl poured?

This was to prepare the way for what kings?

What came out of the mouth of the dragon, beast and false prophet?

Who did the unclean spirits gather together, and for what purpose?

The Lord's coming is like what?

In Hebrew, what is the name of the place they gathered?

The Seventh Bowl (16:17-21)

What did the loud voice from the temple say?

What happened to the great city after the earthquake?

What came down from heaven upon men?

Notes

We have now come to the third major series of seven-fold judgments. The seven seals were destructive in fourths. The seven trumps were destructive in thirds. The bowls are destructive without qualifications. Notice the similarities between the three series, especially the bowls and trumps. Also, keep in mind the backdrop of the Egyptian plagues.

The First Bowl (16:1-2)

- The command to pour the bowls comes from the **temple**, a reference to the heavenly temple mentioned in 8:3; 11:1, 19; 14:17; 15:5-8.
- The **bowls** (NASB) may refer to the cups used to pour out the libations which accompanied the various offerings of the Law, in keeping with the temple imagery.
- Just as the first trump produced destruction on the earth, so does the first **bowl**. In particular, terrible **sores** afflicted those who **worshipped the beast** (comparable to the boils in Ex. 9:8-12).

The Second Bowl (16:3)

- Parallel to the second trump which turned 1/3 of the sea to blood, the second **bowl** turns the entire sea to **blood**. The added description, **like that of a dead man**, perhaps refers to the stench of death.
- This harkens back to the first plague against Egypt (Ex. 7:14-25).

The Third Bowl (16:4-7)

- Parallel to the third trump which affected springs and rivers, the third **bowl** turns the **rivers** and **springs** to **blood**.
- The angel of the waters declared God **righteous**, because those who were given **blood to drink had poured out the blood of the saints**. Compare this language with Matt. 23:34-36; 27:25.

The Fourth Bowl (16:8-9)

- The fourth trump caused a third of the sun to go dark. In this plague, just the opposite happens: the sun scorches men with fierce heat.
- Instead of turning from sin mankind **blasphemed the name of God**.

The Fifth Bowl (16:10-11)

- The **fifth angel** pours his **bowl** on the **throne of the beast**. I suggested in Rev. 13 that the beast represents the Roman empire, personified by Nero. The result of this plague is that the **kingdom** of the beast was **darkened**. I see this as a reference to the turmoil that troubled Rome during the same time frame as the Jewish war occurred.
- Again, there is no repentance.

The Sixth Bowl (16:12-16)

- Just as the **Euphrates** was mentioned in the sixth trump, it is also used in the sixth **bowl**. In this case it is **dried up** to prepare the way for **kings from the east**. This may refer to the threat of raids by the Parthians during the turbulent years of AD 66-70, or it may refer to the coming of the Roman armies on Israel from the north.
- At the same time **three unclean spirits** come from the **dragon, beast, and false prophet**.
 - These spirits are compared to **frogs**. Frogs were unclean animals under the Law, and were used in the plagues against the Egyptians (Ex. 8:6).
 - These unclean spirits **gather the kings of the world for war** (see 1 Kings 22:19-23 for a parallel).
- John's readers are exhorted to be alert, to be **awake** and clothed, so that they will be ready when He comes (see Matt. 24:42-44).
- The place where the kings are gathered is **Har-Magedon**.
 - **Har-Magedon** means "Mountain of Megiddo." There is actually no mountain called by this name, so it probably refers to the mountain overlooking Megiddo, Mount Carmel.
 - Megiddo was an ancient city located in the Valley of Jezreel, a vital passage way through the central mountain range. Due to its strategic location, many important battles have been fought in this place in world history (Judges 5:19; 2 Kings 23:29; 2 Chron.35:22). Thus it is the perfect symbol for the ultimate battle between good and evil.
 - It is unclear to me whether this gathering for battle refers to the Roman war against Israel, or the warfare upon God's people by Rome and Jerusalem.

The Seventh Bowl (16:17-21)

- The seventh bowl is a **great earthquake** which splits **the great city Babylon** into **three parts**. This three-fold division comes from Ezekiel 5:1-12, a prophecy against Jerusalem. See also Matt. 24:7.
- This is accompanied by a **hailstorm** (compare Ex. 9:18-25).

The Mother of Harlots (Rev. 17:1-18)

Questions

The Harlot (17:1-7)

What did one of the angels with the bowls tell John he would show him?

What were those who dwell on the earth made to drink?

On what was the woman sitting?

Describe the Harlot's appearance:

- Clothed in...
- Adorned with ...
- Having in her hand a...
- On her forehead was written the name...

What was she drunk with?

The Seven Heads (17:8-14)

What was the beast about to do?

The seven heads are identified as what two things?

Describe the status of the seven kings:

The beast which was and is not is also what?

What do the ten horns represent?

From whom do they receive authority, and for how long?

Against whom will they wage war?

Who are those with the Lamb?

The Death of the Harlot (17:15-18)

What are the waters where the Harlot sits?

What will the ten horns and the beast do to the Harlot?

What did God put in their hearts?

How is the woman whom John saw identified?

Notes

In Rev. 16:17-21 the great city Babylon was destroyed by the seventh bowl of wrath. Now, in Rev. 17-18, the fall of the city is described in greater detail. What does the figure of Babylon, the great city, represent? In the history of interpretation, there have been four suggestions. First, those who take the continuous historical view see this as a figure of apostate Christianity, particularly the Roman Catholic Church. While it is true that the Catholic Church has departed from the New Testament pattern, such an identification ignores the time indicators of Revelation. Second, some commentators identify Babylon with Rome. There is much to commend this position, particularly if this chapter is read from a purely geo-political standpoint. Third, some commentators see Babylon as a reference to first century Jerusalem. And finally, some commentators see Babylon as a spiritual symbol of the world city, which has existed in many forms in history, full of immorality and opposed to God.

Throughout our study I have suggested that Jerusalem is the great city, and in this chapter I will explain more clearly why. A basis for such an interpretation can be found in Matt. 24:29, where Jesus quoted language originally applied to Babylon (in Isaiah 13:10) to Jerusalem.

The Harlot (17:1-7)

- The city is described as **the great harlot**. While pagan cities were sometimes described in the Old Testament in this fashion (Isa. 23:15-17; Nahum 3:4), the overwhelming number of references to harlotry apply to Jerusalem (Isa. 1:21; Jer. 2:20-24; 3:1-3; Hos. 9:1; Ezekiel 16 and 23).
- The harlot **sits on many waters**, later identified as various nationalities (17:15).
- This harlot committed **acts of immorality** with the **kings of the earth and those who dwell on the earth**. Throughout Jerusalem's history she played the harlot with many pagan nations for economic or military gain. The ultimate prostitution occurred when the Jews pledged allegiance to Caesar rather than her true king (John 19:15; cf. John 11:48).
- The woman sits upon **the scarlet beast**, the sea beast of Rev. 13. Later, the beast will turn on the harlot and kill her (17:16). In my view this picture shows that the harlot is dependent on Rome, not identical with Rome.
 - Her clothing may just represent the colorful attire of a prostitute, or it may represent the colors and materials used in the temple. Josephus describes the veil of the temple gate in this way: "It was a Babylonian curtain, embroidered with blue, and fine linen, and scarlet, and purple, and of a contexture that was truly wonderful. Nor was this mixture of colors without its mystical interpretation, but was a kind of image of the universe; for by the scarlet there seemed to be enigmatically signified fire, by the fine flax the earth, by the blue the air, and by the purple the sea; two of them having their colors the foundation of this resemblance; but the fine flax and the purple have their own origin for that foundation, the earth producing the one, and the sea the other. This curtain had also embroidered upon it all that was mystical in the heavens, excepting that of the [twelve] signs, representing living creatures." *Wars*, V.5.4

- The **gold cup in her hand** is reminiscent of ancient Babylon, as pictured in Jer. 51:7.
- The **name** on her **forehead** may also be connected with temple imagery, in particular the high priest's turban, on which was engraved "Holy to the Lord" (Ex. 28:36).
- The **woman** was **drunk with the blood of the saints and witnesses of Jesus**. While the first official imperial persecution did break out during the time of Nero, Jerusalem holds the infamous distinction of persecutor through the ages (Matt. 23:29-37; Luke 13:33-34).
- The **angel** tells John he will explain this vision.

The Seven Heads (17:8-14)

- The **beast** John earlier saw (in 13:1-10) **was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss**. This difficult language seems to refer to Rome's temporary civil war after the death of Nero, from which it recovered (on par with the fatal wound which healed in 13:3).
- The angel then says that the **seven heads** of the beast represent **seven hills**, which in turn represents **seven kings**.
 - In ancient times, reference to a city of **seven hills** would immediately be connected with Rome.
 - The **seven kings** would then represent the first seven kings, or emperors, of Rome: Julius Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius, Gaius, Claudius, Nero, and Galba.
- These **seven kings** are identified as follows:
 - **Five have fallen**: Julius Caesar through Claudius.
 - **One is**: Nero (compare with our identification of 666 in 13:18).
 - **The other has not yet come and must remain a little while**. It can get tricky here because of Rome's civil war. When Nero committed suicide, the empire was torn by competing factions. Within a year, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius tried to rule the empire, only to be killed. Some have suggested this count of the kings excludes these three emperors. However, ancient writers consistently include these three men in their lists. If they are to be included here, Galba is the one who is yet to come. If the three should be excluded, Vespasian is the one yet to come.
- The **beast** is also an **eighth**, and **one of the seven** (or "of the seven," ASV). The idea here is that an eighth ruler will come along who is like the seven, and goes to destruction. This may be a reference to Domitian, who styled himself as a second Nero.
- The **ten horns** (also mentioned in Dan. 7:24) represent **ten kings** who **receive authority** with the **beast one hour**. This would refer to the allied client kings (like Herod), or to the provincial governors (there were ten Roman provinces).
- These rulers **wage war against the Lamb** and His people.

The Death of the Harlot (17:15-18)

- The **waters** where **the harlot sits** are **peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues**. Since the harlot sits on the beast, this may be a reference to Rome's worldwide scope. If it applies directly to the harlot, it may refer to the vast Jewish population dispersed throughout the empire (for example, see the list in Acts 2:5-11).
- The **ten horns** and **beast** turn on the **harlot**, making her **desolate, naked**, while eating **her flesh** and burning her with **fire**.
 - For an example of burning a harlot, see Gen. 38:24.
 - Frankly, this imagery is difficult to understand if the harlot is Rome. But it is easily understood if identified as Jerusalem. Once they worked as allies in persecuting God's people, but eventually the empire turned against Jerusalem.
 - For nakedness, see Jer. 13:26; Lam. 1:8-9.
 - The eating of flesh may harken back to the references to Jezebel in 2:20, as in 2 Kings 9:30-37.
- This destruction of the harlot was part of God's **purpose**, to fulfill the word of God.
- The final statement, that the harlot is the **great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth**, has been used to refute the Jerusalem interpretation in favor of the Rome view. However, I offer these points to consider in defense of the Jerusalem view:
 - The **great city** as identified in Rev. 11:8 refers to Jerusalem.
 - The **earth** may also be translated "land," in which case it may be that the land of Palestine is under discussion. Josephus says that "the royal city Jerusalem was the supreme, and presided over all the neighboring country, as the head does over the body" (*Wars* III.3.5).
 - The idea of reigning may refer to Jerusalem's sway over Rome, which in turn controlled the world. To illustrate, consider how the Jews manipulated Pilate (John 19:12), and later tried to stir up trouble in the provinces (Acts 18:12-17).
 - It may be that the entire picture should be seen in light of what Jerusalem was supposed to be, namely, the center of the earth (Ezek. 5:5; 38:12). As the city where God placed His name, Jerusalem was above all other cities (Ps. 48:1-8). But it played the harlot, and faced God's wrath.

Fallen Is Babylon the Great (Rev. 18:1-24)

Questions

The Angelic Announcement (18:1-3)

With what was the earth illumined?

The great city had become the dwelling place of what three things?

What three groups of people sinned with the harlot?

Come Out of Her (18:4-8)

The voice from heaven urged God's people to come out of the city so that they would not receive what?

How high had her sins piled up?

What portion was to be paid back to the harlot?

What did she say in her heart?

How quickly would her plagues come?

The Lament of the Kings (18:9-10)

What will the kings see as they weep over the city?

Why will they stand at a distance?

The Lament of the Merchants (18:11-20)

Why do the merchants mourn her?

What was laid waste in one hour?

What did those who make their living by the sea throw on their heads?

Who was to rejoice because God pronounced judgment against the city?

The Strong Angel (18:21-24)

What did the strong angel throw into the sea?

Whose blood was found in Babylon the great?

Further Study

Compare 18:22-23 to the following passages in Jeremiah: Jer. 25:10; 7:34; 16:9. Who was Jeremiah prophesying about in these verses?

Notes

Rev. 18 describes the aftermath of the fall of Babylon. Accordingly, many of the statements found in Rev. 18 are drawn from Old Testament prophecies regarding Babylon. The key issue for understanding the identity of Babylon the harlot is to determine what kind of harlot she was. Is the harlot here in Rev. 17-18 an unfaithful wife, or is the harlot a woman of the street, prostituting herself to all customers? Jerusalem would better fit the picture of the unfaithful wife-harlot, while Rome would better fit the street woman-harlot, since Rome was never in covenant with God.

The Angelic Announcement (18:1-3)

- **Another angel**, distinct from the seven angels of the seven bowls, descended **from heaven** to announce the fall of Babylon.
- According to the angel, Babylon had become a **dwelling place of demons**, and a **prison of unclean spirits and birds**. Regarding demons, see the notes on 9:1-11. Regarding the **birds**, imagine scavenger birds picking at the ruined corpses of those who died in the fall of the great city. This kind of language is used regarding Babylon in Isaiah 13:20-21 and Jer. 50:39. This is in contrast to the New Jerusalem, in which nothing unclean can enter (Rev. 21:27).
- **Nations, kings, and merchants** have shared in her sin, which is why they will lament her fall later in the chapter.

Come Out of Her (18:4-8)

- **Another voice from heaven** urges God's people to **come out** from the evil city. For OT allusions to Babylon, see Jer. 51:44-45. If the city is Rome, the idea would be not to share in her evils. If it is Jerusalem, this command would be even more literal, since Jesus told the disciples to flee the city when they saw impending signs of doom (Luke 21:20-24). The fall of Jerusalem would also help Jewish Christians make a clean break with the Judaism of their past (see Gal. 4:21-31).
- **Her sins** are so great that God will **pay her back even as she has paid, double according to her deeds**. For OT allusions to Babylon, see Jer. 50:29. For allusions to Jerusalem see Jer. 16:18; 17:18. Paul says the Jews would receive wrath to the uttermost (1 Thess. 2:15-16).
- The great city **glorified herself**, boasting **"I SIT AS A QUEEN AND I AM NOT A WIDOW, and will never see mourning."** This is a statement found in Isaiah 47:7 regarding Babylon. See Lamentations 1:1 for a similar statement regarding Jerusalem.
- Contrary to the great city's overconfidence, its fall will come in **one day** due to the awesome strength of her judge, **the Lord God**.

The Lament of the Kings (18:9-10)

- Now those who shared in her sins begin to mourn over her loss. The laments found here in 18:9-24 are drawn from Ezekiel's prophecies concerning Tyre (Ezek. 26-28).
- The **kings of the earth** mourn as **they see the smoke of her fire** (cf. Tyre in Ezek. 26:16-18). Some see this as a clear reference to Rome, which was a world wide empire. But it is also possible the word **earth** should be translated "land," as in Palestine. In that sense Jerusalem was over many kings of the land.

The Lament of the Merchants (18:11-20)

- Now the **merchants** mourn her loss (cf. Tyre in Ezek. 27).
 - Many commentators see this as a reference to Rome, a truly major commercial empire in the first century.
 - A case can also be made for Jerusalem. While Jerusalem was not as large as Rome, it did a great deal of business through commercial trade, particularly with regard to the Temple. Josephus said: "Yet hath not its great antiquity, nor its vast riches, nor the diffusion of its nation over all the habitable earth, nor the greatness of the veneration paid to it on a religious account, been sufficient to preserve it from being destroyed. And thus ended the siege of Jerusalem." (*Wars* 6.10.1). Describing the sacking of the temple he writes: "They also burnt down the treasury chambers, in which was an immense quantity of money, and an immense number of garments, and other precious goods there repositied; and, to speak all in a few words, there it was that the entire riches of the Jews were heaped up together" (*Wars* 6.5.2).
- The specific items listed in the cargo is reminiscent of the dirge for Tyre in Ezek. 28:12-25. Some of the items were also used in connection with the Temple. Josephus describes what one survivor gave to Titus: "He also delivered to him the veils and the garments, with the precious stones, and a great number of other precious vessels that belonged to their sacred worship. The treasurer of the temple also, whose name was Phineas, was seized on, and showed Titus the coats and girdles of the priests, with a great quantity of purple and scarlet, which were there repositied for the uses of the veil, as also a great deal of cinnamon and cassia, with a large quantity of other sweet spices, which used to be mixed together, and offered as incense to God every day. A great many other treasures were also delivered to him, with sacred ornaments of the temple not a few" (*Wars* 6.8.3).
- I also wonder if a connection should be made here with Jesus' cleansing of the temple which had been desecrated by the greed of merchants.

The Strong Angel (18:21-24)

- The **saints** and **apostles** and **prophets** are to rejoice at her fall, since God has taken vengeance on her on their behalf.
- A strong angel symbolized the fall of **Babylon** by casting a **millstone into the sea** (cf. Babylon in Jer. 51:61-63).
- The sounds of a city bustling with commerce and arts will be no more when this happens. Interestingly, this language comes from Jer. 25:10; 7:34; 16:9, which was directed toward Jerusalem. Similar language is found in Ezek. 26:13 regarding Tyre.
- The **blood of the prophets** and **saints slain on earth** could be **found** in this city. While Rome persecuted Christians, Jerusalem is certainly the persecutor par excellence (Matt. 23:29-36).

The Destruction of the Beasts (Rev. 19:1-21)

Questions

Joy in Heaven (19:1-10)

What did John hear in heaven?

Who was avenged when the Harlot was destroyed?

Whose marriage has come?

What does the fine linen represent?

What did John do when the angel said, “These are the true words of God”?

The Word of God (19:11-16)

What color horse did John see when heaven opened?

Describe the rider:

- He is called...
- In righteousness He...
- His eyes are...

- On His head are...
- He has a name which...
- He is clothed in a robe dipped in...
- His name is called...
- From His mouth comes a...
- On His robe and thigh is written the name...

The Great Supper of God (19:17-21)

Where did John see an angel standing?

Who did the angel invite to assemble for the great supper of God?

List those whose flesh is to be eaten:

What happened to the beast and false prophet?

How were the rest killed?

Notes

John has described four enemies of God's people: the Dragon, the Sea Beast, the Land Beast, and the Harlot. Now, in reverse order, he describes their destruction: the harlot (Rev. 17-18), the Beasts (Rev. 19), and the Dragon (Rev. 20).

Joy in Heaven (19:1-10)

- **After these things** indicates this vision of joy is the result of the destruction of the harlot in Rev. 17-18. This joyous vision is in stark contrast to the lament of the world over the harlot's fall.
- Joyous praise emanates from:
 - The **great multitude** (19:1-3, 6-7). This multitude was introduced in 7:9. They praise God's judgments in bringing righteous vengeance against the harlot.
 - The **twenty-four elders and four living creatures** (19:4) also fall down and praise God.
 - **A voice from the throne** (19:5) exhorts all of God's **servants, small and great**, to praise Him.
- The second time the **voice** of the **great multitude** speaks, it praises God for the **marriage of the Lamb**. Those invited to the **marriage supper** must be dressed appropriately, in **clean linen**, which symbolizes the **righteous acts of the saints**.
 - Marriage is used to symbolize spiritual covenant with God, both in the case of Israel in the Old Testament (Ezek. 16:8-14) and the church in the New Testament (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25-32).
 - As has been the case throughout the book, this is a preview of something which will be described in more detail later (21:2).
 - Keep in mind the contrast between the harlot and the bride of Christ. Also, if the harlot represents Jerusalem, the imagery takes on greater intensity. God has executed His adulterous first wife to marry His second, the church.
- John **fell** down at the **feet** of the strong angel (I presume the referent is back to 18:21) **to worship him**. The angel told him not to do this since he was of the same rank, **a fellow servant**.

The Word of God (19:11-16)

- This is the first of a series of seven visions which John introduces with the expression, **and I saw**. This is a vision of the Lord.
 - Mounted on a **white horse**, the Lord is called **Faithful and True**.
 - Waging **war**, **His eyes are a flame of fire** (cf. 1:14).
 - He has a **name no one knows**, meaning that His nature and person go beyond the limits of human comprehension.

- His **robe** is **dipped in blood**, either His, or the blood of His servants whom He is avenging.
- He is called the **Word of God**, a title which comes from John 1:1.
- The **armies in heaven** follow Him, a reference to the angels of God so often called the “hosts” in the Old Testament.
- **From His mouth comes a sharp sword to strike down the nations** (1:16), ruling **with a rod of iron** (see Ps. 2:9), treading the **wine press of the wrath of God** (14:19).
- **On His robe and thigh** (conspicuous to all) **He has a name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.**
- What battle is this vision describing?
 - Premillennialists see this as a vision of the second coming, and interpret this as a literal battle. This is hardly appropriate for a King whose kingdom is not of this world, else His servants would fight (John 18:36-37).
 - Rather, it is a vision of the spiritual battle waged against the remaining enemies of the Lord, the beast and false prophet. These were arrayed for battle in 16:12-16. Daniel 2:40-45 is a similar picture: the kingdom of Christ will remain long after its enemies are destroyed.

The Great Supper of God (19:17-21)

- An **angel in the sun** invites the **birds** to assemble **for the great supper of God**, a grisly feast of the flesh of the conquered enemies of the Lord, described in seven categories. See Ezek. 39:17-20 for the OT background.
- The **beast and false prophet** (the land beast) were **thrown into the lake of fire**, and their allies were **killed** by the **sword** of the Lord, and the **birds** ate their **flesh**.
- To summarize: in Rev. 17-18 the harlot (Jerusalem) is destroyed. In Rev. 19, Rome and its system of emperor worship are destroyed. Now, all that’s left is the Dragon.

The Millennium (Rev. 20:1-6)

Questions

The Binding of Satan (20:1-3)

What two things did the angel hold in his hand?

For how long was Satan bound?

What could Satan no longer do?

After these things, Satan must be released for how long?

The Thousand Year Reign (20:4-6)

List the souls John saw:

- Those who had been...
- Those who had not worshipped...
- Those who had not received...

When did the rest of the dead come to life?

What has no power over those who have a part in the first resurrection?

Notes

Since this passage has been the source of confusion and controversy, we are going to spend an entire lesson on just the first six verses of Revelation 20. While the primary focus of the entire chapter is the eventual destruction of the dragon, these verses describe the thousand year reign with Christ, commonly called the millennium (from the Latin for thousand, *mille*, and years, *annum*).

There are two basic views of the millennium:

- A. *It is symbolic and presently taking place.* This is the view of amillennialism and postmillennialism. The major distinction between a- and postmillennialism is that postmillennialists believe the gospel will eventually spread through the whole world, bringing the vast majority of people to Christ. Most amillennialists believe the future will see the growth of both righteousness and wickedness.
- B. *It is literal and future.* This is the view of historic premillennialism and dispensational premillennialism. Premillennialism is the belief that Jesus will return before (pre-) the millennial reign. They believe Jesus will return to earth and reign for a literal period of one thousand years. The distinction between historic and dispensational premillennialism is that historic premillennialists believe that Christ is reigning now in the Church, while dispensationalists deny that Christ is reigning now and that the church of the fulfillment of Old Testament kingdom prophecies.

The Binding of Satan (20:1-3)

- The **abyss** is the place of punishment where the evil are kept until the final judgment. It is the place the demons did not want the Lord to send them to (Luke 8:31).
- The devil is **bound** in the **abyss** for a **thousand years**.
 - The NT teaches that Jesus' personal ministry was an attack on the forces of the devil (Luke 11:20-21), and that His death and resurrection were a crushing blow to the devil (Heb. 2:14-15; Col. 2:15; 1 Peter 3:22). We should see this binding as the result of Jesus' victory at the cross.
 - The devil still has power (1 Peter 5:8), but it is limited. Specifically, John says **he would not deceive the nations any longer**. Since that terminology is used throughout Revelation to describe emperor worship (as in 13:14), I believe this represents the inability of Satan to sway the whole world into idolatry.
 - **Thousand years** is obviously symbolic, and is the first time indicator we've seen so far that extends beyond the time frame of the first century. One thousand is 10x10x10, the number of fullness (ten) multiplied three times (the divine number).
 - **After** the thousand years Satan **must be released for a short time**. Since we have no way of knowing in literal terms how long the thousand years

is, we cannot know how long the short time is. This does suggest however that before the end there will be an outbreak of Satanic activity.

The Thousand Year Reign (20:4-6)

- Next, John sees **thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them.**
 - We are not told who the **they** are, but there is certainly a similarity in the language used here and that used in the rest of the book for the twenty four elders (as in 4:4).
 - If it is the elders, I suggested that they represent the twelve sons of Jacob and the twelve apostles. Jesus told the apostles they would sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes (Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:30).
- John sees two groups of people: **souls who had been beheaded** for their faith, and those who did not worship the **beast** and His **image**.
 - Some take the view that John only saw those who died for their faith, and the entire description modifies these martyrs (as in the picture of the souls under the altar in 6:9-11).
 - I prefer the view that John sees both dead and living saints.
- “They lived, and reigned with Christ **a thousand years**” (ASV). Later, John identifies this as **the first resurrection**. What does it mean?
 - All premillennialists believe it refers to a literal resurrection of the righteous only, followed by the literal millennium, and then the resurrection of the wicked. The problem with this view is that the Bible teaches there will be one general resurrection of the righteous and the wicked (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15) which will occur on the last day (John 6:40).
 - Some brethren believe it refers to the “resurrection of the cause of Christ”, comparable to Ezekiel’s vision of the resurrection of Israel in Ezek. 37:1-14. This interpretation seems forced to me.
 - Those commentators who see these as a vision of the dead alone believe the first resurrection refers to the glorified intermediate state.
 - I believe it refers to our spiritual regeneration and life with Christ, shared by living and dead Christians alike. This is parallel to the first death we experience, spiritual death in sin. In baptism we are raised to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12). We are thus seated with Christ in heavenly places (Eph. 2:5-6), having passed out of death into life (John 5:24).
- **The rest of the dead do not come to life until** after the millennium (see 20:11-15). The wicked do not share in the first resurrection, the spiritual life in Christ. Instead, their only resurrection is the physical resurrection which leads to judgment.
- Those who share in this **first resurrection** are **blessed** because the **second death** (hell, 20:14), **has no power over** them. We are **priests** and **reign** with God now (1:6).

The Destruction of the Dragon (Rev. 20:7-15)

Questions

Satan's Release (20:7-10)

When will Satan be released?

What two nations are specifically mentioned?

What did they surround?

What came down from heaven?

Where was Satan thrown?

The Great White Throne (20:11-15)

Who did John see standing before the throne?

What were opened?

What did the sea give up?

Where were Death and Hades thrown?

Who was also thrown into the lake of fire?

Notes

In Rev. 20:1-6 John pictured the triumphant reign of the faithful with Christ as a glorious era of one thousand years. Many other NT passages discuss the reign of Christ, which began as He ascended to God's right hand (Acts 2:32-35), which believers share in now (Eph. 2:6; Col. 1:13), and which will conclude at the final resurrection (1 Cor. 15:23-25). In literal terms the duration of this reign is known only to God. Now in 20:7-15, John describes the end in the same highly symbolic language which has been used throughout the book.

Satan's Release (20:7-10)

- At the end of the **thousand years Satan will be released to deceive the nations**. Does this mean that before the end comes there will be another era of worldwide false religion? I know of no way to interpret this passage to mean anything else. Again, we have no way of knowing when this will be, or how long it will last.
- Specifically, John mentions the nations of **Gog and Magog**. Ezekiel 38-39 speaks of "Gog of the land of Magog," According to Ezekiel 38:17, they represent the nations God prophesied "in former days" that would come against Israel. In Jewish writings, "Gog and Magog" were standard symbols of the heathen nations. Here, John uses them as symbols of the forces of evil arrayed against God's people.
- These nations threaten the **camp of the saints** and **the beloved city**, identified later as the New Jerusalem (21:2). I believe this means there will be an outbreak of opposition and perhaps even persecution before the end, but I must again stress we have no way of knowing when or how long this will last.
- God destroys these evil powers with **fire from heaven**. God will not allow His people to perish.
- The **devil is thrown into the lake of fire**. As Revelation explains, the fall of Satan is gradual and certain. First he is cast from heaven to earth (12:9). Then he is bound in the abyss (20:3). Now he is cast in the hell which was prepared for him (Matt. 25:41).

The Great White Throne (20:11-15)

- Now we come to the final judgment, which takes place at the **great white throne** of God. The Lord's appearing is so awesome that **heaven and earth fled away!** See a similar picture in Psalm 114.
- All of the **dead** stand before God, **the great and the small**, those which were in the **sea** and in **Hades**.
- Two kinds of **books were opened**. One is the **book of life**, and the other is a symbolic book of the **deeds** of those being judged.
- **Death and Hades were thrown into the lake**. The idea here is that death is no more since all of the dead have been raised. See 1 Cor. 15:26.
- Those not in the **book of life** were also **thrown into the lake**.

The New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:1-22:5)

Questions

The Jerusalem from Above (21:1-4)

What happened to the first heaven and earth?

How was the new Jerusalem made ready?

What did the loud voice say about the tabernacle of God?

What four things will there no longer be?

The Alpha and Omega (21:5-8)

What did He who sits on the throne say He was making all things?

What will He give to the one who thirsts?

List the eight groups who will be in the lake of fire:

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

The Bride of the Lamb (21:9-21)

Who showed John the bride?

What names were written on the twelve gates?

What names were on the twelve foundation stones?

With what did the angel measure the city?

What was the measure of the city's length, width, and height?

What were the measurements of the wall?

What material was the city made of?

The Lord God and the Lamb (21:22-22:5)

Why did the city need no sun?

What did the kings of the earth bring into it?

What shall never come into the city?

What flowed down the middle of the city?

What were the leaves of the tree of life for?

What name will be on the forehead of the bond-servants of God?

Notes

This final major vision in Revelation is drawn chiefly from Ezekiel 40-48 and Isaiah 40-66, particularly Isaiah 60-66. These sections of the Old Testament picture the glorification of Israel in the future, especially a new glorified temple. Now in Rev. 21:1-22:5, those images are used to describe the glorified people of God. Some have debated whether this is a picture of the church in its present state, enjoying the blessings of covenant with Christ, or whether it is the future heavenly state. While it is undeniable that we enjoy a “foretaste of glory divine” now, this is primarily a picture of the church in its glorified heavenly state.

The Jerusalem from Above (21:1-4)

- Isaiah also **saw a new heaven and a new earth** (Isa. 65:17; 66:22-24). Just as the body is resurrected in new glory, the heaven and earth will be re-created in glory (see 2 Peter 3:10-13). **There is no longer any sea**, the place from which the evil beast came (13:1).
- John then sees **the holy city, new Jerusalem**. It makes sense to me that this holy city, a new Jerusalem, is in contrast to the “holy city” in 11:1-2, the old Jerusalem.
 - The key to this picture is that the city is **made ready as a bride**. In other words, this a double symbol. The glorified church is pictured as a beautiful city, which in turn is as beautiful bride.
 - There is a clear comparison/contrast between the harlot and the bride. An angel introduces them the same way (17:1; 21:9). They appear in contrasting environs (17:3; 21:10). Great attention is given to the apparel of each (17:4-5; 21:9ff).
- John heard an announcement that **the tabernacle of God is among men**. In many ways this is the theme of the Bible. God dwelled with man in the Garden, but this fellowship was disrupted by sin. God then established the earthly tabernacle and temple for Israel, providing a temporal means of fellowship. When Jesus came He was the ultimate tabernacle, God dwelling with man (John 1:14; Matt. 12:6).
- The blessings of God’s fellowship include no tears, **death, mourning or pain**. God eases our pain and sorrow even now (1 Thess. 4:13-18), and in the heavenly state He will remove them entirely.

The Alpha and Omega (21:5-8)

- God’s promise to make **all things new** is **faithful and true**, even as He is (19:11).
- It is important to connect this vision of glory with the promises made to the seven churches to the one who overcomes. See 3:12 for the new temple, for instance. Jesus Himself is the source of **the water of life** (John 4:14; 7:37).
- Those who **overcome** will enjoy a Father-**son** relationship with God.

- God then lists eight classes of people who will go to hell. Think of these eight sins in light of the overall message of the book. They are crimes those who persecuted God's people were guilty of, with the possible exception of the **cowardly**, which may refer to those Christians who caved in.

The Bride of the Lamb (21:9-21)

- One of the **angels** connected with the **seven bowls** of wrath invited John to see the **bride** of the **Lamb**. Again, in this double vision, the bride is described as a beautiful **city**.
- While there are many specific details in this vision, the most important is that the city has the **glory of God**. The *shekinah*, the glory cloud, filled the OT tabernacle and temple Ex. 40:34-38; 1 Kings 8:10-11), only to be withdrawn due to Israel's sinfulness. Now it finds permanent dwelling.
- There are two aspects of this vision which receive emphasis: the number **twelve**, the number of God's people, and precious jewels, indicating the splendor of the city.
 - The **city** is a cube, just as the sanctuary of the temple was (1 Kings 6:20). But it is of enormous proportions, "twelve thousand furlongs" (ASV) cubed (1500 miles, NASB).
 - The **wall** was measured at 144 cubits (ASV), **seventy-two yards**, presumably the thickness. The wall was made of **jasper**, with **twelve gates** with **twelve angels**. Later these gates are said to be made of pearl.
 - **Every kind of precious stone** served as the walls **foundation**. There are some similarities with the high priest's breastplate in the OT (Ex. 28:15-21). See 1 Kings 5:17 for the foundation stones of Solomon's temple.
 - **The city was pure gold.**

The Lord God and the Lamb (21:22-22:5)

- It is as if the city is one giant temple, filled with the **glory of God** and the **Lamb**.
- It is open to all the **nations**, whose **kings** bring gifts into the city (Isa. 60:10-12). Since all enemies were destroyed, only those who honor the Lord remain on earth.
- The final part of this vision pictures eternal glory as a new Garden of Eden, complete with a **river** (see Gen. 2:10; also Ezek. 47:1-9) and **the tree of life**. Man was cursed and evicted from the garden; here there is no **curse**.
- **They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads.** This is what theologians call the "beatific vision," and it is what heaven is all about—not the absence of suffering, as wonderful as that will be—but the reunion of God and His people!

Conclusion (Rev. 22:6-21)

Questions

John and the Angel (22:6-11)

What did the angel show His bondservants?

Who is blessed?

What did John do before the angel who showed him these things?

How did the angel describe himself?

What was John not to do with the words of the prophecy of this book, and why?

What did the angel say to the...

- One who does wrong?
- One who is filthy?
- One who is righteous?
- One who is holy?

John and Jesus (22:12-21)

What will Jesus render to each man?

Who has the right to the tree of life?

List the six groups of people outside the city:

-
-
-
-
-
-

Of whom did Jesus say He was the root and descendant?

What did the Spirit and Bride say?

What will be added to the one who adds to the words of this prophecy?

What will be taken from the one who takes away from this prophecy?

What did John testify about Jesus' coming?

Further Study

“Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book” (22:7). In what way has your study of Revelation strengthened your faith?

Notes

As we come to the close of our study of this great book, I hope you feel more comfortable about studying the book. We should never feel afraid of it, especially because its message is designed to comfort and assure us!

John and the Angel (22:6-11)

- Notice the emphasis John places on the close timing of the events of the book, **things which must soon take place**. He is preparing his readers for an imminent time of judgment (see also 22:10, 12, 20).
- **I am coming quickly** is a reference to coming in judgment, as in 1:7, which in turn follows Matt. 24:3 (“what will be the sign of Your coming?”). Its nearness was the reason those who heed the words of the book would be **blessed**.
- Similar to his personal testimony to his gospel (see John 21:24), John says **I am the one who heard and saw these things**. Again, as in 19:10, he was overcome with the majesty of the vision and **fell down to worship the angel who showed him these things**. Remember John says in 1:1 that God revealed this book “by His angel to His bondservant John.”
- John is **not to seal up the book**, since **the time is near** (unlike Daniel’s vision in Dan. 8 about the future kingdoms of Alexander the Great, which would not arise until three centuries later).
- The admonition for the wicked and righteous to continue in their deeds probably carries the idea of putting the choice before the early Christians in stark, black and white terms.

John and Jesus (22:12-21)

- Jesus, **the beginning and the end**, will render to each man **according to his deeds**. Jesus started the war, and He will finish it!
- The final beatitude of the book is for **those who wash their robes**. Those who do so will enter the glorious **city** where **the tree of life** is.
- Jesus describes Himself as...
 - **The root and descendant of David**. See the following passages for additional comment: 2 Sam. 7:12-17; Isa. 11:1; Zech. 6:12; Rev. 3:7; 5:5).
 - **The bright and morning star**. What a fitting description of the “light of the world” (John 8:12; 9:5). See also Numbers 24:17.
- There are basically two invitations made in 22:17. The first, by the **Spirit and bride**, along with **the one who hears**, seems to be an invitation to Jesus to **come**. The other is to those who thirst to **come**.
- Finally, John adds a solemn warning to those who **add or take away** from this book. And if indeed this is the last book to be revealed, it is an appropriate warning.