THE BOOK
of
REVELATION

A Brief Commentary
and
Study Guide

By
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The Book of Revelation: A Brief Commentary and Study Guide
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Cover picture: Artist rendering of Jerusalem at the time of Christ. Source: Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary.

COMMON ABBREVIATIONS:

ASV  American Standard Version
AV   Authorized Version
A.D. Anno Domini (“year of our Lord”)  
B.C.  Before Christ  
cf   Compare
ff   Verses following
Gr.  Greek  
Heb.  Hebrew
Ibid. Footnote reference previously listed
ISBE  International Standard Bible Encyclopedia
KJV  King James Version
LXX  Septuagint
mss. Manuscript, manuscripts
NASB New American Standard Bible
NIV  New International Version
NKJV New King James Version
N.T.  New Testament
O.T.  Old Testament
RSV  Revised Standard Version
vs. Verse
vss. Verses
Vol. Volume

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INTRODUCTION:

Intimidated by its mysterious apocalyptic imagery many Christians tend to stay away from the book of Revelation. They are afraid of its terrifying and threatening language: hail and fire mixed with blood being thrown to the earth (Rev. 8:7); the sea becoming blood (Rev. 8:8); the moon becoming like blood (Rev. 6:12); and stars falling from the sky (Rev. 6:13). Symbolic language of this nature interpreted literally, and out of context, has led some to conclude that Revelation is describing earth’s last days and its climatic “doomsday.” In this way, the popular prophecy writers of the day assure us that earth’s “Armageddon” is near. Such bold (though false) predictions increase fears about Revelation’s mysterious message and language.

There is the false notion among some believers that no one can understand the book of Revelation—so why study it? This is an unfortunate and unnecessary response to the last book in our New Testament. Revelation, to various degrees, can be understood. True, one may not be able to interpret accurately every apocalyptic symbol within the book. However, with some sound and consistent hermeneutics, the overall theme and message of this incredibly fascinating and often misunderstood New Testament letter can be understood and properly applied.

This brief commentary and study guide is designed to help us in our understanding of the book of Revelation. Please note, that this is only a brief commentary and study guide. If you are looking for an exhaustive commentary on Revelation, you will not be satisfied with this work. In the presentation of this material, I have included quotes from other authors (who have written exhaustively on the subject) to help explain various texts. Where such quotes are used, they will be properly referenced.

You will not agree with all of the interpretations offered in this work, such is the nature of commentaries. Still, it is hoped that our efforts will enlighten you as to the message of Revelation—and that so enlightened that you will gain a greater appreciation and respect for this often-feared and neglected New Testament letter.

A sound understanding of Revelation is needed by more Christians today. Sadly, in the church of Christ, studies in eschatology involving Revelation or other “last days” related passages are often ignored or misapplied. Yet all around us, various religious groups are practically majoring in these types of studies. The End-Times is definitely a popular subject among the general public. Book sales for series such as Left Behind or any other end-time related material would offer strong proof to the vast interest in what the Bible has to say about “the last days.”

The truth is, man has seemingly always been fascinated with how and when the world will end. Today, this fixation with the end-times is as strong as it has ever been—perhaps even stronger. This curious interest in earth’s climatic “doomsday” has produced many sensationalistic speculations concerning the end-times—many of which come from misapplying the language found in the book Revelation. Throughout the course of our study, we will share some examples of this false apocalyptic sensationalism.

Our lack of study in Revelation (and eschatology in general) has found us short-skilled and ill-equipped to scripturally reply to the end-time error so widely taught today. Let us equip ourselves in being able to respond properly with the truth of the inspired scriptures.
THE AUTHOR:
The author of the book of Revelation identifies himself simply as John (1:1, 4; 21:2; 22:8). While helpful, this does not go a long way in identifying with absolute certainty which John wrote the book. The most widely-accepted position regarding the specific identity of this John is that he was the apostle of the same name—the son of Zebedee and brother of the apostle James. William Hendriksen notes,

…the very fact that the author of the Apocalypse merely calls himself John indicates that he was very well-known. Not only in one particular locality but throughout the churches of “Asia.” By simply calling himself John, without any additional designation, everybody immediately knew just who was meant…. Suppose the author of the book which you are now reading would simply call himself William, do you think for a minute that everybody would immediately guess who wrote it?”

Philip Schaff in his History of the Christian Church had this to say about the authorship of the apostle John:

The Apocalypse professes to be the work of John, who assumes a commanding position over the churches of Asia. History knows only one such character, the Apostle and Evangelist, and to him it is ascribed by the earliest and most trustworthy witnesses, going back to the lifetime of many friends and pupils of the author. It is one of the best authenticated books of the New Testament.¹

As both Schaff and Hendriksen illustrate, the identification of simply “John” was enough. Readers of this first century letter would have known exactly who had penned the inspired words of Revelation: the apostle John.

Christian writers of the second the third century such as Justin Martyr (A.D. 110-165), Irenaeus (A.D. 120-202), Hippolytus (A.D. 170-236), Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 153-217), Origen (A.D. 185-254), and Tertullian (A.D. 145-220), all accepted the apostle John as the divinely inspired human author. This alone does not give us irrefutable evidence that John was without question the inspired author of the book, but it does reveal the popular understanding during the period closest to Revelation’s original writing.

Internally, the book reveals further evidences as to the apostle John’s authorship. This is seen in some uses of various Greek words that are almost exclusive to John. For example, it is John who identifies Jesus as “the Word” using the Greek word logos, doing so in his gospel, his first epistle, and in Revelation (Jn. 1:1, 14; 1 Jn. 1:1; Rev. 19:13).

It is John who is the only N.T. writer to use the Greek word arnion, translated: “lamb” (Jn. 21:15; Rev. 5:6, 8, 12, 13; 6:1, 16; 7:9, 10, 14, 17; 12:11; 13:8, 11; 14:1, 4, 10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:7, 9; 21:9, 14, 22, 23, 27; 22:1, 3).

Another popular word for John (though not exclusive cf. Lk. 11:22; Rom. 3:4; 12:21), is the Greek word nikaō, meaning “to overcome” (Jn. 16:33; 1 Jn. 2:13, 14; 4:4; 5:4, 5; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5; 6:2; 11:7; 12:11; 13:7; 15:2; 17:14; 21:7). From the repeated use of this word “overcome,” one of Revelation’s major themes is revealed.

¹ William Hendriksen, More Than Conquerors, 17.
It is also interesting to note that both the gospel of John and the book of Revelation reference the promise of “living water” resulting in one never again being “thirsty” (cf. Jn. 4:10; 17:37-38; Rev. 22:17).

Based on these external and internal evidences, it seems clear that the apostle John is the most obvious author of the book. Time will not be given here for the very few who would offer weak arguments rejecting the apostle John’s authorship.

**THE LANGUAGE**

The language of the book of Revelation is primarily that of symbolism. One would be hard-pressed to interpret the book literally, though some have attempted to take such an approach. For example, Premillennial-futurist John Hagee writes, “The Bible I revere is a literal book from cover to cover…”\(^3\) Later Hagee asks in regards to his literal interpretation of the scriptures, “Why shouldn’t I literally walk on streets of gold?”\(^4\) If Hagee wants to be truly literal, he should know that Revelation only mentions a street (singular) of gold, not “streets” (Rev. 21:21).

Details such as this seldom bother dispensational teachers like Hagee. When scripture does not conform to his futuristic eschatology, he is quick to abandon his literal approach and go symbolic. For example, in describing what he believes to be a future Russian led attack on Israel (which he bases on Ezekiel 38 and 39), Hagee writes:

> Now it is unclear from Ezekiel 38:11 if Israel has retained its arsenal, but even if it has, the Russians can threaten to lob missiles loaded with nuclear, chemical, or biological warheads upon Israel…\(^5\)

Based on his literal approach to the scriptures, I wonder where Hagee gets such advanced weaponry? The text in Ezekiel describes ancient weapons of war: swords, bows, arrows, war clubs and spears (Eze. 39:9ff). There are no nuclear, chemical or biological warheads mentioned… literally speaking.

The book of Revelation describes Jesus coming on a white horse with a sword in His mouth (Rev. 19:15ff). Is this a literal horse and sword? Following Hagee and other dispensationalist’s pleas for a literal Bible from cover to cover, what else could they represent? Nevertheless, does it not seem more logical to conclude that the sword is a symbolic reference to the word of God? Such an interpretation would be consistent with other scriptures where the word is symbolically portrayed as a sword (Isa. 49:2; Heb. 4:12; Rev. 1:16; 2:12). Could the horse not be symbolic of a conquering Christ? Must this passage be interpreted literally to have any meaning?

The Bible is a book that contains a variety of different types of written language. There is poetry, figurative language, symbolical language, and yes, text that should (and must) be interpreted literally. Each verse must be closely examined in its context to determine what type of language is being used.

Jesus said, “If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off” (Matt. 5:30). A literal approach to this verse would demand a painful penalty for committing sins with the right hand. All those who have literally applied this scripture raise your right hand. Literally

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\(^4\) Ibid. 113.

\(^5\) Ibid. 149-150.
speaking, could one do whatever they want with their left hand? Of course not. The language here is obviously figurative and is not meant to be interpreted literally. Applying figurative or symbolic language literally will create some serious doctrinal consequences.

Revelation’s symbolic language comes straight from the Old Testament language of judgment. Hundreds of symbolic O.T. references are found within the Apocalypse. Specifically, it draws heavily from the prophetic language of Isaiah, Daniel, and especially Ezekiel. One commentator noted,

“The Revelation is a Christian rewriting of Ezekiel. Its fundamental structure is the same. Its interpretation depends upon Ezekiel. The first half of both books lead up to the destruction of the earthly Jerusalem; in the second they describe a new and holy Jerusalem. There is one significant difference. Ezekiel’s lament over Tyre is transformed into a lament over Jerusalem, the reason being that St. John wishes to transfer to Jerusalem the note of irrevocable doom found in the lament over Tyre. Here lies the real difference in the message of the two books. Jerusalem, like Tyre, is to go forever.”

Notice the following list of similarities between Ezekiel and Revelation. This list was put together by David Chilton and is based on the work of Philip Carrington.

1. The Throne-Vision (Rev. 4/Eze. 1)
2. The Book (Rev. 5/Eze. 2-3)
3. The Four Plagues (Rev. 6:1-8/Eze. 5)
4. The Slain Under the Altar (Rev. 6:9-11/Eze. 6)
5. The Wrath of God (Rev. 6:12-17/Eze. 7)
6. The Seal on the Saint’s Foreheads (Rev. 7/Eze. 9)
7. The Coals from the Altar (Rev. 8/Eze. 10)
8. No More Delay (Rev. 10:1-7/Eze. 12)
9. The Eating of the Book (Rev. 10:8-11/Eze. 2)
11. Jerusalem and Sodom (Rev. 11:8/Eze. 16)
12. The Cup of Wrath (Rev. 14/Eze. 23)
13. The Vine of the Land (Rev. 14:18-20/Eze. 15)
14. The Great Harlot (Rev. 17-18/Eze. 16, 23)
15. The Lament over the City (Rev. 18/Eze. 27)
16. The Scavenger’s Feast (Rev. 19/Eze. 39)
17. The First Resurrection (Rev. 20:4-6/Eze. 37)
18. The Battle with Gog and Magog (Rev. 20:7-9/Eze. 38-39)
19. The New Jerusalem (Rev. 21/Eze. 40-48)
20. The River of Life (Rev. 22/Eze. 47)

Despite all the O.T. symbolism contained within the book Revelation, interestingly, there is not one direct quotation from the O.T scriptures! Still, it is as Ferrell Jenkins notes, “…the most thoroughly Jewish in its language and imagery of any New Testament

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7 Chilton, 21.
This means that a successful interpretation of the book will require a great familiarity with the O.T.

THE MESSAGE OF REVELATION

The message of the book of Revelation centers on its very name. “Revelation” is the Greek word Apokalupsis meaning, an unveiling or uncovering. Revelation is an unveiling of certain events that are symbolically described. It is the belief of this author that those events primarily surround the first century destruction of Jerusalem by Rome. In this way, one can say that the message of Revelation was contemporary to its originally targeted first century audience.

Many apply the message of Revelation and the events unveiled to our contemporary time period. This is inconsistent with the messages of warning and comfort to the seven churches of Asia addressed in the book. David Chilton rightly comments:

The purpose of Revelation was to reveal Christ as Lord to a suffering church. Because they were being persecuted, the early Christians could be tempted to fear that the world was getting out of hand—that Jesus, who had claimed “all authority… in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18), was not really in control at all.…

John’s primary concern in writing the book of Revelation was just this very thing: to strengthen the Christian community in the faith of Jesus Christ’s Lordship, to make them aware that the persecutions they suffered were integrally involved in the great war of history.

Revelation’s message reveals that God is in control. The ungodly will be punished for their rejection of God and their violent actions upon His children. It urges the Christians to overcome, promising blessings for those who faithfully endure. It pictures a victorious Christ and a victorious church.

Understanding “The Last Days” of the New Testament

Another key in unlocking the message of Revelation is an understanding of the term “the last days” as it is used in the New Testament. It will surprise many people to learn that when the Bible uses the term “the last days,” it is not always (if ever) referring to the end of the world. Each occurrence of the phrase must be carefully examined in its context, only then can a logical and sound determination be made as to which last days are being described.

The last days could refer to the latter years of a person’s life, as in the case of Job (cf. Job 42:12). Moses warned Israel about the latter days. This warning had nothing to do with the end of world, it referenced a later period of time when they would depart from God and provoke His anger (Deut. 31:29). This was fulfilled shortly after the death of Joshua when they took possession of the land of Canaan and quickly fell into the abomination of idolatry (Judges 2:13-14, 20). Jeremiah warned the people of Judah of the “tempest and fierce anger of the Lord,” noting, they would understand it in “the latter days” (Jer. 30:24). This was fulfilled when Babylon invaded the land, took the people captive, and later destroyed Jerusalem (cf. Jer. 52; Dan. 1:1). In each of these examples “the last days” only represented a future period of time—not the end of the world.

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8 Ferrell Jenkins, The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation, 22.
Pertaining directly to our study is the New Testament usage of the phrase “the last days” or “latter days.” There are three common interpretations of these New Testament “last days.” These three interpretations could be defined as futuristic, contemporary, and historical.

The futuristic interpretation would apply the last days described in the New Testament to the period leading up to and including, the rapture of the church and the (supposed) seven years of tribulation. Those who hold this position are constantly looking for visible signs of the Lord’s return. They would interpret ancient Bible prophecies with current world events. Based on what are perceived to be modern fulfillments of ancient signs, futurists would say that we are now living in the last days.

The contemporary interpretation would apply the last days to the entire Christian era. This would represent a period beginning with the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter two and extend forward in time to the future day of judgment. These “days” are viewed as being the last in that this is the final period of God’s dealings with mortal man. According to this view, we are now living in the last days and have been for the last two thousand years.

The historical interpretation views the last days of the New Testament as the period of time involved in bringing to a complete close the Old Covenant with Israel. Yes, the Old Covenant was nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14; Heb. 9:16-26). However, there was a period existing afterwards where it continued to function. Though Jesus was the final and ultimate sacrifice for sin, for some years after there were animals still being offered on the temple’s altar.

The Hebrew writer spoke of the Old Covenant (after the death of Jesus) as “growing old and ready to disappear” (Heb. 8:13). The Old Law would disappear completely with the destruction of the Jewish temple. In this way, the historical “last days” would comprise the period beginning with the baptism (or birth) of Jesus and culminate with the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome in A.D. 70.

So which of the above interpretations is correct? In being consistent with the whole of scripture, it is the historical view which best defines the last days of the New Testament. The last days are not a future period of time leading up to the rapture of the church and the end of the world. The last days are not describing the full contemporary Christian era. It hardly seems consistent to associate the term “days” with two millennia of years!

A closer look at the New Testament usage of the term will reveal that the last days represented a now historical period of time. It was a fitting description of the final days of the Old Covenant, a period lasting a little over forty years. The first century earthly ministry of Jesus ushered in these last days. In this way, the “last days” of the New Testament were actually the “first days” of the New Testament church. See chart on page 24.

The historical interpretation is validated through a number of New Testament scriptures. The Hebrew writer, addressing the Christians of his day and time penned these words:

**In these last days** has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

Hebrews 1:2
This verse clearly indicates that the last days were *those* (first century) days. The Christians being addressed *at that time* were living in the last days. The apostle Peter referred to the last days in the same way:

> For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you.  
> 1 Peter 1:20

When Peter says, Jesus has appeared in *these* last times, it is a clear reference to the times in which his first century readers were living. Jesus has not personally appeared in *these* current days as He appeared in *those* days. On the day of Pentecost recorded in Acts chapter two, Peter quoting from the prophet Joel, says:

> But this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: And it shall be in the last days, ‘God says, ‘That I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, And your young men shall see visions, And your old men shall dream dreams.’  
> Acts 2:16-17

The prophet Joel described some miraculous activities that would characterize the last days (Joel 2:28-31). Peter uses the prophetic words of Joel to explain the miraculous events that were occurring *at that time*. The fact that those events were ascribed as being a fulfillment of the words of Joel indicated that the last days had arrived. If the inspired prophet was referencing the entire Christian era from Pentecost until the present, would we not expect these same miraculous activities to still be genuinely occurring—“in the last days”?

This same first century application of the last days could be applied to Paul’s words of warning to Timothy.

> But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.  
> 1 Timothy 4:1

Was Paul warning Timothy about some distant and future period known as the later times? If so, why did he tell him to warn the brethren living *at that time* about these things? (1 Tim. 4:6) Paul was not writing about the distant future. The *later times* of this verse were another reference to the last days of the Old Covenant. The brethren Timothy would address would be directly impacted by the difficult *later times* events leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem (cf. 2 Tim. 3:1ff).

With his powerful and inspired pen, James gave his readers some strong words of warning and rebuke concerning the last days. Once again, notice the first century time indication in this text.

> Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. *It is in the last days* that you have stored up your treasure!  
> James 5:1-3
James indicates that his readers were living in the last days. The last days had come upon them. If the last days were not exclusively related to the first century, James would be warning his readers about something having no direct meaning to them.

In each of the above examples, “the last days” spoke of a specific (now historical) period directly applicable to the first century. The expression itself suggests the final or ending days of an era.

In his second New Testament epistle, Peter wrote, “In the last days mockers will come … saying where is the promise of His coming?” (2 Pet. 3:3-4) Who were these mockers? Were these the same (now historical) last days we have been discussing?

Many believe Peter was describing the last days of the world. Taken literally, this would certainly appear to be the case. Peter talks of “the present heavens and earth being reserved for fire, kept for the Day of Judgment and destruction of ungodly men” (2 Pet. 3:7). Later, he describes the “elements being destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works being burned up” (2 Pet. 3:10).

However, is the end of the world the best interpretation of the passage? Is this really what Peter intended to communicate to his first century readers? Although this is the most commonly accepted understanding of Peter’s inspired words, it is not the only possible interpretation. What one must keep in mind in properly interpreting this text is that Peter is drawing from the Old Testament language of judgment. This language often sounded as if the end of the world was being described (cf. Isa. 34:4; Eze. 7:2; Zep. 1:2-4; Mal. 4).

In the text referenced in Malachi chapter four, we find a prophecy of a coming day of burning which would arrive after Elijah had come. Elijah in that text is a reference to John the Baptist (cf. Matt. 11:14; Mk. 9:13). This was a first century day of burning fulfilled in the burning destruction of Jerusalem.

Peter uses this same type of language when he speaks of the present heavens and earth being reserved for destruction by fire (2 Pet. 3:7). Is he speaking of the literal heavens and earth? Not necessarily. In the Old Testament, Israel as a Covenant people were symbolically referenced as “a heaven and earth” (cf. Deut. 32:1; Isa. 1:2; 51:6, 15-16; Jer. 4:23-24; 5:1). In this way, Peter could well be describing the burning end coming upon Old Covenant Israel. This “burning end” would be felt in the devastating events of A.D. 70.

In describing the destruction of the present heavens and earth (Old Covenant Israel), Peter spoke of the elements being destroyed with intense heat (2 Pet. 3:10, 12). Scholars typically define these elements as the atoms that make up our world. However, the Greek word (stoicheion) so rendered is never used this way in the New Testament. Paul uses the word four times, always with respect to the Old Law (Gal. 4:3, 9; Col. 2:8, 20). The Hebrew writer uses it once with respect to the elementary principles of the law of Christ; although, some believe he too has reference to the Old Law. It seems highly unlikely that Peter’s first century audience would have understood the application of atoms. Understanding it as a reference to the elements of the Old Law is much more consistent with its use in the New Testament.

With the burning destruction of the heavens and earth (Old Covenant Israel), and the burning of the elements (the Old Law), Peter described the promise of a new heavens and earth (2 Pet. 3:13). What promise of God did Peter have in mind? The only Old
Testament promise that spoke of such! This would be the promise spoken by God through the prophet Isaiah.

“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.”

Isaiah 65:17

This promise of a new heavens and earth was a reference to the kingdom that the Messiah would establish. In the book of Revelation, John describes the same new heavens and earth.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. Revelation 21:1-2

Many believe John is describing a vision of heaven; however, notice that the new heaven and new earth is coming down out of heaven. The scene is not in heaven it is from heaven. It is the belief of this author that John is describing life in the kingdom. Without question, there may be some types of heaven found in this text, but a more consistent interpretation would seem to favor the idea of the kingdom.

It is also interesting that John describes a New Jerusalem. What happened to the old Jerusalem? It was destroyed! This fits the message of the book of Revelation, which speaks of the holy city, Jerusalem, being destroyed (cf. Rev. 11:1-2, 8).

All of these facts considered, it would appear that Peter had the same last days we have been discussing in mind: The last days of the Old Covenant system. The mockers he described would be first century Jewish mockers. In fact, notice how the mockers make mention of “the fathers” (2 Pet. 3:4). This language is Jewish in nature (Ex. 4:5; 13:11; 2 Chron. 20:6; 24:18; Ps. 22:4; Lk. 1:55; 11:47). The Jewish mockers were very familiar with the words of Jesus concerning the destruction of their temple. Jesus warned, “Behold your house is being left to you desolate!” (Matt. 23:38). He told them this coming judgment would occur in their lifetime (Matt. 23:36). Some may have mocked the Lord’s coming in judgment against Jerusalem, but it soon became clear that their last days had indeed arrived.

**The End of the Age**

The historical application of the last days is again confirmed when we notice the number of New Testament passages describing a coming end of the age. The end of which age? Once again, the end of the Old Covenant age with Israel as God’s covenant people. This end of the age is seen in passages such as this, where Jesus says:

Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.

Matthew 12:32
Jesus was not referring to a future world to come, but a future era or period of time, that being: the New Covenant “age.” In the same way, Paul wrote of Israel of old and the example they provided, stating:

Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

1 Corinthians 10:11

Upon whom had the end of the ages come? Upon the church of the first century. It was happening in their lifetime. One age was ending (the Jewish age) and a new one had begun with Christ reigning as king. The Hebrew writer expresses the same idea with these inspired words:

Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Hebrews 9:26

When was Christ manifested in His putting away sin by His sacrifice? His death occurred at the consummation (or end) of the ages. This was the period described in the New Testament as being “the last days.” Again from the pen of the Hebrew writer:

When He said, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

Hebrews 8:13

What was becoming obsolete, growing old, and was ready to disappear? The Old Covenant. This was the end of the age, a period fittingly described as “the last days.”

All of this in regards to “the last days” and “the end of the age” pertains to the message of Revelation. The book of Revelation describes in the prophetic and symbolic language of judgment, the burning end of the Old Covenant as felt in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Revelation deals with the last days and the end of the age.

The Olivet Discourse

Also crucial to understanding the message of the Book of Revelation is a familiarity with the Olivet Discourse of our Savior (Matt. 24; Mk. 13; Lk. 21). It is the view of this author that the signs given in the Olivet discourse dealt exclusively with events leading up to the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem, and that they correspond to the events described in the Book of Revelation. These signs were pointing to the (then) coming end of the Old Covenant age.

The first century application of the signs given in the Olivet discourse is seen when one accurately identifies those whom Jesus says will see and experience these events. This is not hard to determine when the context is kept under proper consideration. This all-important context is found in the discussion between Jesus and the Pharisees consisting of a series of “woes.” In the final woe of this rebuke, Jesus charged
them as representatives of the Jewish nation with the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on the earth (Matt. 23:35; cf. Rev. 17:6; 18:24). He tells them their house (the temple) was going to be left desolate (Matt. 23:38; cf. Rev. 11:1-2). When would this desolation of their house occur? Jesus tells them: “Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation” (Matthew 23:36; Rev. 1:7).

Contextually, “this generation” is clearly a reference to the Jewish nation of that day and time. Their house was going to be left desolate. It was upon them the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on the earth would fall. This pronouncement of coming judgment was fulfilled upon that generation when Rome destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

When we come to the Olivet discourse, we find Jesus using the same type of language, again referencing “this generation.” Jesus says, “Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place” (Matthew 24:34). This is what some have rightly called the key “time text” of the Olivet discourse. The time indicator relates to “this generation.” Which generation? Based upon the surrounding context, it would appear that Jesus is speaking of the same first century generation He had earlier identified (Matt. 23:36). Thus, all the signs preceding these words would have to be first century signs. If these signs were not fulfilled prior to that generation passing away then Jesus was wrong. The implications of that possibility should be obvious to all.

In this way, Matthew 24:34 has become a favorite for critics and skeptics of the Bible. They would argue that Jesus expected His Second Coming to occur in the first century (before that generation passed away) and since it did not occur at that time, He was a false prophet. The critic understands the first century time indicator of “this generation,” unfortunately, many Bible teachers and students of scripture do not.

The words “this generation” are the subject of great debate. Those who would view the signs of the Olivet discourse as being still future would insist “this generation” does not mean that specific first century generation. They view it as the future generation that would see all the signs. In this way, Hal Lindsey wrote, “We are the generation He was talking about!” The fallacy of such a conclusion can easily be seen by simply surveying the usage of “this generation” in Matthew’s gospel (cf. Matt. 11:16; 12:41, 42; 23:36; 24:34).

In every occurrence of “this generation” in the gospels it always and without exception refers to the first century generation of Jews (cf. Mk. 8:12; 13:30; Lk. 7:31; 11:29-32; 17:25; 21:32). The futurist would agree with this obvious hermeneutical conclusion, with one exception. While agreeing that “this generation” has the same application in all the passages noted, they would still insist it has a different meaning in the Olivet discourse. As noted earlier, it is there they interpret “this generation” as referencing some future generation, one that will see all the signs. The same futuristic approach is then taken with the Book of Revelation.

That the generation Jesus had in mind was of the first century is easily seen by noticing Luke’s parallel account. Luke adds the words of exhortation from Jesus to His disciples, to pray, “…that you may have the strength to escape all these things that are about to take place…” (Lk. 21:36). The words “about to take place” set these events within the lifetime of those first century disciples. Before “this (first century) generation” would pass away the signs would all be fulfilled.

9 Hal Lindsay, The 1980’s Countdown to Armageddon, 162.
The Book of Revelation prophetically speaks of the fulfillment of this sentence of doom pronounced by our Savior upon the Jews of the first century, as well as the many Olivet discourse signs: Wars and rumors of war (Rev. 6:4), famines (Rev. 6:5-6), false prophets (Rev. 16:13), persecution (Rev. 6:11), great tribulation (Rev. 7:14), and so on.

**THE DATE:**

A key issue to solve in properly interpreting the book of Revelation is the determination of its date of writing. The date affects completely one’s interpretation of the symbolism and the message contained within the book.

There are two major views regarding the dating of Revelation’s writing—both lead to contrasting interpretations as to the message of the book. 1). The late date approach views the book as being written around A.D. 95-96. 2). The early date view suggests the book was written around A.D. 64-66. This “brief commentary” favors an early date approach.

The debate surrounding Revelation’s date of writing is so important it would be good to consider evidences for both views (early and late date). We will first consider some of the evidence for the late date and then take a look at that which supports an early date writing.

**Arguments Favoring a Late Date**

One of the arguments made in favor of a late date writing are the conditions found in the seven churches of Asia, as mentioned in the chapters two and three of Revelation. Only two of the seven churches received no negative comments by Jesus. The others were all rebuked for such things as leaving their first love (Rev. 2:4); appearing spiritually alive but being spiritually dead (3:1); being luke warm (Rev. 3:16); needing to repent (Rev. 2:5, 16; 3:3, 19); and tolerating false teaching (Rev. 2:14-15, 20).

It is argued by late date advocates that an early date writing would not provide sufficient time for these churches to fall into such spiritually poor conditions. Yet, does it really take that long for a church to experience problems? When one examines Paul’s letters to Timothy (who was at the time in Ephesus), it seems evident that they were having problems as early as A.D. 63-64. Consider also the problems found in the church at Corinth as described in the apostle’s first letter to those brethren. Paul went to Corinth on his second missionary journey, somewhere around A.D. 48. The First Corinthian letter may have been around A.D. 54-56, just a short time later. Yet look at problems they were already experiencing.

These examples considered, it is certainly possible for the churches mentioned in the book of Revelation to experience the problems recorded after only a relatively short period of existence. There is no need to suppose that a great number of years had transpired.

In regards to the late date position, the strongest evidence is external in nature. “External” meaning it is evidence that is found outside the scope of the inspired scriptures. This external evidence rests heavily (if not completely) upon the written words of a man named Irenaeus, who lived from A.D. 130-202. Irenaeus was known as the Bishop of Lyons, and claimed to know Polycarp, who in turn (according to early church history) may have known the apostle John.

The words of Irenaeus that provide such seemingly compelling evidence for a late date writing of Revelation, come from a section of his writings where he was discussing
the identity of the 666, whom he calls “the antichrist.” His words, which were originally written in Greek, exist today only in Latin. However, the particular statement of interest to our discussion has been preserved in Greek and is taken from the writings of Eusebius, in his work entitled, *Ecclesiastical History*. The words of Irenaeus from this work are usually translated as follows:

> We will not, however, incur the risk of pronouncing positively as to the name of the Antichrist; for if it were necessary that his name should be distinctly revealed in this present time, 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.\(^{10}\)

Advocates of a late date writing take this statement of Irenaeus to mean that the Revelation was seen by John toward the end of the reign of Domitian. Domitian reigned in Rome from A.D. 81-96. On the surface, this is indeed strong *external* evidence to establish their position, and as such, late date advocates rely very heavily on Irenaeus.

However, many scholars looking more closely at the words of Irenaeus have expressed some serious concerns. Concerns that need to be addressed if this statement is to be considered indisputable grounds for establishing a late date writing. Chief among these is the Greek word that is translated “that was seen.” The question is, what should be the subject of this verb, the apocalypse or John? That is, was it the Revelation that was seen and recorded by John near to the end of Domitian’s reign, or was it John himself who was seen at this late date? Should the Greek word be rendered “that was seen” or “he was seen”?

Considering the thought of Irenaeus in this particular paragraph, it seems more likely that it should be “he was seen.” Irenaeus is writing about the name of the antichrist, and says if it were important for the people of his generation to know exactly who it was, the name would have been spoken by *him* who saw the apocalypse. Thus for many scholars, “him who saw” really becomes the subject, and not the apocalypse itself.

Taking the statement in this way would mean that John lived toward the end of Domitian’s reign, but it would say nothing about when he saw or wrote the book of Revelation. Taking the statement of Irenaeus as we have just presented it, one person wrote:

> The logic of the sentences seems to me to require this interpretation. The statement that the vision was seen at the close of Domitian’s reign supplies no reason why the mysterious numbers should have been expounded “by him who saw the apocalypse,” had he judged such an exposition needful. If, on the other hand, we refer [Gr. “was seen”] to St. John, the meaning is plain and simple. We may expand the sentences thus: “Had it been needful that the explanation of the name should be proclaimed to the men of our own day, that explanation would have been given by the author of the Book. For the author was seen on earth, he lived and held converse with his disciples, not so very long ago, but almost in our own generation. Thus on the one hand, he lived years after he wrote the book, and there was abundant opportunity for him to expound the riddle,

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\(^{10}\) Translation taken from Kenneth Gentry’s *Before Jerusalem Fell*, 46-47. For a thorough discussion of issues relating to Irenaeus this work is highly recommended. Gentry’s work is over four-hundred pages of detailed arguments for an early date writing of Revelation.
had he wished to do so; and, on the other hand, since he lived on almost into our generation, the explanation, had he given it, must have been preserved to us.”

The conclusion of this writer that the subject of the verb “was seen” should be John is shared by other prominent scholars. Viewing the statement in this way covers the whole context of what is being said; although, not all scholars (late date advocates) are so convinced.

Yet, another interesting argument against Irenaeus’ statement being applied to a late date writing comes from some words of Eusebius where he again quotes Irenaeus. Listen closely to what Irenaeus said, again concerning the number of the beast, the 666, as recorded in Revelation.

“As these things are so, and this number is found in all the approved and ancient copies, and those who saw John face to face confirm it…”

What is interesting to note here is that in referring to the book of Revelation, Irenaeus speaks of “all the approved and ancient copies.” This would strongly suggest an early date writing, especially if the approved copies themselves were considered at this early point in history, “ancient.”

Irenaeus wrote this about A.D. 185. If, as late date advocates insist, the original copy of Revelation was written around A.D. 95-96, time would have been required to have it distributed to the churches. In addition, copies of the original would have been made some sufficient time after A.D. 96. These copies would have been far less than a hundred years old by the time of the writing of Irenaeus. So, why would he refer to them as being ancient copies? His description of ancient copies suggests an early date writing for the book of Revelation.

More could be discussed in regards to Irenaeus, for example, some of the historical errors contained in his writings. At one point, he writes of a fifteen-year earthly ministry for Jesus, and that Christ lived to be over forty years old! No serious Bible scholar believes such assertions. Statements like this call into question the reliability of Irenaeus. His words concerning John and the apocalypse can be interpreted either way, establishing a late or early date writing.

As noted, Irenaeus is possibly the strongest external evidence for a late writing of Revelation. However, considering what we have noted, how strong is that evidence?

Despite the objections presented here to a few late date arguments, a number of recognized scholars hold to such an interpretation. Here is short a list of late date advocates and the titles of their works on Revelation: Albert Barnes (Notes on the New Testament: Revelation); Homer Hailey (Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary); William Hendriksen (More Than Conquerors); R.C.H. Lenski (The Interpretation of St. John’s Revelation).

**Arguments Favoring an Early Date**

When it comes to accurately establishing Revelation’s date of writing, the strongest evidence to consider should be internal, i.e., let the scriptures interpret the scriptures. The scriptures are a much more reliable witness than Irenaeus or any other historical writer.

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11 S.H. Chase, as quoted by Kenneth Gentry in Before Jerusalem Fell, pp. 50-51.
Moreover, when it comes to internal evidence, the truth of an early date writing is made abundantly clear. What follows are four powerful internal evidences suggesting an early day writing.

1). The Events Prophesied were “Near.”
Repeatedly, John’s readers were warned that the events spoken of in Revelation were to happen soon (Rev. 1:1, 3; 11:14; 22:6-7, 10, 12, 22). Written to a first century audience, words like shortly, quickly, soon, and near do not leave much room for events in the far and distant future.

One can hardly imagine John’s audience being warned of events two thousand years in the future; events that they would never see! These multiple time references in Revelation strongly suggest that this New Testament letter records events that the readers of this letter would see in their lifetime.

Combining these time references with the message of Revelation regarding the destruction of Jerusalem we see the need for an early date writing, sometime before A.D. 70. In connection with this, we have Jesus’ warning to the people of His generation that the destruction of Jerusalem would occur in their lifetime (cf. Matt. 23:36; 24:34).

2). The Temple was Still Standing
In Revelation chapter eleven, John is told to measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship in it (Rev. 11:1-2). It is the position of this commentary that the temple described was that which was standing in first century Jerusalem. If this be true, it would strongly (if not undeniably) suggest a pre-A.D. 70 writing. If John is writing in A.D. 96, the temple would have been long gone.

Late date proponents suggest that the temple referenced in this passage is either a future rebuilt temple in modern Jerusalem, or that it is possibly representative of something else. Some, such as Homer Hailey, have concluded it is a picture of the church. Look at the text in question.

Then there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, “Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it. “Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months.
Revelation 11:1-2

To identify with any degree of certainty which temple is in view, one must identify “the holy city” wherein the temple of this text is said to exist. In the Bible there is only one city known as the holy city and that is Jerusalem (Neh. 11:1; Isa. 52:1; Dan. 9:24; Matt. 4:5; 27:53). Consistency with the inspired scriptures would demand that the holy city of Revelation 11:2 be interpreted as Jerusalem.

The identification of Jerusalem for the temple’s location does not establish either a late or early date for the writing of Revelation, but it does confirm for us a Jewish temple. The fact that this temple was that of the first century is seen when we compare the words of this passage with some words of Jesus found in Luke’s account of the Olivet discourse. Here is the passage from Luke:
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

Notice that in both passages we have Jerusalem being trampled under foot by the Gentiles or the nations. When the time passages of the Olivet discourse (Matt. 23:36; 24:34) discussed earlier are considered alongside those of Revelation (cf. Rev. 1:1, 3; 22:6, 7, 10, 12, 20), it becomes clear that both Jesus (in Luke), and John (in Revelation) are describing the same first century event. Both are describing the destruction of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem is again identified a little later in chapter eleven as the place where our Lord was crucified (Rev. 11:8). Such descriptions make it hard to imagine any city other than Jerusalem!

3). The Identity of the Sixth King

Another significant piece of evidence suggesting an early date writing for the book of Revelation. It has to do with the identification of five fallen kings and the sixth who was alive at the time of the book’s writing. Here is how John described it in Revelation.

“Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits, and they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while. "The beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction.

Revelation 17:9-11

In these verses, we have the seven heads of the beast represented by seven mountains. Rome is identified by its famous seven hills. The woman sitting upon the mountains is Israel. She is a province of the Roman Empire. The seven heads of the beast also have another symbolic value. We are told that they are seven kings. In regards to Rome, seven emperors or Caesars. Revelation calls them, “kings.” This is consistent with the familiar scripture in John’s gospel where the Jews declared, “We have no king but Caesar” (Jn. 19:15).

John is told, five of these kings have fallen and one is. This would mean five kings were dead and one was (at the time of Revelation’s writing) still living. Identifying the king that was still living gives us the time frame for the writing of the book. This would be very easy to do if there were an agreed upon list of Caesars from which we could count. The problem is scholars greatly debate who was first, second, third, and so on. Late date advocates protest including Julius Caesar being on the list. However, considering what Julius Caesar meant to Rome, how can he rightly be excluded? Some comments from Gentry’s Before Jerusalem Fell will be helpful here. Dealing with various objections to Julius being counted as the first, Gentry writes:

It is true that the Roman empire was officially established as an empire under Augustus, and that there are some scattered lists of the emperors that seem to begin the enumeration with Augustus.

As a matter of historical fact, we must note that Julius did claim the title Imperator. Suetonius clearly records his claim to the “praenomem Imperatorius.” This puts him in
line with Augustus and the following emperors who naturally claimed the same. Indeed, the following emperors even called themselves by his name, “Caesar.”

But more compelling than this are the several contemporary and nearly contemporary lists that include Julius in the line of Caesars, and as the first of the line. In his *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, Roman historian Suetonius (c. A.D. 70-160) begins his numbering of the Caesars with Julius. His first book in his *Lives of the Twelve Caesars* is entitled *The Divine Julius*. Likewise another Roman Historian, Dio Cassius (c. A.D. 150-235), numbers Julius as the first of the emperors.

For our purposes perhaps the most decisive representative of those who reckon the emperors from Julius is the Jewish writer Flavius Josephus. Not only do his dates (A.D. 37-101) overlap the very period of John and the New Testament, but he is also a Jew from Palestine, and his works were written for both the Romans and the Jews. Surely his reckoning would reflect contemporary opinion among the Jews and Romans. In his *Antiquities* he calls Augustus the “second” and Tiberius the “third” emperor. Later Gaius is called the “fourth.” In a later chapter he calls Julius the “first who transferred the power of the people to himself.”

If Julius is to be numbered first, as both Jewish and Roman historians would testify, than we have a list that looks like this:

1. Julius Caesar (49 – 44 B.C.)
2. Augustus (31 B.C. – 14 A.D.)
3. Tiberius (14 – 37 A.D.)
4. Caligula (37 – 41 A.D.)
5. Claudius (41 – 54 A.D.)
6. Nero (54- 68 A.D.)

   Five have fallen… (Dead)

   One is… (Living)

If this numbering of emperors is correct we have solid reason for concluding that, the emperor at the time Revelation was written was Nero. This would establish that Revelation was written sometime after A.D. 54, but prior to A.D. 68.

4). John would Prophesy Again

In Revelation 10:11 John is told, “You must prophesy again concerning many people and nations and tongues and kings.” If the book were written in A.D. 96 how would John have accomplished this, at what would have been a very advanced stage of years? Wallace notes, “…it is stated by Jerome that in the year A.D. 96 the apostle was so aged and weak and infirm that ‘he was with great difficulty carried to the church, and could speak only a few words to the people.’”

In this brief commentary, only these four pieces of internal evidence for an early date will be offered. While being only four in number they are strong in substance. As our study progresses these will be reinforced. In addition, further evidence will be revealed as to the message of the book relating to the destruction of Jerusalem.

In addition to this internal evidence, there also exists some compelling external proofs that should be considered. For further study on these, it is recommended the student

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consult Kenneth Gentry’s *Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation*. Gentry offers both internal and external evidences for an early date writing.


A SUMMARY

The position presented in this work is that Revelation was a message of hope and encouragement for persecuted Christians of the first century. They would learn that God was in control and that they had the ultimate victory. Therefore, they should remain faithful until the end. They needed to be overcomers.

Revelation describes in the symbolic Old Testament language of judgment the first century destruction of Jerusalem by Rome. It was written sometime prior to A.D. 68 during the reign of Nero.

With this introductory study, the main body of this commentary will be much more easily understood. Be faithful until the end! Blessed is he who overcomes!

**INTRODUCTION: QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION POINTS:**

- The value of the Book of Revelation for today.
  *What do we miss by not studying the book?*
  *Why is it so rarely studied compared to other books in the Bible?*
  *What can we learn from this first century message to help us today?*

- The importance of properly establishing Revelation’s date of writing.
  *How does it impact one’s interpretation and application of the book?*

- Evidences for the early and late date writing.
  *Which do you find most convincing? Explain why.*

- Man’s fascination with “The End Times.”

- The importance of having *some* understanding of the Book of Revelation.

**NOTES:**
1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John,
2 who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.
3 Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.
4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,
5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood—
6 and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

1 The Revelation “Revelation” is the Greek word Ἀποκάλυψις meaning, an unveiling or uncovering. of Jesus Christ, This uncovering was from Jesus to John, revealing that which gave Him The Revelation was given to Jesus by God the Father to show to His bond-servants (doulos: slaves) the things which must soon take place; This is one of the important “time texts” in Revelation. Each of these “time texts” indicates the things written would happen quickly (cf. Rev. 1:3; 2:16; 3:11; 11:14; 22:6, 7, 10, 12, 20). The nearness of these events relates to the Olivet discourse and Jesus’ pronouncement of a coming judgment upon “this generation” or those of the first century (cf. Matt. 23:36; 24:34). and He sent and communicated it by His angel This is the one book in the Bible communicated by an angel and not by the Holy Spirit. That is not to say that the Spirit did not have a part in guiding John into all truth. It is to say that the method of “revelation” was different (cf. 2 Pet. 1:20-21). to His bond-servant John, Though there is some debate among scholars as to who this John was, the apostle John seems to be the most-likely candidate and is commonly thought to be the human author. See introductory comments on authorship (pp 3-4).
2 who testified John bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. John is describing all that was revealed to him concerning the things that were to soon take place.
3 Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; This is one of the seven “beatitudes” of Revelation (cf. Rev. 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). for the time is near. Again reference is made to events that were to happen soon (cf. Js. 5:8; 1 Pet. 4:7; 1 Jn. 2:18). The immediacy of these time references makes it hard to believe that Revelation could be talking about events thousands of years removed from John’s original readers.
4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: There were more than seven churches in Asia (minor). See map on page 32. Seven is used here, as throughout the letter, in a symbolic sense representing spiritual perfection. Grace to you and peace, This was a common New Testament type of greeting in opening a letter (cf. Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2 etc.). from Him who is and who was and who is to come, A reference here to the Father. and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, Again, seven is used symbolically. Here the Holy Spirit is in view (cf. Rev. 4:5). In the next verse, reference is made to the Son.
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.
8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”
9 I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

5 and from Jesus Christ, The salutation of grace and peace has come from the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This gives us a wonderful picture of the Trinity. the faithful witness, Jesus Christ is the faithful witness. He is the source behind this unveiling (1:1). the firstborn of the dead, Jesus was the first to be raised from the dead to never die again (cf. Col. 1:18; 1 Cor. 15:20ff). and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Paul described Jesus as the King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tim. 6:15). The same title is found later in the book of Revelation (19:16). Jesus told His apostles, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). He has been raised above all rule and authority (Eph. 1:20-22). To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood—The power of the cross through the shed blood of Jesus is seen here (1 Pet. 3:18). As He instituted the Lord’s Supper, Jesus said of the fruit of the vine, “this is my blood of the Covenant which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins” (cf. Matt. 26:27-28; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 1:18-19).
6 and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him The same “Him” who released us from our sins. be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. This was a conditional promise originally given to Israel (Ex. 19:5-6). Israel failed to faithfully keep the covenant and the priesthood fell to one specific tribe, Levi (Num. 3:6-16). In the New Covenant this promise is available to all who will come in faithful obedience to the gospel (cf. 1 Pet. 4:2; Rev. 5:9-10).
7 Behold, He is coming with the clouds, Coming with clouds is a picture of coming in judgment (cf. Ps. 104:3-4; Isa. 19:1; Eze. 30:3; Joel 2:1-2; Matt. 24:30). The “clouds” represented a time of darkness, a time of storm. This verse is often thought to be a reference to the Second Coming of Jesus—it is not. Remember the events were to occur “soon,” the time was “near.” The “coming on clouds” here is a reference to His coming in judgment against Jerusalem in A.D. 70 through the forces of the Roman army. and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; The “every eye which will see Him” contextually is every eye “who pierced Him.” The Jews of the first century were the one’s who demanded the death of Jesus (Matt. 27:21-26). Peter on the day of Pentecost declared their guilt in His death (Acts 2:36). and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. All the tribes of the earth (ge = land) is another reference to Israel, not all the people of the world. So it is to be. Amen. This was a judgment from God it was to be final.
8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet, omega is the last. This is another way of saying, as in the Old Testament, “I am the First and the Last” (cf. Isa. 41:4; 44:6; 48:12; Rev. 1:17; 2:8; 22:13). “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” “Who is to come” is a reference to the coming in judgment described in Revelation. It was from the Almighty.
10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet,
11 saying, “Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.”
12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands;
13 and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash.

9 I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation Jesus spoke of the great tribulation which would come upon “this generation” (Matthew 24:21, 34). John is testifying (vs. 2) that he was in that tribulation (cf. 7:14). and kingdom There are those today who deny that the kingdom has been established. Premillennialism teaches the kingdom will be established on earth at a later time. John says he was presently (at the time of his revelation and writing) in the kingdom. Paul writes of how we are presently in the kingdom (Col. 1:13). The kingdom exists now (Isa. 2:2; Dan. 2:44; Acts 2). See this elaborated in comments for 5:10. and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. John was on the island of Patmos as a result of his faith. Jesus promised His disciples that they would be persecuted and delivered up to tribulation (Matt. 24:9; Jn 15:18-27).

10 I was in the Spirit Literally “I was in spirit” on the Lord’s day, The Lord’s day is often mistakenly said to be Sunday. “The Lord’s Day” or “Day of the Lord” in scripture is always a day of judgment (Isa. 13:6, 9; Eze. 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11; Zep. 1:7, 14; mal. 4:5; 2 Pet. 3:10). Nowhere in scripture is Sunday called the Lord’s Day—this is the invention of man. and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet, Trumpets were used to call the people to worship, to sound alarm, or to signal warning (cf. Num 10:2; 29:1; Jer. 4:19, 21; 6:17; Eze. 33:4-6; Hos. 8:1; Joel 2:1; Amos 3:6).

11 saying, “Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.” The letters to these churches are found in chapters two and three of Revelation. They are told about the events that are going to come upon Jerusalem. They were to know it was God.

12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. Who was speaking to John? An angel or Jesus? Commentators disagree. Having heard the voice, Johns turns and sees the Son of Man. However, it could be that the angel who was communicating this revelation to John (cf. 1:1) simply directed John’s attention to see Jesus among the lampstands. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; The seven lampstands represent the seven churches (vs. 20).

13 and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, The description which follows is that of Jesus as our High Priest. He is pictured in the midst of the churches (lampstands) symbolic of His constant presence. What a beautiful scene! “Like a son of man” would indicate in the revelation, John sees Him in human form. clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. Compare the description of His dress with that of the high priest under the Old Covenant (Ex. 28:39-40; Lev. 8:7).
14 His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire.
15 His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters.
16 In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.
17 When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last,
18 and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.
19 “Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.
20 “As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

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14 His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; White is symbolic of purity. Compare this to the description of the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7:9. Perhaps this is intended to connect the Son of man with the Ancient of Days as being One God.

and His eyes were like a flame of fire. Ogden notes, that the eyes being like a flame of fire may be reflective of Christ’s piercing knowledge of all things (cf. Jn. 2:24-25; Rom. 2:16; Heb. 4:12-13).

15 His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. This description of Jesus is very similar to the appearance of the angel who appeared to Daniel (Dan. 10:5-6).

16 In His right hand He held seven stars, The seven stars are the seven angels of the seven churches (vs. 20). and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; The sword from His mouth was symbolic of the word of God (cf. Isa. 49:2; Heb. 4:12; Rev. 19:15). and His face was like the sun shining in its strength. (cf. Heb. 1:3).

17 When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, The words “I am the first and last” identify the Deity of this individual (cf. vs. 8).

18 and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. A picture of Christ’s victory over death.

19 “Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things. John is told to start writing down the things that were being revealed (cf. 1:1-2).

20 “As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches. Thankfully, Jesus explains part of what John was beholding. This is a great help in properly interpreting the message of Revelation.

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CHAPTER ONE: QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION POINTS:

- The value of the properly understanding and applying the phrase, “things which must shortly come to pass” (Rev. 1:1).

- What do the descriptions of Jesus Christ in verse five say about His nature and His accomplishments?
  
  *The faithful witness.*
  *The firstborn from the dead.*
  *The ruler of the kings of the earth.*
  *Him who loves us.*
  *Released us from our sins by His blood.*

- How should verse seven be applied today?
  *Can this be talking about His Second Coming? Explain your answer.*

- The description of Sunday as “the Lord’s day.”
  *Is this consistent with the inspired scriptures?*

- Christ walking among the lampstands (the churches).
  *How significant is the symbolism here?*

- The symbolism of Christ’s appearance in this chapter (vss. 13-16).

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**The “Last Days” of the New Testament**

- In the last days the House of the Lord will be established (Isa. 2:2)
- In the last days I will pour forth My Spirit (Acts 2:17)
- In the last days difficult times will come (2 Tim. 3:1)
- In these last days God has spoken to us in His Son (Heb. 1:2)
- It is in the last days you have stored up treasures (Isa. 5:13)
- In the last days mockers will come (2 Pet. 3:3)

- The end of all things is near (1 Pet. 4:17)
- It is the last hour (1 Jn. 2:18)
- The coming of the Lord is near (Isa. 5:18)
- Growing older may be disappearing (Hab. 3:13)

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24
CHAPTER TWO

1 “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this:

1 “To the angel of the church Angels in scripture are not always celestial in nature. The word “angel” simply means “messenger,” so the angel of each of these churches may well have been a terrestrial (human) messenger, an elder or evangelist. However, we cannot completely rule out the possibility that they might have been celestial in nature, based on the many obviously celestial angels mentioned in the book of Revelation (cf. Rev. 5:11; 8:2ff; 9:14). The church in Ephesus write: Chapters two and three of Revelation contain “report cards” to the seven churches. Why these seven? The number itself is symbolic. Ogden notes, “One thing we should learn from this is that the seven churches are representative of all the churches, not only at that time but, presently…. The points commended in them are the same points He wishes to commend in us, and the points condemned in them are the same points He will condemn in us.” Those who hold a futuristic interpretation of Revelation view the seven as a forecast of the future of the church. “On this view, the letter to Ephesus is said to describe the church during the apostolic age until A.D. 100. Smyrna, the church enduring persecution, is likened to the church from about 100 until 313, which suffered under a series of Roman emperors. Pergamos is a church compromised with carnality and false doctrine, such as the church became from Constantine’s Edict of Tolerance (313) until the rise of the papacy (about 500). Thyatira is seen as the papal church until the Reformation (from 500 to 1500) and Sardis as the church during the Reformation itself (from 1500-1700). Philadelphia is regarded as corresponding to the church which experienced a resurgence of missionary activity (1700 to present), followed by the Laodicean church, which was lukewarm, and is likened to the liberal churches of modern times.” This interpretation seems to add more to the text than John’s original readers needed to know. It is very possible these seven churches present an O.T. history. There is a very interesting chronology present in symbolism used in each letter. See Appendix A. The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: This of course being a reference to Jesus acting as our High Priest (cf. Rev. 1:13-16). The seven golden lampstands are reflective of the seven local churches addressed (Rev. 2:20). Note that it is Christ who alone walks among the lampstands (churches) and who alone has the power to remove a lampstand (Rev. 2:5).

2 ‘I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, What a comforting thought—if of course our deeds are according to His word. The picture here establishes Christ’s deity (cf. Jn. 1:1-3, 14; Phil. 2:5ff). As God, He sees all and knows all (cf. 2 Chron. 16:9; Ps. 139:1-6; Heb. 4:13). And that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; This is one of the charges to the saints: Test those who claim to be from God (cf. 1 Jn. 4:1). Those in Ephesus had been effective in this important work.

15 Ogden, 119.
16 Steve Gregg, Revelation: Four Views, A Parallel Commentary, 62.
2 ‘I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false;
3 and you have perseverance and have endured for My name’s sake, and have not grown weary.
4 ‘But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.
5 ‘Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent.
6 ‘Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

3 and you have perseverance and have endured for My name’s sake, and have not grown weary. The brethren in Ephesus had demonstrated great endurance in the midst of a difficult time of persecution. How we would all love the Lord to commend us for not growing weary. “Weary” seems to be in the sense of failing in our service or just simply giving up. These letters to the churches are about “overcoming.” The “report card” to Ephesus was sounding good so far, but it was not over. The Lord has some more to say. The word “but” at the start of the next verse tells us there was a problem.

4 ‘But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. What was the first love they had left? Any number of different ideas can and have been offered to explain this. Since we are not told specifically what this first love they had abandoned was, that is all they are… ideas and theories. However, based on the information we have, we can (as others have), make some reasonable suggestions. It is clear, based on the positive comments they received from the Lord that they had a love for the truth. They had no tolerance for evil men. They tested those who claimed to be apostles. They had persevered in that and had not grown weary. This would (on the surface) demonstrate a love for God. However, while possessing a love for God and His truth, perhaps they had lost an active demonstrative love toward one another. This was the problem of the scribes and Pharisees. They loved the Law. No one could ever accuse them otherwise. They had a great respect for the Law. But their love of the Law got in the way of their love for others (cf. Matt. 22:37-39). When they saw Jesus dining with tax collectors and sinners, they scoffed, “What teacher of the Law would associate himself with such people?” Remember what Jesus told them? “Go and learn what this means. I desire compassion and not sacrifice.” That was taken from the very Law they so loved! The Law was not given to instill a love for God to the loveless neglect of others. No! The Law was about a love for God and a love for others. To lack love for one another is to be doctrinally impure (1 Jn. 3:10-11, 17; 4:7; 5:3; 2 Jn. 6).

5 ‘Therefore remember from where you have fallen, They needed to climb back to the level they once possessed. and repent turn around and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent. Here we are reminded of Christ’s power to remove a congregation’s lampstand. No man possesses this right, though many have seemingly claimed and have attempted to exercise such authority.

6 ‘Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. This was certainly a positive. Note: It was the deeds of the Nicolaitans that were hated, not the people themselves. Who were the Nicolaitans? Little is known about them, though various theories have been offered. Whoever they were, they were advocating doctrine that was contrary to the gospel. The rejection of this false teaching was commended by the Lord.
7 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.’
8 “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this:

7 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Each letter closes in this same fashion. Whenever God speaks, we need to give ear. To him who overcomes, This too, is common in each of the letters. For those of the first-century, there were many extreme difficulties that needed to be overcome. Wallace noted that, “This condition [overcoming] attached to the promise that followed was a specific reference to the impending persecutions, thus adding evidence that the book belongs to the period of their own experiences; they were expected to be the overcomers of these persecutions…”

I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.’ The mention of the “tree of life” takes us back to the Garden of Eden prior to man’s sin. Once sin occurred, man was driven from the garden and lost access to this life-sustaining tree. In Christ, man regains what he lost in Eden. The tree of life mentioned in this text would perhaps be symbolic of the cross. The Paradise of God would be heaven as this is the eternal reward for the overcomers (cf. 2 Cor. 12:4).

8 “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, Once again, the idea of “first and last” establishes the deity of Christ (cf. Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; 48:12; Rev. 1:8; 1:17; 22:13). who was dead, and has come to life, says this: The picture here is clearly the resurrection of our Savior.

9 ‘I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. What an indictment of those who were practicing Judaism! They said they were Jews, but actually, there were not following the teachings of Moses or the prophecies of the Old Covenant. If they were, they would have accepted Jesus as the Christ. Compare these words of Jesus with the teaching of Paul in the book of Romans concerning a true Jew (Rom. 2:28; 9:6).

10 ‘Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. There are many who seek to interpret the book of Revelation literally, who in this particular text will go symbolic. Hal Lindsey says the ten days applies “to ten eras of persecution under ten diabolical Caesars.” Literally speaking, could it not be “ten days”? I am not opposed to a symbolic approach to the number ten, but if others are going to insist on a literally interpretation, then why not here? David Chilton offers this, “The tribulation of the church of Smyrna would be fierce, but relatively short in duration: ten days. Daniel and his friends had been tested for ten days, but they passed the test (Dan. 1:11-21). Similarly, the Jewish persecution of the church in Smyrna would be allowed to continue for only a short while longer, and then the church would be free…. “

Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. This same exhortation applies to us, though this had an immediate application to the brethren in Smyrna to remain faithful despite what they were about to suffer.

18 Hal Lindsay, There’s a New World Coming, 50.
19 David Chilton, The Days of Vengeance, 103.
9 ‘I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.
10 ‘Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.
11 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.’
12 “And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this:
13 ‘I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.
14 ‘But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality.

11 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.’ What is “the second death”? All will experience physical death (Heb. 9:27). We could call this “the first death.” The second death would be that from which the overcomers are exempt (Rev. 20:6). This would indicate that it is eternal death (Rom. 6:23).
12 “And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this: Notice that all of these descriptions of Christ in each of the letters, relate back to that which was given of Him in chapter one (cf. Rev. 1:16).
13 ‘I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is; and you hold fast My name, Let’s think of this as a recognition of Christ’s authority. Paul told the church at Colossae, “Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Col. 3:17). We must always remember that Christ is the head of the church. We must look for book, chapter and verse in all that we do. We must not compromise His authority by our own wants and wishes in an effort to meet the demands of an ever-changing culture. and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. They stood up for the faith even while facing death. What a marvelous testimony for this one called, Antipas. What a testimony! Jesus Himself referred to Antipas as “My witness” “My faithful one.” Is there any of us who would not want the Lord to speak so admirably of us? More literally, in the Greek, Antipas was called the witness of Me, the faithful one. In other words, all the saints in Pergamum knew of Antipas and his courageous faith and testimony. At a time of great persecution, when it would have been easy to lie or to deny his faith in an effort to save his life and perhaps the life of his brethren; Antipas stood strong. Even at the cost of his own life, Antipas did not deny the Lord.
15 ‘So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.
16 ‘Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.

14 ‘But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality. Balaam was a gentile prophet who was called upon by Balak, king of Moab, to curse Israel. Though Balaam was unable to pronounce a curse upon the people, he suggested a means by which they would draw the wrath of God upon themselves. As we see described in verse 14 he told Balak how to put a stumbling block before the people, something over which they would trip and fall. This stumbling block was to get them to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication. The daughters of Moab went down and seduced the men of Israel. The men quickly fell for their feminine charms and soon the people were bowing down to Baal and offering sacrifices to this idol (Num. 22-25).

15 ‘So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. The Greek word rendered “hold” means to hold fast, to be strong, to take hold. This teaching to which they were holding was one that said it was okay for the people of God to participate in idol worship and fornication. This, as with Balaam, would prove to be a stumbling block for the church as a whole. There was a great danger of this doctrine, “taking hold” of others in the congregation. They were instructed to deal with the problem… to repent from allowing this to go on in the body of Christ.

16 ‘Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, The reference to Christ’s coming is not speaking of His Second Coming or even the destruction of Jerusalem. It is a coming to them in judgment. This coming in judgment would not be a physical coming of the Lord. The coming could be through another to take care of the problems (cf. 2 Cor. 13:2-3, 10). and I will make war against them Those who are advocating the doctrine of Balaam. with the sword of My mouth. To battle error one needs the truth. The sword is the word of God (cf. Isa. 11:4; Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12; Rev. 1:16; 19:15, 21).

17 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, Hailey notes: “…there is an unmistakable allusion to the manna given the children of Israel in the wilderness, a pot of which was to be kept before Jehovah for a memorial throughout their generations (Ex. 16:31, 33; Heb. 9:4). Kept either within or before the Ark of the Covenant (cf. Ex. 16:33; 1 Kings 8:9; Heb. 9:4), it was hidden from view. Jesus says He is the true manna from heaven, and to eat of that bread is to live (John 6:33-35, 50-59). It is “hidden” as was Jesus’ teaching to the twelve concerning His death and resurrection (Lk. 18:34), and as were the things which belong to peace hidden from the eyes of the Jews (Lk. 19:42) but were later seen and understood by all who had eyes to see.”20 and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.’ (cf. Isa. 56:1-6; 62:1-2). A new name would speak of a new condition… a new relationship. The fact that no one knows the new name speaks of the personal relationship one has with the Lord.

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20 Homer Hailey, Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary, 133.
17 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.’

18 “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this:

19 ‘I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first.

20 ‘But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

21 ‘I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality.

22 ‘Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds.

23 ‘And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.

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18 “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this: Again note how this description matches that given in chapter one (Rev. 1:14-15).

19 ‘I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first. They had grown in good works. What a wonderful testimony! Any local congregation would love to hear this from the Lord.

20 ‘But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. Jezebel may be a symbolic name given to this woman. The name likely has a symbolical reference to the Jezebel of the Old Testament (cf. 1 Kings 18:4, 13). who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. Whoever this Jezebel was, she was teaching and leading in the church. While this alone presented an obvious problem as far as mixed assemblies are concerned (cf. 1 Tim. 2:9-15), it was what she was teaching that was of great concern. She was teaching and leading the brethren to go astray; to commit acts of immorality and to eat things sacrificed to idols. It is hard to imagine that this would be allowed to exist in a local church; yet, the brethren at Thyatira were tolerating it! They were allowing her to continue this destructive teaching without putting a stop to it, hence, the strong rebuke from the Lord.

21 ‘I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. How much time and in what way Jezebel was given time to repent is not told. It appears sufficient opportunity for her to turn from this error was given by the Lord (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9). Her refusal to repent would bring judgment.

22 ‘Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds.

23 ‘And I will kill her children with pestilence. Her children were not those by physical birth, but likely representative of her followers. Jezebel and those who participated in her teaching would be punished by the Lord. and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds. (cf. Rom. 2:5-6).
24 ‘But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them—I place no other burden on you.
25 ‘Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come.
26 ‘He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations;
27 and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father;
28 and I will give him the morning star.
29 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

24 ‘But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them—I place no other burden on you. (cf. Matt. 11:28-30)
25 ‘Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come. Keep the faith! “Hold fast” (to be strong, keep, preserve) to those areas that were strong. In other words, do not let Jezebel make any further progress.
26 ‘He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations;
27 and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father;
28 and I will give him the morning star.
29 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’
Notice the contrasts in the commendations and condemnations

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**CHAPTER TWO: QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION POINTS:**

- The message to the church at Ephesus and how it relates to us today (2:1-7).
  *What were their strengths? Weaknesses?*

- What was the “first love” Ephesus had left? (Rev. 2:4).

- The message to Smyrna and how it relates to us today (2:8-11).
  *What were their strengths? Weaknesses?*

- The message to Pergamum and how it relates to us today (2:12-17).
  *What were their strengths? Weaknesses?*

- The message to Thyatira and how it relates to us today (2:18-29).
  *What were their strengths? Weaknesses?*
1 “To the angel of the church in Sardis write: He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: ‘I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.  
2 ‘Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God.  
3 ‘So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.  
4 ‘But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.  
5 ‘He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

1 “To the angel of the church in Sardis write: He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: ‘I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. This church had a reputation that it was alive, but Jesus says, “The truth is, you’re dead!” What a picture for you and I to consider today! First, we see very clearly that the opinions of men in regards to a local church can be dead wrong. Some today might look at a particular local church and say, “They’re really growing!” or “They’re really active” or “They’ve got a lot of good ideas.” or “They have a lot of young people…” Yet the warning is again set in front of us… what are they teaching?  
2 ‘Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. This congregation had gotten so far away from the truth and where they were supposed to be that Jesus says, “Strengthen the things that remain, which are also about to die.” They were in bad shape. They were spiritually sick and ready to die.  
3 ‘So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you. A warning to respond quickly to the things the Lord has told them.  
4 ‘But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. Here is a clear picture of the individual nature of salvation. Paul told the Philippians, “Work out your own salvation…” (Phil. 2:12). Salvation will not come to a person simply because they belong to a very strong and active church. Each will be saved based upon their own obedient faith. In the same way, one will not be condemned because they attend a church that is dead as far as works are concerned.  
5 ‘He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. This is self-explanatory, isn’t it? This is a promise of heaven! I do not know if we will literally be clothed in garments of white or if this is more symbolism, it really does not matter. I do not care what color garment I wear in heaven as long as I am there and am known as an overcomer! The book of life is God’s record of the saved, living and dead, who are known as overcomers. There are references to this “book” in both the Old and New Testaments (Mal. 3:16-18; Heb. 12:22-24).
6 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’
7 “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this:
8 ‘I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name.
9 ‘Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you.
10 ‘Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.
11 ‘I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.
12 ‘He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.

I get the impression these brethren seized whatever opportunities the Lord placed before them. I would hope the same would be said of us; although, sometimes I feel we pass up many opportunities. “A little power…” Perhaps this was a reference to their size. Still, their size did not affect their love for the truth or whether or not they seized the opportunities laid before them.

9 ‘Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you. See comments on 2:9
10 ‘Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Here is a time reference that establishes the events of Revelation within the lifetime of its original readers. The hour of testing was “about to come upon the whole world.”
11 ‘I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.
12 ‘He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name. The temple of God on earth is the church. Paul says, “Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Cor. 3:16). Peter adds, “You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:5). This promise does not involve heaven so much, as it involves our lives right now in the temple of God, in the church. Those who overcome become known as pillars. A pillar supports… a pillar uplifts… a pillar bears up under pressure.
13 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’
14 “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this:
15 ‘I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot.
16 ‘So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.
17 ‘Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,
18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.

13 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’
14 “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this:
15 ‘I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. They were neither hot nor cold. “Hot” does not mean hot in the way of service, such as being on fire, and “cold” does not mean apathetic and lazy. Notice that Jesus says he could wish that they were hot or cold. Certainly, Jesus is not wishing they were apathetic or lazy! Hot serves a purpose just as cold. Heat is used to cook. Cold is used to preserve and keep fresh. Both serve a purpose. The Laodiceans however were serving no purpose! They were lukewarm. They were apathetic, lethargic, and indifferent. They were not accomplishing anything. They were not standing for anything.
16 ‘So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. Their indifferent lukewarm nature left a bad taste in the Lord’s mouth. Unlike the other letters to the churches, there was nothing good that the Lord saw in this congregation.
17 ‘Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, They had a false assessment of themselves. They thought they were looking good. They thought they were doing all right. What a different picture the Lord saw! He said they were wretched, miserable, poor, and blind. No wonder He wanted to spit them out of His mouth!
18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.
19 ‘Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. Isn’t that beautiful? Jesus says, “Look Laodicea, I am only telling you this because I love you. Clean yourselves up” (Rev. 3:18).
20 ‘Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. This verse is often used in regards to the lost who have never known Christ. However, in its context, the verse is addressed to Christians. Jesus wanted to have a relationship with the Laodiceans. He wanted to be a part of their lives and their worship. In their indifference, they had shut Him out.
19 ‘Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.
20 ‘Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.
21 ‘He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.
22 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’ ”

21 ‘He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. Jesus Christ was an overcomer! He overcame death, and it is because of His victory that we too, if we remain faithful (overcome), can enjoy a great victory. The apostle Paul said it well: “Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:57-58).
22 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’ ”

CHAPTER THREE: QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION POINTS:

➢ The message to the church at Sardis and how it relates to us today (3:1-6).
   What were their strengths? Weaknesses?

➢ The individual nature of salvation (Rev. 3:4).

➢ The message to the church at Philadelphia and how it relates to us today (3:7-13).
   What were their strengths? Weaknesses?

➢ The message to the church at Laodicea and how it relates to us today (3:14-22).
   What were their strengths? Weaknesses?

➢ Discuss the concept of being hot or cold as used in Revelation 3:15. In what way did the Lord want them to be “cold”? “hot”?

NOTES:
1 After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things.”

2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne.

3 And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance.

4 Around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads.

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

The lightning and thundering represent the presence and power of God, as at Sinai (cf. Ex. 19:16; 20:18; Dt. 33:2). And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God; There is only one Holy Spirit. Here He is portrayed in terms of the symbolism of seven. Ogden rightly notes: “These represent the Holy Spirit (cf. 1:4; 3:1). Here again we see the likeness to Old Testament worship. Before the Most Holy Place in the Jewish Temple stood the candlestick with seven lamps (Ex. 26:35; 40:24; Num. 8:2).” 6 The number seven is symbolic of spiritual completeness and is used often in the book of Revelation. 6 and before the throne there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal; This takes us back to the Temple which Solomon had built, and again the Old Testament form of worship (cf. 1 Kings 7:23ff; 2 Chron. 4:2ff). In chapter five, we see the change to the New Testament order. and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. 7 The first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle. 8 And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.” Are these living creatures cherubim? (cf. Eze. 1:1-21). The cherubim have four wings, these living creatures are said to have six. Maybe they are seraphim, which also possess six wings (Isa. 6:1-6). Their words of praise are almost identical to that of the seraphim. Interestingly, there are four of these living creatures that John witnesses in his vision. The individual facial features of each correspond to the four faces each of the cherubim possessed. So, which are these, cherubim or seraphim? It is possible that these are a third type of heavenly creature, not called angels, but still performing service to God. Their service is seen in Revelation chapters four, five, seven, and nineteen in worshipping God. Here they are pictured as announcing the opening of the first four seals (Rev. 6:1-7). In chapter fifteen, one of the four living creatures gives to each of the seven angels the seven bowls of wrath (Rev. 15:7). What is clear from these verses (whether these living creatures are cherubim or seraphim, or a third type of heavenly being) is that they are an active part of God’s working.

23 Ogden, 177.
9 And when the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever,
10 the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying,
11 “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.”

Watch how this scene of praise and worship changes in the next chapter. The change strengthens the view that chapter four presents an Old Testament throne scene while chapter five presents the New Covenant.

CHAPTER FOUR DISCUSSION POINTS:

➢ The symbolism used in verses 2 and 3 to describe God. What might it say about His nature?
  Siting on a throne
  Like a jasper stone
  Sardius in appearance
  Rainbow around the throne

➢ The twenty-four thrones around the throne of God. (4:4)
  Who are the twenty-four elders?

➢ Who (what) are the living creatures? (4:6-9)
  How are they like the cherubim?
  How are they like the seraphim?

➢ The symbolism of this chapter and what it says about God and heaven.
  A sea of glass.
  Living creatures.
  Lightning and sounds and peals of thunder coming from the throne.
1 I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals.

2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?”

3 And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it.

4 Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it;

5 and one of the elders said to me, “Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals.”

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1 I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne Remember from chapter four, this is God the Father. a book written inside and on the back. Compare the tablets of stone that Moses brought down from Mount Sinai written on both sides (Ex. 32:15). See also Ezekiel 2:9-10 sealed up with seven seals. That the book was sealed meant it was complete. It was official. The events written therein were to be accomplished. Being a sealed document only one with proper authority could open or break the seals (cf. Isa. 29:9-12). Ogden offers an interesting point concerning the book and its contents. He writes, “We believe it contained the complete word of God from the beginning to end. It had its beginning in the mind of God before the foundation of the world (1 Cor. 2:7-9; Eph. 1:3-11; Col. 1:25-26; 1 Pet. 1:18-20). It was kept secret and hid in a mystery throughout the Old Testament era (Eph. 3:5) but is now revealed unto us by Jesus Christ through the Spirit (Rom. 16:25-26; 1 Cor. 2:10-16; Eph. 3:1-5; 1 Pet. 1:11-12).”

2 And I saw a strong angel (cf. Rev. 10:1; 18:21) proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?”

3 And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it. No one was worthy to open the book. No strong angel, no heavenly creature, no elder around the throne of God, no man on earth. The reason being, “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Rom. 6:23).

4 Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it; John was naturally curious as to what the book contained. That it was a message from God and could not be opened was indeed cause for weeping. Imagine not being able to hear what God had written.

5 and one of the elders said to me, “Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals.” Who is the Lion from the tribe of Judah? (Heb. 7:14) Who is the root of David? (Matt. 1:1) Who had overcome and obtained authority? The answer to each of these questions is clearly Jesus Christ. It was Christ who overcame death and ascended into heaven to take His seat at the right of the Father. We see here in the symbolic language of chapter five what took place in heaven when He ascended.

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24 Ogden, 182.
6 And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth.

7 And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

8 When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

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

6 And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, The picture of Jesus as a Lamb should remind us of the words of John the Baptist, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn. 1:29). The Lamb pictured here is one that had been slain, which should remind us of the words of the prophet Isaiah in his description of the Christ, “Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers.” (Isa. 53:7). having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth.

7 And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. The picture here takes us back to Daniel’s prophecy of the coming Son of Man (Dan. 7:13-14). The events that follow in Revelation chapter five mirror almost to the letter that which is ascribed to the Son of Man in Daniel’s text. Be sure to read the text in Daniel and notice the similarities.

8 When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, Again, notice the change from chapter four. each one holding a harp Angels have long-been described as holding harps but notice here that it is the elders holding the harps. and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. (cf. Rev. 8:3). The harps and golden bowls of incense are not literal but are symbolic of the prayers of the saints. The symbolism here would seem to portray prayer as something that is pleasing to God; much like the pleasing soft and sweet sounds of a harp or the pleasant smell of incense.

9 And they sang a new song, This is an important transition. This helps reinforce the idea that chapter four was an Old Testament scene while chapter five introduces the New Covenant with Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords. Here we have “a new song.” (cf. Rev. 14:3; 15:3). saying, “Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; Christ had the proper authority to open the book (cf. Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:20-22). The establishment for Christ’s authority to break the seals and open the book is seen in the next line: for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. This describes well the work of Christ of our behalf (cf. Matt. 20:28; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). Notice that the New Covenant would not be exclusive to the “tribes” of Israel. Here it is described as possessing “every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (cf. Rom. 9:25-26; 1 Pet. 2:10).
10 “You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.”

There is nothing here that establishes in any way the premillennial futuristic concept that Christ will one day reign on earth as King on David’s throne in a literal kingdom on earth. That the language is not future in its tense is seen in the words, “You have made them,” not “You will make them.” The work was accomplished and the kingdom established. Peter tells us we are right now “a holy nation and a royal priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:9-10).

The prophets of God were clear: “In the last days” God was going to establish an everlasting kingdom (Isa. 2:2-4; Dan. 2:28, 44; Mic. 4:1-3). It can easily be shown that the kingdom of prophecy was established. The apostle Paul is very clear about the existence of the kingdom in his day: “For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son” (Colossians 1:13). How could we be transferred into a kingdom that does not yet exist? Again from the pen of Paul: “Then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power” (1 Corinthians 15:24). When Paul says, in the end Jesus will hand over the kingdom to the Father, it presupposes the fact that the kingdom presently exists.

The prophet Isaiah spoke of the establishment of the kingdom “in the last days.” (Isa. 2:2-4) If the kingdom was not established, Isaiah was a false prophet. As Luke described the events of the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30, we find a fulfillment of that which Isaiah had prophesied (cf. Acts 2). Notice the similarities between the words of Isaiah and the events of Acts chapter two.

**Isaiah 2 and Acts 2**

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<th>Isaiah 2</th>
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<td>In the last days (Isa. 2:2)</td>
<td>In the last days (Acts 2:17)</td>
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<td>All nations (Isa. 2:2)</td>
<td>All nations (Acts 2:5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>From Jerusalem (Isa. 2:3)</td>
<td>From Jerusalem (Acts 2:5)</td>
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Some object to the thought that the text in Isaiah found its fulfillment in the events outlined in Acts chapter two. They would protest that the nations have not yet hammered their swords into plowshares or their spears into pruning hooks, this indicating a time of great peace. They would ask, “Where is this great peace?”

Turning to the book of Isaiah, they would note that the kingdom of prophecy was peacefully described with such images as the wolf dwelling with the lamb and the leopard with the young goat. We are told that the calf and the young lion would dwell together (Isa. 11:6-9). Pointing to these images and expecting a literal fulfillment, they would question the existence of the kingdom.

However, should these images of peace be interpreted literally? In the verses just prior, Isaiah writes of how the Messiah “will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked” (Isa. 11:4). How would this be literally applied? Will Jesus have a literal rod protruding from His mouth? How will He slay the wicked with His lips?

The language here is obviously symbolic. This being true, the real question is: where is this peace to be found? In the world or in the kingdom of God? The answer of course is
only in the kingdom of God. Writing of the language of Isaiah 2:1-4 Homer Hailey notes: “Here the prophet is certainly not speaking of the world, for its people will war continually, but rather of the all nations and many peoples who will come to the mountain of Jehovah’s house. He is describing the character of the citizens of the new kingdom. In the holy mountain they will learn war no more.”

It is in the kingdom that real peace is found, peace between men and God (cf. Rom. 5:1), and peace between one another (Rom. 14:19). The prophecy of Isaiah is not about world peace, but peace in the kingdom of Christ.

Also, as to the establishment of the kingdom as seen in scripture, consider the prophetic words of Zechariah (Zec. 6:12-13). First, Zechariah says Christ will build the temple of the Lord. In the New Testament, Jesus said, “I will build My church” (Matt. 16:18). The church is now the temple (1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16; 1 Pet. 2:5).

Second, Zechariah says Christ will sit on His throne. According to Peter, Christ was sitting on His throne on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:32-35). If Zechariah said Christ would sit on His throne, and Peter described Him as exalted to the right hand of God and sitting, the logical conclusion is that Christ is now sitting on His throne. The Hebrew writer is very clear in this regard. He tells us that Jesus “has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens (Heb. 8:1).

Third, Zechariah prophesied that Christ would be a priest on His throne. Again from the Hebrew writer: Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession (Hebrews 4:14). This passage is not hard to understand. Jesus is now our high priest in heaven. The prophecy of Zechariah said Christ would be a priest on His throne. The logical conclusion is that Christ is now on His throne and His throne is in heaven.

Putting all this together, we can see that there is no need to bring Christ back down to earth to reign on His throne. If Christ were to return to earth, He could not be a priest (Heb. 8:4). And if He could not be a priest on earth, He could not sit on His throne on earth. This would nullify the prophecy of Zechariah who said He would be King and Priest on His throne.

Taking this a step further, Jesus cannot return to earth to reign as king. This would be a direct violation of the prophetic word of God. Through the prophet Jeremiah, God declared concerning king Jeconiah (Coniah) of Judah: “Thus says the Lord, ‘Write this man down childless, A man who will not prosper in his days; For no man of his descendants will prosper Sitting on the throne of David or ruling again in Judah’ ” (Jeremiah 22:30).

This prophecy states that not one of Coniah’s descendants would prosper as king in Jerusalem sitting on the throne of David. The genealogy of Jesus as recorded in the gospel of Matthew establishes very clearly that Jesus is a descendant of Coniah (Matt. 1:12). This being true, Christ cannot return to earth to reign as king and prosper in Jerusalem. Respect for the inspired word of God demands we reject any teaching (such as dispensationalism) that would compromise Christ’s current position as King of kings and Lord of lords.

The facts are undeniable! Jesus Christ, the King of king and Lord of lords, our great High Priest, sits and rules on His throne at this very moment, just as was literally prophesied.

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25 Homer Hailey, A Commentary of Isaiah, 49.
11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.” 13 And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, “To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.” 14 And the four living creatures kept saying, “Amen.” And the elders fell down and worshiped.

11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, One can hardly imagine what all these multitudes of voices raised in unison must have sounded like echoing through the heavens! We know how beautiful congregational singing can be when our voices are raised together, but how about myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands? 12 saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.” Again, take note of the text in Daniel seven regarding the Son of Man. 13 And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, “To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.” 14 And the four living creatures kept saying, “Amen.” And the elders fell down and worshiped.

CHAPTER FIVE: QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION POINTS:

- The symbolism of no one being able to open the book or look into it (5:1-3). Why was this a cause of weeping for John?


- The words of praise offered to the Lamb in verses 9-14. What can we learn from this about our own offerings of praise? Why should we (and all creation) greatly praise Him?
1 Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, “Come.”

2 I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

1 Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, These were the seals on the book to which we were introduced in chapter five. Remember, the Lamb was the only One found worthy to break the seals and open the book (Rev. 5:5-6). We are about to see what the book contains. This will be revealed as the events of this chapter continue. As the seals are broken John hears a thundering voice: and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, “Come.” The King James has “Come and see.” However, there is little manuscript evidence for such a rendering. The invitation to “come” does not seem to be directed to John, but rather to the rider on the white horse. This becomes more evident as the text continues with a repeated invitation to each rider and horse.

2 I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer. Who is this rider on the white horse? (cf. Zec. 6:1-8) In Dispensational Eschatology, this rider is typically thought to be the dreaded antichrist. For example, Tim LaHaye, Hal Lindsay and Chuck Smith all take this erroneous view. In stark contrast to the antichrist, some have said the rider represents the conquering and victorious Christ. Homer Hailey, Foy Wallace, and Jim McGuiggan took this position. If you have access to their respective commentaries on Revelation, you would do well to read their reasoning for such an interpretation. Christ does appear on a white horse later in the book of Revelation (Rev. 19:11ff). Interpreting the rider as Christ would appear a logical conclusion. However, Arthur Ogden offers another interesting interpretation:

We believe the horse and rider represent the development of the kingdom which God had foretold through Daniel. The emergence of this world force was to mark the time during which God’s everlasting kingdom would be established (Dan. 2:31-45). During this time the saints were to be persecuted (Dan. 7) and a king brought to power through which the holy people would be destroyed (Dan. 8, 9, 11). The Roman Empire was that force. It was that fourth world empire through which these things were to be accomplished. It came into being through the determined efforts of one man, Julius Caesar, who was bent on converting the Roman Republic into a world empire over which he would reign as supreme lord. He was the prince of Daniel’s visions. He was the one seen coming upon the scene to develop the force through which God’s purposes against Israel were to be carried out.26

Either interpretation (Christ or Julius Caesar) could fit. One could make the case that the rider was Christ in the sense that God raised up Rome as a nation to carry out His purposes.

26 Ogden, 196.
3 When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, “Come.”
4 And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him.
5 When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, “Come.” I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand.
6 And I heard something like a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine.”
7 When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, “Come.”
8 I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.

3 When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, “Come.” Another rider and horse are now summoned.
4 And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him. The fact that this rider would be taking away peace from the earth, and that men would be slaying one another, and that he was given a great sword (cf. Eze. 21:1-5; 30:24-25), would lead us to conclude that the color red represents bloodshed (cf. Zec. 1:8ff). We find here a connection with the words of Jesus in His Olivet discourse wherein He promised a time of wars and rumors of wars (Matt. 24:6-7). When was this time to be? Jesus said, “This generation will not pass away until all these things take place” (Matt. 24:34). “This generation” was a reference to those of the Jewish nation living at that time.
5 When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, “Come.” Yet another rider and horse are summoned. I looked, and behold, a black horse; Black would symbolize darkness, doom, and despair. and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. The scales would be used to measure or to properly portion out. From what we see in the next sentence, food is being rationed out, but not freely.
6 And I heard something like a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; The picture here is that of famine and the high cost of buying food during such a time. This too, has a connection with the prophecy of Jesus in the Olivet discourse. He spoke of a time of famine (Matt. 24:7). When Rome surrounded the city of Jerusalem, they cut off all supplies of food going into the city. The result was famine in Jerusalem. Josephus describes in horrific detail some of the conditions within

Artist rendering of the four horsemen
the city at this time. and do not damage the oil and the wine.” The meaning here is somewhat difficult to ascertain with any degree of absolute certainty. David Chilton offered this explanation, “Scripture often speaks of God’s blessings upon the righteous in terms of oil and wine (cf. Ps. 104:15); and, of course, oil and wine are used in… the church (James 5:14-15; 1 Cor. 11:25). This would then parallel those other passages in which the godly are protected from destruction (cf. 7:3). Ogden noted among other various ideas, “Perhaps it indicated that the regions where these commodities were especially notable would not be affected by the war. Peraea was the region most noted at that time for the production of these products, and this region was not adversely affected by the war. It was to Pella in this region that Christians fled to escape the war and the destruction of Jerusalem.

7 When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, “Come.” Still another rider and horse are summoned.

8 I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; Ashen would be a pale or pale green color. and he who sat on it had the name Death; There is no mistaking the rider of this horse. Death follows war and famine. and Hades was following with him. Hades is the place of the dead. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, This was would not affect the whole earth, only (as symbolically described here) a fourth, namely, Judea. to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth. The language here (as with much of Revelation) is taken right from the Old Testament (cf. Eze. 5:17; 14:21). Modern day futurist writers, such as Chuck Smith, interpret this to mean one billion will die in the tribulation period following the rapture.

We must keep in mind that Revelation is dealing with events that were (at the time of its writing) soon to take place (Rev. 1:1). In the Olivet discourse, of which we have already made several obvious connections, Jesus indicated this would be a localized judgment. “Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains” (Matt. 24:16). “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies recognize that her desolation is near” (Lk. 21:20).

9 When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; It seems clear that these are the souls of those who had died in faithful service to God. They had been martyred for the testimony they had maintained. It is our belief that these are Old Testament saints. They are the ones Jesus spoke of in His rebuke of the Pharisees and (unfaithful) Jerusalem when He said, “So you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?” (Matt. 23:31-33). “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her” (Matt. 23:37a). The identity of these martyred saints as being representative of Old Testament is seen a little later when reference is made to “their fellow servants,” i.e. New Testament saints. Revelation seems to make a distinction between Old and New Testament saints. Those of the New are referenced by their “testimony of Jesus” (cf. Rev. 1:2, 9; 12:17; 19:10). No mention is made here of the testimony of Jesus, nor in other places where Old Testament saints seem to be in view (cf. Rev. 11:7; 21:11).

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27 David Chilton, The Days of Vengeance, 191.
28 Ogden, 199.
29 Chuck Smith, The Last Days, the Middle East, and the Book of Revelation, 65-66.
9 When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained;
10 and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”
11 And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.
12 I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood;
13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind.
14 The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

10 and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” These martyred saints are crying for vengeance. Later in Revelation, their cry is answered (cf. Rev. 18:20, 24). For now, they are told to wait a little while longer.
11 And there was given to each of them a white robe; The white robe given to the saints would be symbolic of Christ’s accomplishments on the cross. We sometimes speak of the blood of the cross flowing both ways. Here is an example. They lived faithful lives under the Law of Moses, but were fully justified by Jesus Christ. The Hebrew writer described those of the Old Testament who were cleansed by Jesus as “the spirits of the righteous made perfect” (Heb. 12:23). and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren Here are the New Testament saints who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also. Though their cry for vengeance was heard, the time for such was to come later. It would come on God’s time, not theirs (cf. Rom. 12:19).
12 I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood;
13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind.
14 The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. In the Old Testament language of judgment, when God was going to punish a nation, it was very common for the prophets to speak of the sun and moon going dark. This was not meant as a literal reference to the sun or moon, but as a symbolic representation of the governing bodies of that nation (the political and/or religious leaders) going dark (Isa. 13:10; 34:4-5; Amos 8:9; Joel 2:10; Eze. 32:7-8). Not one of these referenced prophecies involved the literal darkening of the sun and moon. What was being described was not (as some futurist writers proclaim) a collapse of the universe. The language is symbolic. The prophetic words were fulfilled as God’s judgment came upon that nation and the governing bodies went dark. Jesus used this same Old Testament language of judgment for His disciples in His Olivet discourse (cf. Matt. 24:29). Here again we have a connection with the events in Revelation being a reference to the first century destruction of Jerusalem. That connection is seen further in the verses which follow.
15 Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains;
16 and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;
17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

15 Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains;
16 and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;
17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

Compare the language here to that which is used in the gospel of Luke by Jesus Himself in describing what “this generation” would say (Lk. 23:29-30). Once again, this is language that comes right from the Old Testament (cf. Isa. 2:19; Hos. 10:8).

The prophet Malachi warned of a coming day of wrath (Mal. 4). John the Baptist spoke of it as he asked the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to him, “Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come” (Matt. 3:7). This wrath of God was poured out on Israel in the first century. As the seals continue to be opened by the Lamb, and the events of Revelation continue to be “uncovered” this will become more and more evident.

**Chapter Six: Questions and Discussion Points:**

- The symbolism of each of the horses and riders (6:1-8).
  - The white horse and rider:
  - The red horse and rider:
  - The black horse and rider:
  - The ashen horse and rider:

- The cry for vengeance from the souls under the altar (6:9-11).
  - Who are they?
  - Why were they given white robes?
  - Why were they told to wait a little longer?

- The symbolism of verses 12-17.

- In what ways does this chapter relate to Matthew chapter twenty-four?
  - Give some examples.

**Notes:**
CHAPTER SEVEN

1 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree.

2 And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea,

1 After this That is, after what he previously had beheld. This is not a chronological statement in regards to how the events were to unfold. I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth. For similar language cf. Eze. 7:2; Dan. 11:4; Zec. 2:6; Matt. 24:31; Rev. 20:8. David Chilton noted, “The wind in scripture is used in connection with the coming of God and the action of His angels in either blessing or curse (cf. Gen. 8:1; 41:27; Ex. 10:13, 19; 14:21; 15:10; Num. 11:31; Ps. 18:10; 104:3-4; 107:25; 135:7; 147:18; 148:8; John 3:8; Acts 2:2).”

Ogden noted that the wind is often used to represent God’s wrath upon Israel and other nations (Jer. 13:24; 22:22; 51:1-2; Eze. 1:4; 13:11-16). In the Old Testament, Babylon was called God’s east wind (Jer. 18:17; Hos. 12:1; 13:15; Hab. 1:9). so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree. The angels are restraining the forces of destruction which are about to come upon the four corners of the land. In regards to the symbolism behind the trees, Chilton added, “Throughout the Bible trees are images of men (Jud. 9:8-15). In particular, they are symbols for the righteous (Ex. 15:17; Ps. 1:3; 92:12-14; Isa. 61:3; Jer. 17:5-8).”

2 And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, This angel comes with the authority of Jesus Christ (cf. Mal. 4:2; Lk. 1:78; Eph. 5:14). having the seal of the living God; Symbolically, this angel has a seal of God that will be used to mark the righteous, see verse three. The seal would be reflective of God’s “stamp of approval” on their life. and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea,

3 saying, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads.” Before the angels let the destructive winds blow, there was a sealing of the bond-servants of God that needed to take place. A similar scene is found in Ezekiel 9:4-6. Jim McGuiggen comments on the sealing in Ezekiel and that which is found here: “Now, does this sealing assure the saints of physical preservation? Not at all! The saints, in vision, in Ezekiel 9 were sealed, but many of them died.”

What was the sealing all about if it did not assure their survival? It was God’s way of illustrating that this coming judgment was to be upon the ungodly. In the midst of that judgment some of the righteous would also suffer, and possibly even experience death. However, their lives were of such a nature (stamped with God’s approval) that they would receive the ultimate victory.

30 David Chilton, Day of Vengeance, 203.
31 Ogden, 211.
32 Chilton, 203.
33 Jim McGuiggen, Revelation, 116.
saying, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads.”

And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel:

From the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand, from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand,

from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand, from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand, from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand,

from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand, from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand, from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand,

From the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand, from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand, from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand were sealed. The selection and order of the tribes listed here has given rise to much speculation among commentators. For example, why is the tribe of Dan missing? Why is Joseph listed along with his son Manasseh, but there is no mention of Ephraim? (cf. Deut. 29:29).
8 from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand, from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand, from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand were sealed.

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

10 and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

11 And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,

12 saying, “Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”

13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?”

9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; This great multitude which no one could number are those who are added to Christ, after the cross. They are not exclusive to Israel but are from “every nation and all tribes and tongues.” This helps us in understanding the 144,000. Together these two groups represent the saved of the Old and New Covenants. However, contextually, this great multitude of people would be those first century Christians (Jew and Gentile) we read of in the New Testament.

10 and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

11 And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,

12 saying, “Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.” Many people wonder about the nature of heaven. Based on the scenes we have witnessed thus far in Revelation, heaven will be a place full of praise to God.

13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?”

14 I said to him, “My lord, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, The mention of the great tribulation again reminds us of the words of Jesus in His Olivet discourse when He spoke of such a coming time, before that (first century) generation passed away (Matt. 24:21, 34). The prophet Daniel also spoke of the same great tribulation as identified by Jesus and John (Dan. 12:2). That great tribulation was a reference to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. The ones pictured here have come out of this period of suffering. Commentators differ as to whether they or alive or dead. They have overcome and are serving God, either in heaven or in the church. and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They had obeyed the gospel and remained faithful to Christ in spite of intense persecution and a time of great tribulation.
14 I said to him, “My lord, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.
15 “For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them.
16 “They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat;
17 for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.”

15 “For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. This could be either heaven or earth. Depending on how you view the ones mentioned in verse thirteen, whether alive or dead, will determine how you interpret this verse.
16 “They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; Physically, perhaps this is representative of the period of the great tribulation being over. Spiritually, the end of hunger and thirst would be that as promised by Jesus (cf. John 6:48ff).
17 for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.” When one considers all the many blessings we have in Christ and the ultimate victory we have in Him, it is cause for great joy! In this way, God will wipe away the tears from our eyes.

CHAPTER SEVEN: QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION POINTS:

➢ The symbolism of this chapter and what it may tell us about the work of angels.

➢ The sealing of the bond-servants of God.
   Would some of the righteous still perish in the conflict? Why?

➢ The symbolism of the 144,000.
   Discuss various interpretations.
   Should the number be interpreted literally?

➢ The symbolism of the “great multitude which no one could count” (7:9).
   Who are these people? Can they be identified with scripture?

CHAPTER EIGHT

1 When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.
2 And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.
3 Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne.
4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel’s hand.
5 Then the angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar, and threw it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

1 When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. The silence was for the events that were about to take place (cf. Hab. 2:20; Zep. 1:7; Zec. 2:13). As to the time period of about half an hour, Homer Hailey wrote: “A half hour is ordinarily a short period of time, but it seems long when one is waiting. The impressive pause focuses attention on heaven’s interest as all wait in breathless suspense and expectation for what is to follow.”

2 And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. The opening of the seventh seal brings seven trumpets. These trumpets will sound forth warnings of coming judgment. Their blasts will sound in successive order beginning in verse six of this chapter.

3 Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne. As the seven angels with the seven trumpets wait to sound their warning of coming judgment, the prayers of the saints are heard. Earlier in Revelation, we heard from the Old Testament souls under the altar who were crying for vengeance. They were told to wait until their fellow servants and brethren were also killed. During the first century, the persecution of Christians was great, beginning not by Rome, but by the Jews. It was their guilt in this death of the saints that God was pouring out upon first century Jerusalem (cf. Matt. 23:29-38; Rev. 17:6; 18:24).

4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel’s hand. Though angels are pictured in Revelation as ministering around the altar with the prayers of the saints, it is God who answers our prayers. Thus, the incense goes up before God. However, the work of angels in God bringing about an answer to prayer is seen in scripture (cf. Dan. 10ff; Acts 12:5ff; 27:23ff).

5 Then the angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar, and threw it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake. All of these are pictures of a coming storm. As it is used in scripture, lightning symbolized several different things, each related to the subject at hand. 1). Lightning symbolized the presence of God (Ex. 19:16). 2). Lightning symbolized the manifestation of God’s power (Rev. 4:5). 3). Lightning symbolized God’s judgments against His enemies (Ps. 18:13-14).

34 Homer Hailey, Revelation, 215.
6 And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them.

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

8 The second angel sounded, and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood,

9 and a third of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed.

6 And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them. The silent waiting was over. John could see the seven angels about to sound their trumpets. Judgment was coming. Arthur Ogden notes,

A reading of Josephus’ account of the Roman-Jewish war would be most helpful in understanding this section. His treatment of the development of the war, and the order of events that transpired, appear to reveal the same order as that presented here in the Apocalypse. While we must be careful about giving specific applications to apocalyptic language, we believe the comparisons will reveal similarities too obvious to be ignored.35

As we proceed through these various trumpets, we will present some of the historical accounts of Josephus. These will reveal the similarities of which Ogden speaks. This is strong external evidence for an early date writing of Revelation.

7 The first sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; There are several symbols here to be discussed. The first being hail. Those who take a futuristic interpretation of the book tend to literalize symbols of this nature. For example, Chuck Smith says of this description of hail being thrown to the earth,

It is entirely possible, of course, that this will be a spectacular, supernatural work of God—fire raining down from heaven to consume much of the earth. But I tend to think there will be some “natural explanation behind it. That’s why I believe God might use a “stray” asteroid or meteorite to carry out His plan.36

Sensationalistic futuristic interpretations such as this are often presented by the popular prophecy teachers of the day. However, is John really describing meteorites being hurled to the earth by God? Not likely! In the Old Testament, the imagery of hail was sometimes associated with weapons of war which brought about destruction (cf. Isa. 28:1-2; 30:30ff; Eze. 13:11-16). This is exactly what we find in Josephus’ historical account of the Roman-Jewish war.

One of the first areas of attack was Galilee. The one charged to defend that area for the Jews was Josephus. However, his army was no match against a Roman force of what

35 Ogden, 221.
36 Chuck Smith, The Last Days, the Middle East, and the Book of Revelation, 82.
he described as being in the number of sixty-thousand strong!\textsuperscript{37} Listen to his description of the Roman camp and their engines of war (catapults):

As for what is within the camp, it is set apart for tents, but the outward circumference hath the resemblance of a wall, and is adorned with towers at equal distances, where between the towers stand the engines for throwing arrows and darts, and for slingling stones, and where they lay all other engines that can annoy the enemy, all ready for their several operations.\textsuperscript{38}

One can picture the stones hurled by these engines as hail falling from the sky. John described it as “hail and fire mixed with blood being thrown to the earth.” Once again, listen to the eyewitness description of Josephus as to the appearance of Galilee after the Roman attack, “…Galilee was all over filled with fire and blood; nor was it exempted from any kind of misery or calamity…”\textsuperscript{39} It is interesting that his description of “fire and blood” matches almost exactly that of John’s. \textit{and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.} This is not a description of the destruction of one third of the whole world, although, some literalists will apply it as such. The destruction occurs where the fire and blood and hail fell upon “the land” (Greek word \textit{ge} = land or earth). This matches the description already given by Josephus.

\textbf{8 The second angel sounded, and something like a great mountain burning with fire} Mountains were often used to symbolically describe nations (cf. Isa. 2:2; Jer. 51:25; Amos 4:1). \textit{was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood, 9 and a third of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed.} Here we have reference to an apparent battle at sea in which a nation (mountain) was defeated, or perhaps a third thereof; although, the specific sea or nation is not identified. Josephus mentions some trouble at sea for the Jews that took place at Joppa. Some of the Jews of that area had turned to the sea, for their land was being destroyed.

In the meantime there were gathered together, as well such as had seditiously got out from among their enemies as those that had escaped out of the demolished cities, which were in all a great number, and repaired Joppa, which had been left desolate by Cestius, that it might serve them for a place of refuge; and because the adjoining region had been laid waste in the war, and was not capable of supporting them, they determined to go off to sea. They also built themselves a great many piratical ships, and turned pirates upon the sea near to Syria, and Phoenicia, and Egypt, and made those seas unnavigable to all men. Now as soon as Vespasian knew of their conspiracy, he sent both footmen and horsemen to Joppa, which was unguarded in the nighttime; however, those that were in it perceived that they should be attacked, and were afraid of it; yet did they not endeavor to keep the Romans out, but fled to their ships, and lay at sea all night, out of reach of their darts.

Now Joppa is not naturally a haven, for it ends in a rough shore, where all the rest of it is straight, but the two ends bend towards each other, where there are deep precipices and great stones that jut out into the sea, and where the chains wherewith Andromeda was bound have left their footsteps, which attest to the antiquity of that fable; but the north

\textsuperscript{37} Josephus, \textit{Wars of the Jews}, 3, 4, 2
\textsuperscript{38} Josephus, \textit{Wars of the Jews} 3, 5, 2
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid. 3, 4, 1
wind opposes and beats upon the shore, and dashes mighty waves against the rocks which
receive them, and renders the haven more dangerous than the country they had deserted.

Now as those people of Joppa were floating about in the sea, in the morning there fell a
violent wind upon them; it is called by those that sail there “the black north wind,” and
there dashed their ships one against another, and dashed some of them against the rocks,
and carried many of them by force, while they strove against the opposite waves, into the
main sea; for the shore was so rocky, and had so many of the enemy upon it, that they were
afraid to come to land; nay, the waves rose so very high, that they drowned them; nor was
there any place whither they could fly, nor any way to save themselves; while they were
thrust out of the sea, by the violence of the wind, if they staid where they were, and out of
the city by the violence of the Romans; and much lamentation there was when the ships
were dashed against one another, and a terrible noise when they were broken to pieces; and
some of the multitude that were in them were covered with the waves, and so perished, and
a great many were embarrassed with shipwrecks; but some of them thought, that to die by
their own swords was lighter than by the sea, and so they killed themselves before they
were drowned; although the greatest part of them were carried by the waves, and dashed to
pieces against the abrupt parts of the rocks, insomuch that the sea was bloody a long way,
and the maritime parts were full of dead bodies; for the Romans came upon those that were
carried to the shore, and destroyed them; and the number of the bodies that were thus
thrown out of the sea was four thousand and two hundred. The Romans also took the city
without opposition, and utterly destroyed it.  

Once again, there are remarkable similarities found in Josephus’ historical account of
the Roman-Jewish war and the Apocalypse. Though it is hard to be dogmatic about
interpreting Bible symbolism with historical events such as this, the similarities are
interesting and hard to simply ignore. If there were but one or two similarities they could
easily be dismissed, however there is an abundance of such that must be considered.

10 The third angel sounded, and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch,
and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters.

11 The name of the star is called Wormwood; and a third of the waters became
wormwood, and many men died from the waters, because they were made bitter.

Once again, literalists would interpret these verses as actual stars falling from the sky.
Graphic language is used by such writers to describe the devastation upon earth when
such occurs in “the last days.” That this star is not a literal star is seen in the fact that it is
given a name, “Wormwood.” Vine’s had this to say about the word: “Apsinthos (Eng.,
“absinthe”), a plant both bitter and deleterious, and growing in desolate places,
figuratively suggestive of “calamity” (Lam. 3:15) and injustice (Amos 5:7), is used in
Rev. 8:11 (twice; in the 1st part as a proper name). This considered, who then would
this star that causes bitterness represent? The fact that the star is pictured as falling may
suggest that it was someone in a position of authority (cf. Isa. 14:12-15; Matt. 24:29).
Ogden makes an interesting case for the star being a reference to Josephus. He points to
some words of Josephus himself in regards to his defeat by the Romans and how it was
received by the Jews. Interestingly, this follows sequentially in his historical account
right after the events we have just presented.

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40Josephus, Wars of the Jews, 3, 9, 1-4
10 The third angel sounded, and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters.
11 The name of the star is called Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the waters, because they were made bitter.
12 The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way.
13 Then I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, “Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!”

But now, when the fate of Jotapata was related at Jerusalem, a great many at the first disbeliefed it, on account of the vastness of the calamity, and because they had no eyewitness to attest the truth of what was related about it; for not one person was saved to be a messenger of that news, but a fame was spread abroad at random that the city was taken, as such fame usually spreads bad news about. However, the truth was known by degrees, from the places near Jotapata, and appeared to all to be too true. Yet were there fictitious stories added to what was really done; for it was reported that Josephus was slain at the taking of the city; which piece of news filled Jerusalem full of sorrow. In every house also, and among all to whom any of the slain were allied, there was a lamentation for them; but the mourning for the commander was a public one; and some mourned for those that had lived with them, others for their kindred, others for their friends, and others for their brethren, but all mourned for Josephus; insomuch that the lamentation did not cease in the city before the thirtieth day; and a great many hired mourners, with their pipes, who should begin the melancholy ditties for them.

But as the truth came out in time, it appeared how the affairs of Jotapata really stood; yet it was found that the death of Josephus was fiction; and when they understood that he was alive, and was among the Romans, and that the commanders treated him at another rate than they treated captives, they were as vehemently angry at him now as they had shown their good will before, when he appeared to have been dead. He was also abused by some as having been a coward, and by others as a deserter; and the city was full of indignation at him, and of reproaches cast upon him; their rage was also aggravated by their afflictions, and more inflamed by their ill-success; and what usually becomes an occasion of caution to wise men, I mean affliction, became a spur to them to venture on farther calamities, and the end of one misery became still the beginning of another; they therefore resolved to fall on the Romans the more vehemently, as resolving to be revenged on him in revenging themselves on the Romans.⁴²

12 The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way. As to the symbolism of the sun, moon and stars, see comments on 6:12-14. That a third of each is darkened would represent that the battle is not yet over, but full destruction is on its way, as is indicated by the message of the flying eagle in the next verse.
13 Then I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, “Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!” These woes will be referenced later as the unveiling continues (cf. Rev. 9:12; 11:14).

⁴²Josephus, Wars, 3, 9, 5-6
CHAPTER EIGHT: QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION POINTS:

- The symbolism of verses three and four.
  What does it tell us about our prayers?
  What does it tell us about the work of angels and our prayers?

- Should verses five and seven be interpreted literally?
  Are there some Old Testament uses of “hail” that might relate to what is being described? Give some examples.

- The parallels of Josephus’ accounting and the symbolism of this chapter.

- The symbolism of “Wormwood.” (8:11)
  Could this be a reference to Josephus?

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

1 Then the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him. Once again, we see that this cannot be a literal star for it is referenced as “him” and not “it.” This star represents a personality. It is different from the star in 8:10 which John saw falling, this one had already fallen. Based on the fact that “he” is given the key to the bottomless pit and that later he is described as the king of the demons (vs. 11), it is the common belief of commentators that this is speaking of Satan (cf. Lk. 10:18). The key given to him is a symbol of authority (cf. Matt. 16:19). The authority given to him was by the only One able to grant such: God.

2 He opened the bottomless pit, and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit. The imagery here is obviously dark and threatening. Like smoke seen filling the sky during a great fire it is a cause for alarm and a signal of approaching danger.

3 Then out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth, and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. These are not to be interpreted as literal locusts. They represent a destructive force. This will be illustrated later in the chapter. The symbol of locusts coming out of the smoke would also spell disaster. Swarms of locusts can quickly devastate the land. The symbol of locusts comes right from the O.T. (Ex. 10:12-15; Isa. 33:4; Jer. 51:27; Joel 2:4ff; 2:25).

4 They were told not to hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. That these locusts were not to hurt the grass or trees is again letting us know that they are not to be taken literally. They are only to hurt those who do not have the seal of God on their forehead.

5 And they were not permitted to kill anyone, but to torment for five months; and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man. Who are these locusts? Some might say the Roman army. However, the restriction from killing anyone would seem to discourage such an interpretation. Gentry offer this explanation:
A great many commentators agree that, stripped of the poetic imagery, the locusts are really demons and their sting is that of the pain and influence of demonic oppression. This seems to be quite clearly the case in the light of their origin (the bottomless pit, 9:1-3), their task (they afflict only men, 9:4), and their ruler (“the angel of the abyss,” surely Satan, 9:11). If demons are in view in this passage, this fits well with requirements of the early date and the prophetic expectation of Christ in Matthew 12:38-45. There Christ teaches that during His earthly ministry He had cast out demons in Israel, but because of Israel’s resistance to His message, the demons will return in greater numbers within the “generation.”

Ogden offers another approach to the identity of the locusts. He believes they were “the wicked from the Jews who were so obsessed with defying Rome that they turned their fury upon all other Jews…” Ogden refers to this account of Josephus:

Thus did Simon unexpectedly march into Idumea, without bloodshed and made a sudden attack upon the city Hebron, and took it; wherein he got possession of a great deal of prey, and plundered it of a vast quantity of fruit. Now the people of the country say, that it is an ancientser city, not only than any in that country, but than Memphis in Egypt, and accordingly its age is reckoned at two thousand and three hundred years. They also relate that it had been the habitation of Abram, the progenitor of the Jews, after he had removed out of Mesopotamia; and they say that his posterity descended from thence into Egypt, whose monuments are to this very time shown in that small city; the fabric of which monuments are of the most excellent marble, and wrought after the most elegant manner. There is also there shown, at the distance of six furlongs from the city, a very large turpentine tree; and the report goes, that this tree has continued ever since the creation of the world. Thence did Simon make his progress over all Idumea, and did not only ravage the cities and villages, but laid waste the whole country; for, besides those that were completely armed, he had forty thousand men that followed him, insomuch that he had not provisions enough to suffice such a multitude. Now, besides this want of provisions that he was in, he was of a barbarous disposition, and bore great anger at this nation, by which means it came to pass that Idumea was greatly depopulated; and as one may see all the woods behind despoiled of their leaves by locusts, after they have been there, so was there nothing left behind Simon’s army but a desert. Some places they burnt down, some they utterly demolished, and whatsoever grew in the country, they either trod it down or fed upon it, and by their marches they made the ground that was cultivated, harder and more untractable than that which was barren. In short, there was no sign remaining of those places that had been laid waste, that ever they had had a being.

Which of these interpretations is correct? Maybe both! It could be that the seditious Jews of the time, in their revolt against Rome and their own countrymen, was heavily influenced by demonic forces.

6 And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death flees from them. Interestingly, Josephus describes this very kind of sentiment among the Jewish people due to the horrific behavior of their own countrymen! He writes:

43 Kenneth Gentry, Before Jerusalem Fell, 247-248.
44 Ogden, 232.
45 Josephus, Wars 4, 9, 7
Along all the roads also vast numbers of dead bodies lay in heaps, and even many of those that were so zealous in deserting, at length chose rather to perish within the city; for the hopes of burial made death in their own city appear of the two less terrible to them.

Nay the terror was so very great, that he who survived called them that were first dead happy, as being at rest already; as did those that were under torture in the prisons, declare, that, upon this comparison, those that lay unburied were the happiest.  

7 The appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle; Now we are given more detailed descriptions of the locusts. In this further description, we see again that they are not to be interpreted literally. The imagery of horses prepared for battle means they are armed and ready to fight. and on their heads appeared to be crowns like gold, Crowns of gold would suggest that they were victorious in their efforts. and their faces were like the faces of men. We have already seen that these locusts were evil men.

8 They had hair like the hair of women, and their teeth were like the teeth of lions.

9 They had breastplates like breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle. All together, the description here of the appearance of the locusts is extremely strange. And this of course had led to much speculation as to what they represent. One of the most sensationalistic interpretations comes from the pen of Hal Lindsay. He writes:

There are diverse opinions among Bible teachers as to whether these creatures are actually going to be a supernatural, mutant locust especially created for this judgment or whether they symbolize some modern device of warfare.

I have a Christian friend who was a Green Beret in Viet Nam. When he first read this chapter he said, “I know what those are. I’ve seen hundreds of them in Viet Nam. They’re Cobra helicopters!”

That may just be conjecture, but it does give you something to think about! A Cobra helicopter does fit the composite description very well. They also make the sound of “many chariots.” My friend believes that the means of torment will be a kind of nerve gas sprayed from its tail.

In a similar way, Chuck Smith gets just as wild with his interpretation of these verses and the identity of the locusts. He wrote this:

[John] is given a vision of millions of soldiers sweeping into battle, using machines and weapons that won’t be developed for nearly 2,000 years. John is from an age when armies fought each other with spears and swords; how could he understand bombs, bullets, and chemical warfare? How shocked he would have been to see soldiers carrying rocket launchers, army tanks blasting away with huge artillery shells, and mushroom clouds rising into the sky. Yet that seems to be what he is describing.

46 Josephus, Wars, 4, 6, 3.
47 Hal Lindsey, There’s a New World Coming, 138-139.
It seems hard to imagine that John would be describing Cobra helicopters, army tanks, and chemical warfare to his readers. The time frame for events in Revelation that were soon to take place does not allow for such modern interpretations.

Josephus once again gives us an interesting parallel to some of the descriptions given of the locusts. It involves a group of seditious Jews who were led by a man name John.

Now this Simon, who was without the wall, was a greater terror to the people than the Romans themselves, as were the zealots who were within it more heavy upon them than both of the other; and during this time did the mischievous contrivances and courage [of John] corrupt the body of the Galileans; for these Galileans had advanced this John, and made him very potent, who made them a suitable requital from the authority he had obtained by their means; for he permitted them to do all things that any of them desired to do, while their inclination to plunder was insatiable, as was their zeal in searching the houses of the rich; and for the murdering of the men, and abusing of the women, it was sport to them. They also devoured what spoils they had taken, together with their blood, and indulged themselves in feminine wantonness, without any disturbance till they were satiated therewith; while they decked their hair, and put on women’s garments, and were besmeared over with ointments; and that they might appear very comely, they had paints under their eyes, and imitated, not only the ornaments, but also the lust of women, and were guilty of such intolerable uncleanness, and they invented unlawful pleasures of that sort. And thus did they roll themselves up and down the city, as in a brothel house, and defiled it entirely with their impure actions; nay, while their faces looked like the faces of women, they killed with their right hands; and when their gait was effeminate, they presently attacked men, and became warriors, and drew their swords from under their finely dyed cloaks and ran everybody through whom they alighted upon. However, Simon waited for such as ran away from John, and was the more bloody of the two: and he who had escaped the tyrant within the wall, was destroyed by the other that lay before the gates. So that all attempts of flying and deserting to the Romans were cut off, if any had a mind so to do.49

Does this solve with absolute certainty all that John was describing? Of course not. However, historically, it is an interesting similarity to consider in view of the context of Revelation.

10 They have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months. The time period of five months indicates that this “demonic work” was limited. Chilton noted, “This figure of five months is, first of all, a reference to the period of five months, from May to September, when locusts normally appear.”50

11 They have as king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon. The leader of the locusts is again identified. In verse one he was the star that had fallen from heaven. Here he is called “Abaddon” (Hebrew = ruin or destruction) and “Apollyon” (Greek = destroyer).  

49 Josephus, Wars, 6, 9, 10.
50 Chilton, 244.
8 They had hair like the hair of women, and their teeth were like the teeth of lions.
9 They had breastplates like breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle.
10 They have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months.
11 They have as king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon.
12 The first woe is past; behold, two woes are still coming after these things.
13 Then the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,
14 one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.”
15 And the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released, so that they would kill a third of mankind.
16 The number of the armies of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them.

12 The first woe is past; behold, two woes are still coming after these things. Considering the evil and destructive nature of the first woe, one can hardly imagine what the second might bring. “Woe” is certainly an apt word!
13 Then the sixth angel sounded, The seven trumpets are still sounding in order. The sixth now sounds. and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, (cf. Lev. 4:13-21; 1 Kings 1:50-51).
14 one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.” Thus far we have seen the actions of the seditious Jews against Rome and their own people, the focus now shifts to the invasion of the Roman forces. The reference to the Euphrates is very significant. “It was the northern frontier of Palestine (cf. Gen. 15:18; Deut. 11:24; Josh. 1:4), across which Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian invaders had come to impose their pagan sovereignty on the people of God. All the scriptural warnings about a foe from the north, therefore, find their echo in John’s bloodcurdling vision” (cf. Jer. 6:1, 22; 10:22; 13:20; 25:9, 26; 46:210, 24; 47:2; Eze. 26:7; 38:6, 15; 39:2). 51 The forces of Rome are pictured here as being bound for a time at the river Euphrates. Historically, Rome had stationed (bound) troops in this area to prevent any Jews from the area north to come to the aid of their countrymen. When Titus gathered his forces together in the area of Syria, he removed the guard and took them with him for the assault on Jerusalem.

Thus did John hope to be too hard for his enemies by these engines constructed by his impiety; but God himself demonstrated that his pains would prove of no use to him by bringing the Romans upon him before he had reared any of his towers; for Titus, when he had gotten together part of his forces about him, and had ordered the rest to meet him at Jerusalem, marched out of Caesarea. He had with him those three legions that had accompanied his father when he laid Judea waste, together with that twelfth legion which had been formerly beaten with Cestius; which legion, as it was otherwise remarkable for its valor, so did it march on now with greater alacrity to avenge themselves on the Jews, as remembering what they had formerly suffered from them.

51 G.B. Caird, 122. As quoted by Chilton, 250.
Of these legions he ordered the fifth to meet him, by going through Emmaus, and the
tenth to go up by Jericho; he also moved himself, together with the rest; besides whom
marched those auxiliaries that came from the kings, being now more in number than
before, together with a considerable number that came to his assistance from Syria.
Those also that had been selected out of these four legions, and sent with Mucianus to
Italy had their places filled up out of these soldiers that came out of Egypt with Titus,
who were two thousand men, chosen out of the armies at Alexandria. There followed
him also three thousand drawn from those that guarded the river Euphrates; as also
there came Tiberius Alexander, who was a friend of his, most valuable, both for his
good will to him and for his prudence. He had formerly been governor of Alexandria,
but was now thought worthy to be general of the army [under Titus]. The reason of this
was, that he had been the first who encouraged Vespasian very lately to accept this his
new dominion, and joined himself to him with great fidelity, when things were
uncertain, and fortune had not yet declared for him. He also followed Titus as a
counselor, very useful to him in this war, both by his age and skill in such affairs.52

15 And the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month
and year, were released, so that they would kill a third of mankind. Symbolically,
representative of the forces of Rome.

16 The number of the armies of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the
number of them. There are many who attempt to take this number literally. Hal Lindsey
for example said that these were 200 million Red Chinese soldiers. The point of the
passage is simply that this Roman force was of such a vast number that they would be
invincible in their attack on Jerusalem.

17 And this is how I saw in the vision the horses and those who sat on them: the
riders had breastplates the color of fire and of hyacinth a dark red color and of
brimstone; The NIV translates as “yellow as sulfur.” These colors would seem to be
representative of the colors of the Roman soldiers. and the heads of the horses are like
the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceed fire and smoke and brimstone.
The lion has long been recognized for its fierce nature (cf. Deut. 28:50). The thought of a
lion attack would strike fear in a potential victim. Thus the symbolism here reflects the
fierce nature of the Roman army and their ability to strike fear in their opponents.

18 A third of mankind was killed by these three plagues, by the fire and the smoke
and the brimstone which proceeded out of their mouths. This is not one third of all
mankind, for all mankind was not involved in the battle. Mankind would speak of those
humans involved in the battle, specifically, those of the Jews. Josephus records that
approximately one-third of the people died in the Roman siege of Jerusalem. He relates
that 1,100,000 died of 2,700,200.53

19 For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails are
like serpents and have heads, and with them they do harm. This is again more
symbolic descriptions of the Roman forces.

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52 Josephus, Wars, 5, 1, 6.
53 Ibid. 6, 9, 2-32.
17 And this is how I saw in the vision the horses and those who sat on them: the riders had breastplates the color of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone; and the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceed fire and smoke and brimstone. 18 A third of mankind was killed by these three plagues, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which proceeded out of their mouths. 19 For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents and have heads, and with them they do harm. 20 The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; 21 and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts.

20 The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; 21 and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts. These verses describe the refusal of the seditious to repent. Josephus himself pleaded with the people to repent, but they refused. 54 He remarked that they were “incapable of repenting” 55 Titus also pleaded for their repentance, but to no avail.

CHAPTER NINE: QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION POINTS:

- Who is the star which had fallen to earth? (cf. vs. 11)
  *Could it be a literal star? Why not?*

- The identity and symbolism of the locusts.
  *Which interpretation do you believe best fits, Gentry’s or Ogden’s? A combination of both? (See pp. 60-61).*
  *What do you think of Gentry’s application of Matthew 12:38-45?*

- The parallels of Josephus’ accounting and the symbolism of this chapter.

- What problems might one face in interpreting this chapter *literally?*

NOTES:

CHAPTER TEN

1 I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire;
2 and he had in his hand a little book which was open. He placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land;

1 I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, Who is this angel? Based on the descriptions which follow he appears to be either a representative of Christ or Christ Himself. Jesus is not an angel, but He was certainly a messenger (cf. Heb. 1:2). Note how the references which follow match earlier descriptions of Jesus. clothed with a cloud; (cf. Rev. 1:7) and the rainbow was upon his head, (cf. Rev. 4:3) and his face was like the sun, (cf. Rev. 1:16). and his feet like pillars of fire; (cf. Rev. 1:15).
2 and he had in his hand a little book which was open. (cf. Rev. 5:3-6) He placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land; This would appear to represent the complete authority possessed by Jesus (cf. Matt. 28:18).
3 and he cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars; (cf. Rev. 5:5) and when he had cried out, the seven peals of thunder uttered their voices. (cf. Rev. 4:5). As to all these similarities, Hailey noted, “…similarity does not prove identity, for as ‘another strong angel’ he is identified as an angel of the same rank or class as the ‘strong angel’ of 5:2 and 18:21. The entire description indicates that he was sent on a very special mission and that his work was of unusual importance.”
4 When the seven peals of thunder had spoken, I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken and do not write them.” The things which John heard from these seven peals of thunder were not intended for us (cf. Deut. 29:29). In contrast to the sealing of this information, John is later told in regards to the message of the Apocalypse, “Do not seal up the words of this prophecy for the time is near” (Rev. 22:10).
5 Then the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to heaven,
6 and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, Chilton notes, “Some commentators have taken this fact [the angel swearing with an oath] as their basis for holding that this Angel is not Christ, apparently regarding swearing as somehow below His dignity or out of character. One wonders, in response, about the soundness of these commentators’ views regarding the doctrine of the Trinity and Christ’s deity. For, assuredly, the Lord God swears oaths throughout Holy Scripture (cf. Gen. 22:16; Isa. 45:23; Jer. 49:13; Amos 6:8), and in fact our salvation is based on God’s faithfulness to His covenant oath, the ground of the Christian’s assurance and hope (Heb. 6:13-20). who created heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it, that there will be delay no longer, This was perhaps in answer to the cry for vengeance from the souls under the altar (Rev. 6:9-11). They were told to rest a little while longer. Now, there would be no more delay. The days of vengeance had arrived.

56 Hailey, Revelation, 242.
57 Chilton, 264.
3 and he cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars; and when he had cried out, the seven peals of thunder uttered their voices.
4 When the seven peals of thunder had spoken, I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken and do not write them.”
5 Then the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to heaven,
6 and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it, that there will be delay no longer,

7 but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets. What is the “mystery of God”? Foy Wallace gave a very clear and precise description of what we believe to be meant here:

This mystery of God is that divine plan of Ephesians 1:9-10, which was to reach its fulfillment “in the dispensation of the fullness of times,” and here the reference is to the “finish” of all events connected with its success. (Matt. 24:14) And it was accomplished for Jesus said, “this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world as a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”
In verse 31, of this discourse of Matthew 24, the Lord said that after these events of the destruction of Jerusalem he would “send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet” to “gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” These statements in Matthew and Revelation are parallel in meaning and alike had reference to the universal expansion of the kingdom of Christ, after the fall of Judaism and the end of the Jewish state.
The destruction of Jerusalem, the demolition of the temple, the downfall of Judaism, and the end of Jewish state, which politically and practically ended the Jewish dispensation, were all a part of the divine mystery. The Mosaic law had been “nailed to the cross,” “abolished” and “taken away”; but the Jewish state continued, and in that sense the Jewish dispensation functioned, until “the days of the voice of the seventh angel” which sounded the final doom. This was all in and part of “the mystery of God," the divine scheme of things, which was “finished” in the culmination of these events.

As declared to the prophets: These things were all declared to the Old Testament prophets and witness borne in the prophecies to their fulfillment. (Rom. 16:25-26; I Pet. 1:10-12) These were the things that were “manifested in last times”--the end of the Jewish world. (I Pet. 1:20). The old prophets contemplated all of the things pertaining to the kingdom of Christ, both of its inauguration and its expansion. (Gen. 49:1; Isa. 2:2-5; Mic. 4:1-4; Dan. 2:42-45; Dan. 10:14; Zech. 14) The revelations made known to the prophets were a declaration in advance of the things to come--a witness to them--and found fulfillment in the events herein disclosed. 58

8 Then the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard again speaking with me, and saying, “Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land.” In verse four, John heard a voice from heaven. This would be the same voice. It is not the strong angel holding the book who is speaking. Perhaps we are to take this to be the voice of God.

7 but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets.
8 Then the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard again speaking with me, and saying, “Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land.”
9 So I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book. And he said to me, “Take it and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey.”
10 I took the little book out of the angel’s hand and ate it, and in my mouth it was sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter.
11 And they said to me, “You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.”

This event should remind us of a similar account in the book of Ezekiel, and is perhaps intended to do just that (cf. Eze. 2:8-3:3 see also Jer. 15:16). The word of God is indeed sweet to the taste. David said the word was sweeter than honey (Ps. 19:10). However, while the word is sweet, there is a painful reality, illustrated by the bitterness in John’s stomach. Standing up for the word of God can bring persecution. The Christians of the first century could certainly testify to this! Also, the message of judgment for those who do not obey the word of God is also sometimes “hard to swallow.” Both of these ideas may be intended here. As well, a third possibility could be John’s joy at the realization of the mystery of God (see vs. 7), but the painful bitterness as to the coming end of the Old Covenant as felt in the destruction of Jerusalem.

10 I took the little book out of the angel’s hand and ate it, and in my mouth it was sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter. Just as the angel had said, the taste of the book was sweet, but a bitterness was later experienced.

11 And they said to me, “You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.” See introductory comments on Arguments Favoring an Early Date: 4). John Would Prophesy Again, page 18.

**CHAPTER TEN: QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION POINTS:**

- The identity of “another strong angel” in the first three verses.
  *Is this an angel or Christ? Explain the reasons for your conclusion.*

- What is the “mystery of God” in verse seven?

- The symbolism in verses 8-10.
  *What does this say about the word of God?*
  *Is a similar scene found in the Old Testament? Where?*

- How does verse eleven impact one’s choice of a date of writing for Revelation?
1 Then there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, “Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it.

2 “Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months.

3 “And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.”

John is told to measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it. This strongly suggests a pre-A.D. 70 writing. If John is writing in A.D. 96 the temple would have been long gone. There are those, such as Homer Hailey, who take a late date approach who see the temple mentioned in this verse as a reference to the church. However, notice in verse two that the temple is said to be in the holy city. And what is the holy city? Jerusalem (See comments on verse two where Jerusalem is clearly identified). In connection with the verse which follows, we see that these inner elements of the temple were measured so as not to be destroyed by the Gentiles. There are several interesting approaches to what is meant here. Gentry offers this:

…the measuring of the Temple is for the preservation of its innermost aspect, i.e. the altar, and worshipers within. This seems to refer to the inner-spiritual idea of the Temple in the New Covenant era. Thus, while judgment is about to be brought upon Israel, Jerusalem, and the literal Temple complex, this prophecy speaks also of the preservation of God’s new Temple, the Church (Eph. 2:19ff; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; 1 Pet. 2:5ff) that had its birth in… Jerusalem.

Ogden offers another approach:

John was only told to measure the temple, the dwelling place of God. This was the temple proper, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place (Heb. 9:1-8). The area outside the temple proper, the courts and the holy city, were to be given to the Gentiles…. The significance of what John wrote is this: the Gentiles were not responsible for the destruction of the temple proper. Josephus relates that the seditious Jews were responsible for the destruction of the temple proper. The Romans destroyed everything else.

2 “Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months. The only city in the Bible called “the holy city” is Jerusalem (cf. Neh. 11:1; Isa. 52:1; Dan. 9:24; Matt. 4:5; Matt. 27:53). If the holy city is Jerusalem and the temple is located in Jerusalem, this temple could hardly be a reference to the church. For Hailey, the holy city is the spiritual Jerusalem. One has a hard time understanding how the

59 Gentry, 174.
60 Ogden, 251.
spiritual Jerusalem could be trod under foot by the nations for forty-two months; especially when this type of language is so consistent with that which the Lord spoke concerning physical Jerusalem of old. For example, Jesus says this in Luke’s account of the Olivet discourse:

“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near. “Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city; because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled. “Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people; 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.


In both Revelation 11:2 and Luke 21:24 we have Jerusalem being tread under foot by the Gentiles (or the nations). It is clear that both passages are describing the same first century event. The subject of Jerusalem’s first century destruction is further confirmed when we examine the time frame given of 42 months. Wallace notes:

Vespasian received his commission from Nero, and declared war on Jerusalem February, A.D. 67. The siege ended with the fall of Jerusalem, the burning of the city and temple, in August, A.D. 70. This computation of dates yields the forty-two months for Jerusalem to be “trodden under foot” as in the vision of Rev. 11:2. The historical authority for these dates is Lardner’s Jewish Testimonies, Vol. 8, and Josephus, in Wars Of The Jews.61

3 “And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, Who are the two witnesses? Depending upon the date one assigns for the writing of the book, the identity of the two witnesses will change. For example, from a late perspective, Hailey believes the two witnesses to be representative of the Holy Spirit and the Apostles. From an early date perspective, we believe the two witnesses to be representative of the Law and the Prophets. The reason for such an interpretation will be seen as the text continues. The idea of two witnesses is significant from the requirements of the Old Covenant. At least two witnesses were required for a sentence of death (Deut. 17:6). and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, The time frame of twelve hundred and sixty days is the same as the forty-two months (42 x 30 = 1260), clothed in sackcloth.” This was the dress that symbolized mourning (cf. Gen. 37:34; 2 Sam. 3:31; Esther 4:1; Isa. 20:2ff; Jer. 4:8; 6:26; Jonah 3:6; Zec. 13:4ff). The prophets of God would sometimes attire themselves in sackcloth and plead for the people to repent.

4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. Ogden notes, “The Olive tree was the source of oil for the candlestick (lampstand). The two witnesses (the Law and the Prophets) were the sources of oil from whence the nation of Israel drew her light…. (cf. Matt. 5:17; 7:12; 11:13; 22:40; Lk. 16:16, 29, 31; Jn. 1:45; Acts 24:14; 26:22; 28:23; Rom. 3:21).62

61 Wallace, 215.
62 Ogden, 252.
4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.
5 And if anyone wants to harm them, fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies; so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way.
6 These have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.
7 When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them.
8 And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.
9 Those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb.

5 And if anyone wants to harm them, Here is where the identity of the two witnesses being the Law and Prophets becomes clearer. Careful examination of the powers of these two witnesses points to Moses and Elijah, who together, embodied the Law and the Prophets. fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies; (cf. Num. 11:1-3; 2 Kings 1:5-17). so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way.
6 These have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying; (1 Kings 17:1-7; James 5:17-18) and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, (Ex. 7:14ff) and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire. All of the descriptions given here point to Moses and Elijah (the Law and the Prophets).
7 When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them. The beast referenced here will be identified later as the Roman Empire. The Law and the Prophets were “overcome” and “killed” in the sense that Jerusalem and the temple (remember the context of this chapter) were destroyed.
8 And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. The place where our Lord was crucified is obvious enough: Jerusalem. But what about the references to Sodom and Egypt? Turning to the Old Testament scriptures we can see references to Jerusalem as Sodom (Isa. 1:9-10; 3:9; Jer. 25:14; Lam. 4:6; Eze. 16:44-49, 53-59). Egypt as a symbol for Israel may be seen in the many years she spent in that nation. Egypt was an integral part of her history. The Passover celebration commemorated Israel’s deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. What we find then is that these symbols are a perfect match for what was being communicated to John. The “great city” where our Lord was crucified was Jerusalem.
9 Those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. The destruction of Jerusalem and Israel’s temple would cause many to look in wonder. In the next verse, we see that this scene of destruction would become a cause of celebration for some.
10 And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and celebrate; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.
11 But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were watching them.
12 And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” Then they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them.
13 And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.
14 The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly.
15 Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.”

10 And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and celebrate; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. The Law and the Prophets had made Israel a peculiar people. “Their different ways, days, and laws were a thorn in the flesh to all people, especially to the people of the Roman world.”

11 But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were watching them. When it was fully realized that the Law and the Prophets had been fulfilled, that their testimony was true (even in regards to Jerusalem’s destruction), it would prompt great fear.

12 And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” Then they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them. This is a symbolic portrayal of the Law and the Prophets, having served their purpose, and returning to God who gave them.

13 And in that hour there was a great earthquake, Not a literal earthquake, but symbolic of the destructive forces of the Roman army. and a tenth of the city fell; This would be representative of the temple area, which comprised about one-tenth of Jerusalem. seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, “Seven” thousand would appear to be symbolic of the completeness of this destruction. and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. Listen again to a description given by Josephus of the temple destruction and some of the events that followed.

While the holy house was on fire, everything was plundered that came to hand, and ten thousand of those that were caught were slain; nor was there a commiseration of any age, or any reverence of gravity; but children and old men, and profane persons, and priests, were all slain in the same manner; so that this war went round all sorts of men, and brought them to destruction, and as well those that made supplication for their lives as those that defended themselves by fighting. The flame was also carried a long way, and made an echo, together with the groans of those that were slain; and because this hill was high, and the works at the temple were very great, one would have thought the whole city had been on fire. Nor can one imagine anything either greater or more terrible than this noise; for there was at once a shout of the Roman legions, who were marching all together, and a sad clamor of the seditious, who were now surrounded with fire and sword. The people also

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63 Ogden, 254-255.
that were left above were beaten back upon the enemy, and under a great consternation, and made sad moans at the calamity they were under; the multitude also that was in the city joined in this outcry with those that were upon the hill; and besides, many of those that were worn away by the famine, and their mouths almost closed, when they saw the fire of the holy house, they exerted their utmost strength, and broke out into groans and outcries again: Perea did also return the echo, as well as the mountains round about [the city], and augmented the force of the entire noise. Yet was the misery itself more terrible than this disorder; for one would have thought that the hill itself, on which the temple stood, was seething hot, as full of fire on every part of it, that the blood was larger in quantity than the fire, and those that were slain more in number than those that slew them; for the ground did nowhere appear visible, for the dead bodies that lay on it; but the soldiers went over heaps of these bodies, as they ran upon such as fled from them. And now it was that the multitude of the robbers were thrust out [of the inner court of the temple] by the Romans, and had much ado to get into the outer court, and from thence into the city, while the remainder of the populace fled into the cloister of that outer court. As for the priests, some of them plucked up from the holy house the spikes that were upon it, with their bases, which were made of lead, and shot them at the Romans instead of darts. But then as they gained nothing by so doing, and as the fire burst out upon them, they retired to the wall that was eight cubits broad, and there they tarried; yet did two of these of eminence among them, who might have saved themselves by going over to the Romans, or have borne up with courage, and taken their fortune with the others, throw themselves into the fire, and were burnt together with the holy house; their names were Meirus the son of Belgas, and Joseph the son of Daleus.64

14 The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly. The third woe is not specifically identified by John. That it was coming quickly may connect it with the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

15 Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.” These are the shouts of victory. With the destruction of the temple and the complete end to the Old Covenant, the New could expand to far greater horizons (cf. Matt. 24:31). In this way, Wallace noted:

With the fall of Jerusalem came the shaking down of all Jewish opposition to gospel. Christianity was liberated from the fetters of Judaism and entered upon a worldwide career of leavening the civilizations of world by bringing them under the influence of Christ. Thus the kingdoms or dominions of men became the kingdoms of our Lord (God) and of his Christ. In Eph. 5:5 the apostle designated it the kingdom of God and Christ, and declared in Col. 1:13-14 that it was then present. But in the apocalypse, the trumpets, thunders and earthquakes were envisioned as shaking down opposition of all human dominion to give way to the “kingdom which cannot be shaken” (Heb. 12:18-28).65

16 And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, We were first introduced to these elders in chapter four (cf. 4:4).

64 Josephus, Wars 6, 5, 1
65 Wallace, Revelation, 229.
16 And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God,
17 saying, “We give You thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign.
18 “And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth.”
19 And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple, and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm.

17 saying, “We give You thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign. Here again we see the fullness of the kingdom that would now take place upon the destruction of Jerusalem, and the burning end to Old Covenant Israel. All authority in heaven and earth was given to Jesus at His resurrection (Matt. 28:18). Upon His ascension he took His seat on His throne (Acts 2:29-36). But here we see, in the symbolic language of the Apocalypse, the fullness of kingdom with the removal of the Old Covenant.

In His Olivet discourse, Jesus spoke about the sign that would occur for Israel at the time of Jerusalem’s end.

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.

Matthew 24:30

Many interpret this as a reference to the Second Coming of Jesus. This is an incorrect interpretation. Jesus is quoting from the prophet Daniel 7:13-14 where Daniel views the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven and going up to the ancient of days. There is no mention of Jesus coming down to earth. The picture is His ascension into heaven where He received glory and a kingdom.

This is the sign of which Jesus was prophesying. His coming in judgment against Jerusalem would reveal His authority as King and the truth of His being the Messiah. In consideration of this, notice how the verse begins with the words “And then…” This connects it with the word “immediately” in verse twenty-nine, where (we are told with symbolical language) that the governing bodies of Israel would go dark. “And then…” could be rendered “at that time.” At what time? At the time of the dark end for Israel as the covenant people of God.

“At that time” the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky.” The word “sky” would be better rendered (as in some translations), “heaven.” The Greek word used here ouranos is sometimes rendered “sky,” but most commonly, “heaven.” In the NASB it is rendered “heaven” or “heavenly” 243 times and “sky” only 22 times. In the KJV it is translated “sky” only five times. It is also significant to note that there is no definite article in the Greek. It is not “in the heaven; but “in heaven.” All of this considered, a more literal translation of this verse would be, “At that time will appear (to bring to light or shine forth) the sign (the distinguishing mark) of the Son of Man in heaven.”
The sign is not Jesus physically appearing in the sky. The sign that appears is *The Son of man in heaven* (cf. Dan. 7:13-14). This would be the sign Israel would finally see. Remember that the Jews of that day and time rejected Him as Messiah and King. They rejected His kingdom. At His trial before the High Priest:

> Jesus said to him, “You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter **you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power**, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”
> Matthew 26:64

Jesus warned the religious leaders of His day that they would see Him sitting at the right hand of power. Jesus told them they would see Him coming on the clouds of heaven. And they did! They saw it in the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome. Jesus said their house would be left desolate and as prophesied, it was completely leveled. And when it was, when the end came, *then appeared the sign of the Son of Man in heaven*. When that promised end came, they would see that Jesus was the Messiah and King whom they had rejected.

Upon the revelation of that sign, Jesus says, “All the tribes of the earth will mourn.” Contrary to popular belief this is not a reference to all the people of the world. The time text will not allow for such an application. Remember: “This (first century) generation will not pass away until all these things take place” (Matt. 24:34). This considered, we can see that the “the tribes of the earth” or as it could rendered, “the tribes of the land,” contextually would have to be a reference to Israel. They (Israel) would mourn because of the great devastation and death experienced in the Roman siege of their city. Israel would mourn because they would recognize this judgment was from the Son of Man (cf. Rev. 1:7).

In the next verse in Matthew’s account of the Olivet discourse, Jesus says,

> And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.
> Matthew 24:31

Many also believe this to be a prophetic picture of the Second Coming of Jesus and the Day of Judgment. One of the factors undoubtedly leading many to such a conclusion is the mention of angels. However, we must remember that the Hebrew and Greek words translated “angel” simply mean messenger (Heb. = *malak* Gr. = *angelos*). The context of each passage where the words are used must be examined to determine if the angel is celestial or terrestrial. In many instances, it is human (terrestrial) messengers in view (cf. Num. 20:14; 21:21; Jos. 7:22; 2 Sam 2:5; Hag. 1:13; Mal. 2:7; Lk. 7:24; 9:52).

The question is, which translation of *angelos* should be made in Matthew 24:31, terrestrial or celestial? The context, the highly symbolic language, and the all-important time-text, would dictate these angels to be terrestrial. They are human messengers of the gospel.

In connection with this, the great trumpet of the verse would be symbolic of the gospel message. Among the various uses for trumpets in the Old Testament was the calling of God’s people together (cf. Num 10:1). Like a trumpet, the gospel would call men from the four winds and from one end of the sky to the other, which is a symbolic
way of describing the whole world (cf. Deut. 30:1-4; Isa. 11:12). This proclamation of the gospel continues to this day, not being limited to the first century.

Foy Wallace wrote of this passage, “Here is the grand announcement of the worldwide success of the gospel, the universal expansion of Christianity after the destruction of Jerusalem.” With the complete ending of the Old covenant system in the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, a great hindrance to the new covenant was removed.

All of this considered, gives us another remarkable connection between the Olivet discourse and the book of Revelation.

18 “And the nations were enraged, They were enraged at Israel. and Your wrath came, God was punishing them for their wickedness. and the time came for the dead to be judged, This is not the final day of judgment. Remember the Old Testament (dead) saints under the altar? (Rev. 6:9-11) They were crying for vengeance. They are heard and judged righteous. It is possible “the dead” here represents Israel in its fallen (spiritually lifeless) state. and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, The time of vengeance for those who had been killed for their faithful testimony (cf. Matt. 23:32-36). the small and the great, This is encouraging, isn’t it? There were those dead Old Testament saints who were great (well known), Jeremiah, Isaiah, Nehemiah… great “heroes” of the faith. But there were also many small (not so well-known) saints. Even though their names are not found in God’s inspired word, they are found in His book of life. The same is true today. There are many well-known men today who hold gospel meetings all over the country or write many books. There are also many faithful saints out there whose names we do not all know—but God knows who they are, and they will be rewarded by Him. and to destroy those who destroy the earth.” This is another reference to Jerusalem. Later in the book of Revelation Babylon is described as the one who destroys the earth (Rev. 17:1-4; 18:20, 24; 19:1-2). As we will see, Babylon is a symbolic reference to Jerusalem.

19 And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple, and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm. This is symbolic language which speaks of the temple on earth (in Jerusalem) now being destroyed, and the temple in heaven being opened (not that it wasn’t open before). The temple on earth which housed fallible men as high priests, gives way to the temple in heaven where we have a High Priest who is greater than those on earth (Heb. 4:14-16).

Transitional Note:
The conclusion of chapter eleven marks the end of a series symbols related to the destruction of Jerusalem and the victorious Christ. These were covered in chapters four through eleven. The blood of the martyred saints had finally been avenged. The temple on earth had been destroyed and the temple in heaven was opened.

We now approach chapter twelve, where the same events are again symbolically portrayed, but from a different perspective. Ogden calls chapters four through eleven the heavenly apocalypse and chapters twelve through twenty, the earthly apocalypse. In other words, chapters 4-11 give the perspective of these events as seen from heaven; and

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66 Foy Wallace, God’s Prophetic Word, 255.
in chapters 12-20 the perspective is that which is seen on earth. The key is understanding that both sections cover the same events and are not a sequential continuation.

Why are these events again symbolically portrayed? This is a pattern often found in Old Testament language. For example, Foy Wallace notes:

A striking example is found in the dream visions of Joseph, and of Pharaoh in Genesis (37:5-11; 41:18-32), and of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel (chapters 2 and 7). In the visional dreams of Joseph concerning himself and his brothers the symbols of the sun, moon and stars of the second dream represented the same things as the vision of the sheaves in the first dream. The same thing is true of the visions of the cattle and the ears of corn in Pharaoh’s dreams—the successive dreams were visional re-enactments of the same events. In the same manner the four beasts of Daniel in chapter seven were symbolic repetitions of the four kingdoms of the colossal image dream of chapter two. 67

Though the symbolism of the next section deals with the same events, different aspects of the judgment upon Jerusalem will be revealed. The church on earth is seen, as well as Rome as a persecutor of God’s people. Jerusalem will be identified as Babylon. In the end (as in chapter eleven), Jerusalem is destroyed, the blood of the saints is avenged, and Christ and His church are victorious.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION POINTS:

- The identity of the temple of God in verse one.  
  *Could it be a reference to the church? Explain your answer.*
  *Could it be a reference to the Jewish temple? Explain your answer.*
  *Could it be a reference to a modern rebuilt temple in Jerusalem? Explain your answer.*

- The identity of the holy city.


- Who were the two witnesses?  
  *How does the symbolism used in the text help in making this identification.*

- Where was our Lord crucified? (11:8)

- The symbolism of verses 15-19.  
  *What is being described?*

67 Wallace, Revelation, 257-258.
CHAPTER TWELVE

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

1 A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; Those who take a literal approach to the book of Revelation will have a hard time doing so here. If this is a literal woman clothed with the sun, she would burn up! Based on the description given, she is clearly symbolic—but whom does she represent? A strong case can be made that she represents the faithful of Israel. This will be seen as her description continues in the verses that follow.

2 and she was with child; and she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth. She is carrying a child. And who is this child? In verse five, we see this child would be a boy. Further descriptions of this son in verse five make it clear that He is the Christ. With that, some might conclude that this woman represents Mary. As we will see, it is not Mary in view, but faithful Israel.

3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems. Who is this dragon? Verse nine tells us that it is the devil. The description of the devil as this great dragon closely matches the description of the beast, or Rome, as found in chapter thirteen (Rev. 13:1ff). This would appear to indicate the satanic influence behind Rome in its persecution of the church—a picture that will be symbolically developed as this chapter continues.

4 And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. Many associate these “stars of heaven” with angels. This is a symbol not unknown to the book of Revelation (cf. Rev. 1:20). However, not every reference to a star in Revelation is describing angels (cf. Rev. 6:13; 8:11-12). As to the symbolism presented here, Wallace noted:

The tail of the dragon was in the imagery of the sweeping power of the antagonist of the church and the destruction behind him in the wake of persecution, described in the symbol of pulling the stars from their orbits with the angry lash of his enormous tail. It was the vision of the presumptive power of the persecutors of the church.... The reference to casting down to the earth a third of the stars of heaven appears to have had application to the part of the political world that was subject to these destructions--Jerusalem, Judaism and the Jewish state.68

And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child. This same type of Satanic attack was seen when Israel’s deliverer was born in Egypt (Ex. 1:16-22). It was seen at the time the great Deliverer, Jesus Christ was born (Matt. 2:13-23), which is what we find referenced in this text. In each case, the devil failed and God’s plan succeeded.

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68 Wallace, Revelation, 265.
3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems.

4 And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.

5 And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.

6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

7 And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war,

8 and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven.

5 And she Faithful Israel, not Mary, gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; A clear reference to the Christ (cf. Ps. 2:7-9; Isa. 9:6-7). and her child was caught up to God and to His throne. This would cover the birth of Christ, His life on earth, and His ascension into heaven where He now reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords (Dan. 7:13-14; Matt. 28:18; Acts 2:33ff; Eph. 1:20-23).

6 Then the woman Once faithful Israel, but now through their obedience to the gospel, the church. fled into the wilderness This is as Jesus instructed His followers to do in the Olivet discourse (Matt. 24:16-20; Lk. 21:20ff). where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days. 1260 days is equal to 42 months. This gives us a connection with Rev. 11:2 where John is told the holy city will be tread under foot by the Gentiles for 42 months. This period of time is later referenced as “a time and times, and half a time” (Rev. 12:14). This fleeing of the woman into the wilderness is mentioned again in verse fourteen. Note, she did not flee twice, only once. The same single event is described by John two times.

7 And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, This verse is often used to establish the theory that the devil was at one time a good angel who rebelled in heaven and was then cast out. However, when interpreting this passage we must again remember that we are dealing with apocalyptic language. As we have seen, the book of Revelation is very rich in symbolic language. Many of the events spoken of are not to be taken literally. With this in mind, we are not looking at a literal battle in heaven between Michael and Satan. What we have is a symbolic picture of a spiritual battle. A picture of the forces of God doing battle against Satan and his forces. Foy Wallace writes of how these verses speak symbolically of the forces of Satan fighting against the church, as opposed to any literal battle which took place in heaven. Of the theory that Satan was at one time a good angel, who, in rebellion, literally went to battle in heaven against Michael and his angels; and thus, defeated, fell from heaven to torment mankind; Wallace accurately notes that it is completely out of the nature and character of heaven, and is “a great incongruity.”69

8 and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. The devil cannot defeat God! Once again, we have a picture of a victorious Christ.

69 Wallace, Revelation, 273-274.
9 And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.
10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.

9 And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. This symbolic language is again describing the devil’s defeat in his effort to destroy the church.
10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.

Satan’s defeat is the cause of great rejoicing!
11 “And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb With the power of Christ’s shed blood cleansing us of our sins, the accuser of the brethren is left with no means of accusation. We have a victory in Jesus. and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death. The power of a faithful life lived in service to the King of kings and Lord of lords.
12 “For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time.” Having lost out on the people of God, the devil is symbolically portrayed as advancing his efforts to secure the rest of mankind and keep them enslaved to sin.
13 And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child. Here begins a repetition, or clarification of what John has previously written.
14 But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. This was previously described in verse six. As mentioned there, this is exactly what Jesus warned His disciples to do when they would recognize the time of Jerusalem’s destruction (cf. Matt. 24:15-22; Lk. 21:20ff). Again, from Wallace:

As generally known, Josephus was an eyewitness to the siege of Jerusalem and the events preceding it. In Wars, Book III, Section 3, page 3, he relates that after the armies of Cestius Gallius, Roman general, had besieged Jerusalem, they withdrew--and in this interval the disciples fled, ac-cording to the Lord’s admonition. The historian Josephus was an unbeliever and admitted his inability to account for the cessation, but declared it was nevertheless a fact. All who believe the statements of the Lord in Matthew twenty-four, Mark thirteen and Luke twenty-one, know and understand the why-it was the Lord’s doing. Another later historian, Eusebius, whose history bears date of 324 A. D., states in Book III, Section 3, page 3, that the church in Jerusalem, by divine revelation, fled to the mountain country of Pella, beyond the Jordan, which according to Josephus was largely a desert, mountain region.

70 Wallace, Revelation, 269.
11 “And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.
12 “For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time.”
13 And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child.
14 But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.
15 And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood.
16 But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth.
17 So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

15 And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood. Symbolic of a flood of persecution against the church. The picture of a flood would speak of an overwhelming experience of persecution (cf. Dan. 9:26). As with a literal flood, it would touch many people and places.
16 But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth. The woman would find help and protection in overcoming the flood.
17 So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. The rest of her children may speak of those Christians not living in and around Jerusalem, whom the devil would also go after in his efforts to destroy the true people of God.

CHAPTER TWELVE: QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION POINTS:

➢ The symbolism of the woman in verses one and two.
  *Who is she? Explain how you reached your conclusion.*
  *Who is her child?*

➢ Who is the great red dragon? (12:3-4)
  *Why did he want to destroy the child of the woman?*

➢ The symbolism of verse seven.
  *Was there a war in heaven?*
  *Is this describing the origin of the devil?*

➢ The symbolism of verse thirteen.
  *What is it describing?
CHAPTER THIRTEEN

1 And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names.

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

3 I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast;

1 And the dragon The devil, as identified in the previous chapter. stood on the sand of the seashore. Remember this is symbolic language Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names. Nearly all commentators, early and late date, agree that this is representative of the rise of the Roman empire. Compare the descriptions of this sea beast with that of the dragon in 12:1. What we see is that this beast is satanic in its thoughts and actions. As Hailey (from the late date approach) rightly noted: “He possesses characteristics and qualities of the devil.”

2 And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The language here should remind the student of the book of Daniel and his various beast-like descriptions of various rising nations (cf. Dan. 7:1-8). And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority. The influence behind this wicked nation is obvious. Ogden’s comments here are helpful:

Rome is a devouring lion, and Satan has given “him his power, and his seat, and great authority.” God does not deceive the nations to do wickedly (Hab.1:12-17). Through righteousness God exalts a nation (Pr. 14:34). Satan, however, deceives the nations to do wickedly (Rev. 20:3, 8; Lk. 4:6). Oppression, war, hatred, strife, murder, etc. are all the works of the devil. Rome and all other world dominating empires, are built and sustained by Satanic influences. God in time has used these deceived nations to accomplish His purposes (cf. Isa. 10:5-7; Rev. 11:15) in the same way He used the Roman Empire (Dan. 8:23-25), but the wickedness of the nation was the result of Satanic influences at work within them.

3 I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast; As with many passages in the book of Revelation, this verse has proven extremely challenging to interpreters. Among the various theories offered in explanation of this verse is what is known as the Nero Redivivus myth. This was the belief among many of the first century that, after his death, Nero was actually still alive, or that he would come back to life. In the passage before us, John describes a fatal wound to one of the heads of the beast that was healed.

71 Homer Hailey, Revelation, 284.
72 Ogden, 281-282.
In this way, some believe John is making use of the *Nero Redivivus* myth. Of the widely-spread nature of this myth, Gentry writes:

Nero so fearfully impressed the world in his era that pagan, Jewish, and Christian legends quickly began to grow up around his death and to assert themselves among the general populace throughout the far-flung reaches of the empire. Pretenders to the imperial throne are recorded to have employed the myth in quests for power. In the pagan literature references to the expectation of Nero’s return after his fall from power can be found in the writings of Tacitus, Suetonius, Dio Cassius, Xiphilinus, Zonaras, and Dion Chrysostom. Among Jewish Talmudists the myth surfaces in the tract Gittin, The Ascension of Isaiah (4:2ff), as well as in the Jewish Sibyline Oracles. In Christian circles it is mentioned in books by Lactantius, Sulpicius Severis, Jerome, and Augustine.73

The question to be answered is this: Is John referencing this myth? If not, what then is he describing? The following summary by Steve Gregg is concise and to the point, offering a very plausible explanation:

Some have felt that John was taken in by the popular contemporary myth that Nero would return to conquer Rome again after his apparent death—but this denies the book any validity as a revelation of God and reduces it to the creative expression of John’s personal opinions. Such an interpretation is certainly not necessary. Even if Nero is the head mortally wounded, it is not he who personally survives the wound, but the beast that survives the wounding of one of its heads. At the death of Nero, the Roman empire was thrown into violent convulsions of civil war and anarchy, in which three emperors succeeded one after another within a single year. Historians consider it astonishing that the empire stabilized and survived this period that might easily have spelled the end of the imperial rule. Thus the recovery of the empire under Vespasian was a marvel to all—the beast of the empire had survived the mortal wounding of one of its heads (Nero).74

An even more compelling interpretation is presented by Ogden:

Julius Caesar had turned the Roman Republic into an empire over which he ruled as supreme lord. The Roman Senators did not cater to this new development. After taking his sovereign rule for as long as they could stand it, they brought him to the Senate floor and mercilessly murdered him in an attempt to end the empire and return the government to its former identity as a republic. They thought they had succeeded, but thirteen years later the ugly beast raised its powerful head again when Augustus resurrected the empire and buried the republic once and for all times, With the solidification of Caesarean power upon the Roman world, the “rest of the world was astonished and followed the beast” (NIV).75

It is also important to note that although the verse reads, “the whole earth was amazed and followed the beast” this *may* primarily be a reference to apostate Israel. It was Israel who cried out, “We have no king but Caesar!” (Jn. 19:15). It was Israel who, like Rome, persecuted the church. Jesus referenced their assemblies as “synagogues of satan” (Rev. 2:9; 3:9). The wrath being poured out by God was upon Israel.

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75 Ogden, 282.
4 they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?”

5 There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him.

6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven.

7 It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him.

4 they worshiped the dragon The devil because he gave his authority to the beast; Rome and they Israel worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?” How did Israel worship the beast? As already noted, they cried out at the trial of Jesus, “We have no king but Caesar.” Edersheim said it well, “With this cry Judaism was, in the person of its representatives, guilty of denial of God, of blasphemy, of apostasy.”

Josephus records some words of King Agrippa given to the Jews that reflect exactly, the words of this verse: “Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?” Agrippa said this:

Will you not carefully reflect upon the Roman Empire? Will you not estimate your own weakness? Hath not your army been often beaten even by your neighboring nations, while the power of the Romans is invincible in all parts of the habitable earth? Nay, rather they seek for somewhat still beyond that; for all Euphrates is not a sufficient boundary for them on the east side, nor the Danube on the north; and for their southern limit, Libya hath been searched over by them, as far as countries uninhabited, as is Cadiz their limit on the west; nay, indeed, they have sought for another habitable earth beyond the ocean, and have carried their arms as far as such British islands as were never know before. What therefore do you pretend to? Are you richer than the Gauls, stronger than the Germans, wiser than the Greeks, more numerous than all men upon the habitable earth?—What confidence is it that elevates you to oppose the Romans?

5 There was given to him a mouth This would be a verbal spokesman for the beast. Likely, this has reference to the Emperors. speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him. Notice that once again we have the time frame of forty-two months. These forty-two months relate not to the Roman Jewish war, but to a period of persecution against the church.

6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven. As discussed in the introduction to this material, it is our belief that Revelation was written during the reign of Nero. In this way, it is believed that this is a reference Nero himself and his blasphemies against God and His people. As far as possessing the character of a beast, Nero fits perfectly. Gentry writes:

Nero often acted in horrible viciousness as regards men and women. According to Suetonius, Nero “compelled four hundred senators and six hundred Roman knights, some of whom were well to do and of unblemished reputation, to fight in the arena. He was a Sodomist who is said to have castrated a boy named Sporus and married him. He enjoyed

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76 Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 874.
77 Josephus, *Wars*, 2:16:4
homosexual rape and torture. He killed his parents, brother, wife, aunt, and many others close to him. He even so prostituted his own chastity that after defiling almost every part of his body, he at last devised a kind of game, in which, covered with the skin of some wild animal, he was let loose from a cage and attacked the private parts of men and women, who were bound to stacks.\textsuperscript{78}

More about the beast-like nature of Nero will be offered later in this chapter. It should be clear at this point, with this graphic description, that Nero fits the picture of a beast.

\textbf{7} It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. The war with the saints is not a reference to Rome’s war against the Jews and the destruction of Jerusalem. Contextually, this would be a reference to Nero’s persecution of the Christians. This too, interestingly, lasted a period of about forty-two months (cf. vs. 5).

The persecution of Nero began about the middle or latter part of A.D. 64, at Rome. It ended with the death of Nero, which was on the ninth of June, A.D. 68, for on that day Galba entered Rome and was proclaimed emperor. Here again is 3+ years or 1260 days with sufficient exactness; for the precise time of forty-two months expires about the middle or end of May, and Nero died in the first part of June…\textsuperscript{79}

\textbf{8} All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. Some discussion is necessary here in regards to emperor worship. Late date advocates argue that such a practice did not really begin to originate until the time of Domitian. History shows this to be false. “Emperor worship is traceable as far back as Julius Caesar, almost a century before Nero’s death.”\textsuperscript{80} Nero was worshipped as a god. Some historical records will show this to be true. For example, Dio Cassius records Tiridates, the King of Armenia, in A.D. 66, approaching Nero in worship:

Indeed, the proceedings of the conference were not limited to mere conversations, but a lofty platform had been erected on which were set images of Nero, and in the presence of the Armenians, Parthians, and Romans Tiridates approached and paid them reverence; then, after sacrificing to them and calling them by laudatory names, he took off the diadem from his head and set it upon them…. Tiridates publicly fell before Nero seated upon the rostra in the Forum: “Master, I am the descendant of Arsaces, brother of the kings Vologaesus and Pacorus, and thy slave. And I have come to thee, my god, to worship thee as I do Mithras. The destiny thou spinnest for me shall be mine; for thou art my Fortune and my Fate.\textsuperscript{81}

Again from Dio Cassius:

The city was all decked with garlands, was ablaze with lights and reeking with incense, and the whole population, the senators themselves most of all, kept shouting in chorus: “Hail, Olympian Victor! Hail! Pythian Victor! Augustus! Augustus! Hail to Nero, our Hercules!

\textsuperscript{78} Gentry, \textit{Before Jerusalem Fell}, 213.
\textsuperscript{80} Gentry, 264.
\textsuperscript{81} Dio Cassius, \textit{Roman History}, 62:5:2 (as quoted by Gentry, 273).
Hail to Nero, our Apollo! The only Victor of the Grand Tour, the only one from the beginning of time! Augustus! Augustus! O, Divine Voice! Blessed are they that hear thee."\(^82\)

Gentry adds to these scenes the following historical information:

As early in his reign as 55 the Senate erected a statue of Nero on the divine scale in the Temple of Mars at the Forum Augustus…. The statue was the same size as that of Mars in Mars own Temple. That Nero was actually worshipped is evident from inscriptions found in Ephesus in which he is called, “Almighty God” and “Saviour.” Reference to Nero as “God and Saviour” is found in an inscription at Salamis, Cyprus. In fact, as his megalomania increased, the tendency to worship him as ruler of the world became stronger, and in Rome his features appeared on the colossus of the Sun near the Golden House, while his head was represented on the coinage with a radiant crown.\(^83\)

9 If anyone has an ear, let him hear.
10 If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints. This was meant as great encouragement for the Christians. Though they would suffer at the hands of the beast, they were to remember, that God was still in control. John seems to be quoting from Jeremiah (Jer. 15:1-3ff). In Jeremiah, God tells the prophet, “Even though Moses and Samuel were to stand before Me, My heart would not be with this people [Judah]. They are destined for captivity… destined for the sword.” In John’s day, the same was true for Jerusalem and apostate Israel. Vengeance from God was coming upon those who to whom it was due, this was indeed “the perseverance and faith of the saints.”

11 Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon. Who is this beast? He is later identified as being a false prophet (Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10). This would be consistent with what Jesus warned in the days leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem (Matt. 24:5, 11, 24). That this beast comes up from the earth (or land), would seem to identify him with Israel, perhaps its spiritual leadership.

The Jewish false prophets had the appearance of a lamb, as Jesus had warned: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves” (Matt. 7:15). This is a reference not only to the false prophet’s disguise as a member of God’s flock, but to his specifically messianic pretensions. In reality, he was a wolf, a Beast, who spoke as a Dragon. How does the Dragon speak? He uses deceptive, subtle, seductive speech to draw God’s people away from the faith and into a trap (Gen. 3:1-6, 13; 2 Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9); furthermore, he is a liar, a slanderer, and a blasphemer (John 8:44; Rev. 12:10). The book of Acts recorded numerous examples of Draconian false witness by the Jews against the Christians, a major problem for the early Church (Acts 6:9-15; 13:10; 14:2-5; 17:5-8; 18:6, 12-13; 19:9; 21:27-36; 24:1-9; 25:2-3, 7).\(^84\)

\(^82\) Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, 62:20:5.
\(^83\) Gentry, 272.
\(^84\) Chilton, 337.
8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from
the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.
9 If anyone has an ear, let him hear.
10 If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the
sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints.
11 Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb and he
spoke as a dragon.
12 He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and
those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed.
13 He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in
the presence of men.
14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to
perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the
beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life.
15 And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast
would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

12 He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. Both beasts are
being influenced by the dragon, the devil. The second beast (Jewish false prophets)
however, appears here to be under the authority of the first beast (Rome). And he makes
the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was
healed. They pay homage to Rome.
13 He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to
the earth in the presence of men. These are false signs. In the next verse, we see that
people were being deceived by the “signs.” Again, this is what Jesus warned would occur
(Matt. 24:24).

The Book of Acts records several instances of miracle-working Jewish false prophets who
came into conflict with the Church (cf. Acts 8:9-24) and worked under Roman officials (cf.
Acts 13:6-11); as Jesus had foretold (Matt. 7:22-23), some of them even used His name in
their incantations (Acts 19:13-16). In imitation of the Biblical prophets, who called down
God’s fiery wrath against apostates and lawbreakers (Lev. 10:1-2; Num. 16:28-35; 1 Kings
18:36-40; 2 Kings 1:9-16; Amos 1:3-2:5; Rev. 11:5), the Jewish leaders appeared to
exercise God’s judgment against the Church, excommunicating Christians from the
synagogues and persecuting them to the point of death. 85

14 And he The false prophet deceives those who dwell on the earth Apostle Israel
because of the False signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the
beast Rome, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who
had the wound of the sword and has come to life. (cf. Rev. 13:3).
15 And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image
of the beast would even speak (cf. Ps. 135:15-16) and cause as many as do not
worship the image of the beast to be killed. Once again, homage to Rome. Submission
to the Roman authorities was enforced by the synagogues. Those who refused to submit
were punished, sometimes by death. 86

85 Chilton, 339.
16 And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the
slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead,
17 and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark,
either the name of the beast or the number of his name.
18 Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the
number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.

Much has been made of “Mark of the Beast.” This subject has given rise to much of the current (and
past) end-time sensationalism. Various writers describe how the antichrist will order such
a “mark” to be tattooed on our hand or forehead. Perhaps you have seen illustrations in
various end-time writings depicting such a scene. The *Universal Product Code* is often
interpreted as being the infamous mark of the beast. Some have suggested that only the
wisdom of God could have foreseen this modern technology. In this way, one author
noted:

John made an astounding prophecy in Revelation 13:16 when he said that “no one can buy
or sell unless he has the mark.” He tied in a marking system with the numbering system of
the beast society as the method used for control. Did you know that a computer reads
“marks,” not numbers? Only by the wisdom of God could John have known this.87

It is true that only God could have given John the prophetic insight to foresee such a
system of reading “marks.” However, is this really what the *inspired* apostle was
describing? Jack Van Impi suggests another possibility for the mark of the beast—though
he carefully avoids getting too specific. He writes, “Could information embedded in tiny
biochips be the personal end-time ID code we are warned of in the Bible?”88 Commenting later, Van Impi concludes, “Is there any doubt that we are now a few miles
further down the road toward a Big Brother-style global dictatorship?”89 One has to
wonder how dispensationalists like Van Impi (who pride themselves on their “literal”
approach to the scriptures) can make a biochip *under* the skin equal to a mark *on* the skin.

Dispensationalists Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy believe the mark will be “the
actual number 666, not a representation.” They indicate the mark will be “on the person,
not in him or her” and will be “visible to the naked eye.”90 This is more in line with the
wooden literal interpretation methods of dispensationalism.

Ideas such as these are common among sensationalistic writers. As computer
technologies advance, be assured that more fantastic and far-fetched interpretations of
“the mark” will be offered. While these types of concepts make interesting end-time
reading there is no biblical truth to them.

There is no denying that technology exists today whereby one could be identified by a
biochip implanted under the skin. This may even become a standard system of

89 Ibid. 79.
90 Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy, *Fast Facts on Bible Prophecy*, 130.
identification in the future. However, is this what John was describing? Was John really describing UPC marks tattooed on our hand or forehead? Was he prophesying about computer biochips that would be implanted under the skin? Would his first century readers have been able to “heed these words”? Hardly!

Ideas of this nature, while technologically possible, are far from fitting the first century time indicators of Revelation. Remember, these were “things which must soon take place” (Rev. 1:1). John was told, “The time is near” (Rev. 1:3). Words spoken in the first century such as soon and near clearly eliminate any two-thousand year later type of application. There had to be a direct application to John’s original audience. So just what is the mark of the beast?

Of first importance in properly identifying this mark is determining whether it is literal or symbolic. Dispensationalists insist it is a literal mark. However, in the same chapter, they see the beast with seven heads and ten horns as being symbolic. Why is “the beast” symbolic and the “mark of the beast” literal?

In a book full of symbolic language, it seems much more consistent to consider the mark as also being symbolic. In this way, it would appear to be merely representative of one’s allegiance to the beast (Rome).

We hear a lot of talk from prophecy writers about the mark of the beast, but not much about the mark of the Lamb. It would appear that few people today are even aware that Revelation describes such “a mark.” The mark of the Lamb was a mark (or seal) identifying the people of God. Was this “mark” literal or symbolic?

Saying, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads” (Revelation 7:3).

Was this a literal seal on the foreheads of the servants of God? Are we to believe that God will tattoo UPC codes or implant computer chips into His bond-servants? No! This was a symbolic sealing. We see same marking of His people later in the Apocalypse (cf. Rev. 9:4; 14:1).

This seal on the foreheads of God’s people was simply an indication of their allegiance to God and not to the beast. The symbolic language used in this regard is taken from the Old Testament. Notice, for example, the “mark” that was seen on the forehead of Israel’s High Priest. As God is explaining the garments the high priest was to wear, He tells Moses:

“You shall also make a plate of pure gold and shall engrave on it, like the engravings of a seal, ‘Holy to the Lord.’ “You shall fasten it on a blue cord, and it shall be on the turban; it shall be at the front of the turban. It shall be on Aaron’s forehead, and Aaron shall take away the iniquity of the holy things which the sons of Israel consecrate, with regard to all their holy gifts; and it shall always be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord (Exodus 28:36-38).

While the high priest had a type of “mark” on his forehead, God also spoke of a mark on the hands and foreheads of the people. In regards to their observance of the Passover Feast, God said:
“You shall tell your son on that day, saying, ‘It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.’ And it shall serve as a **sign to you on your hand**, and as a **reminder on your forehead**, that the law of the Lord may be in your mouth; for with a powerful hand the Lord brought you out of Egypt (Exodus 13:8-9).

Later, Moses says to Israel:

“Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. “These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. “You shall bind them as a **sign on your hand** and they shall be as **frontals on your forehead**. “You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

These were not literal signs or marks on their hands and forehead. They were symbolic of what God had done for the people. They were to be continually thankful to God in the work of their hands and the thoughts of their minds.

Some of the Jews (even to this day) took this instruction literally, actually binding the scriptures to their hands and foreheads. These were the phylacteries we read of in the New Testament (Matt. 23:5).

Another “marking” of the people took place in the days of Ezekiel. God told the prophet:

The Lord said to him, “Go through the midst of the city, even through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations which are being committed in its midst.” But to the others He said in my hearing, “Go through the city after him and strike; do not let your eye have pity and do not spare (Ezekiel 9:4-5).

This “mark” was symbolic of the fact that the righteous were not to be hurt in the punishment that was being described to Ezekiel. God was not asking the prophet to go through the city and literally put a mark on the foreheads of the righteous.

All this considered, consistency with the scriptures and the language of Revelation would indicate the mark of the beast to be symbolic. It was a symbolic means of distinguishing between two classes of people: Those who served God and those who served the beast.

Such an interpretation is nowhere near as exciting as computer chips implanted under the skin or UPC lines tattooed on the skin, but it is (allowing scripture to interpret scripture) a very sound explanation of a scripture that has been overly sensationalized and misapplied.

**18 Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.**

John tells his readers that the number of the beast is the number of a man and that they were to calculate the number. In other words, this would be a person they could identify. They could do this by calculating the number of his name. This was a reference to the practice of gematria. This involved adding up the sum of the letters in a word or person’s name to determine the numeric value. The characters of ancient alphabets had not only a

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phonetic representation, but a numeric value as well. In this way, every word or name had more than a linguistic value, each carried a numeric value. The numeric values of words were sometimes used to determine supposed secret information or to determine deeper meanings of words or names. So who was this serpent-like beast designated “666”? Based on internal and external evidences that indicate the book of Revelation was written prior to A.D. 70, many Bible scholars have found a solution to the mystery of the number in Nero Caesar, emperor of Rome at the time. Nero’s historically documented wicked and violent character fits perfectly with the descriptions in Revelation of “the beast.” Philip Schaff writes of Nero and his beast-like character:

We read his life with mingled feelings of contempt for his folly, and horror of his wickedness…. He heaped crime upon crime until he became a proverbial monster of iniquity. The murder of his brother (Britannicus), his mother (Agrippina), his wives (Octavia and Poppaea), his teacher (Seneca), and many eminent Romans, was fitly followed by his suicide in the thirty-second year of his age.

A "vast multitude" of Christians were put to death in the most shocking manner. Some were crucified, probably in mockery of the punishment of Christ, some sewed up in the skins of wild beasts and exposed to the voracity of mad dogs in the arena.

Christian men and women, covered with pitch or oil or resin, and nailed to posts of pine, were lighted and burned as torches for the amusement of the mob; while Nero, in fantastical dress, figured in a horse race, and displayed his art as charioteer. Burning alive was the ordinary punishment of incendiaries; but only the cruel ingenuity of this imperial monster, under the inspiration of the devil, could invent such a horrible system of illumination.91

The evil character of Nero fits well with some of the modern antichrist descriptions given by various popular end-time writers. Indeed, Nero is the perfect personification of “the beast.” As J. Stuart Russell so aptly noted:

Here, then, is a number which expresses a name; the name of a man, of the man who, of all then living, best deserved to be called a wild beast: the head of the Empire, the master of the world; claiming to be a god, receiving divine honours, persecuting the saints of the Most High; in short, answering in every particular to the description in the apocalyptic vision.92

With Nero’s character matching the description of the beast of Revelation, many scholars have demonstrated that an ancient Hebrew spelling of his name (Nרונ Qסר) yields the needed sum of 666. Some would object to such a conclusion, asking, “Why a Hebrew spelling of Nero Caesar in a letter written in Greek?” Describing the preterist response, Steve Gregg writes: “Most likely, the code utilized the Hebrew form rather than the Greek or Latin form of the name to avoid detection from Roman authorities, who would know both Latin and Greek, but not Hebrew. The readers of the book, however, knew considerable Hebrew, judging from the many symbols taken from the Old Testament and John’s use of Hebrew words like Armageddon, amen, hallelujah, Satan… and Abaddon…”\(^9^3\)

Obviously not all will agree with the interpretation of Nero. In opposition to this interpretation, Homer Hailey takes another approach in identifying the number of the beast, noting: “I believe… the number does not represent an individual such as Nero, Domitian, or others per se, but the sum of that which is human…. When John adds, “It is the number of a man,” he omits the definite article before “man,” thereby indicating that he has no particular individual in mind.”\(^9^4\) Hailey’s comments are certainly worth considering. However, by asking his readers to calculate the number of the beast, which is the number of a man, John appears to be indicating one specific individual related to the beast, one whose sum would be six-hundred-sixty-six. It is the belief of this author that Nero was that individual. As a man, he was the evil personification of the beast (Rome).

### Chapter Thirteen: Questions and Discussion Points:

- The symbolism of the first three verses.  
  *What is being described?*  
  *How is the language of verse two similar to Daniel 1:1-7?*

- The “beast-like” nature of Nero.

- The characteristics of the false prophet. How are they like the devil? How can we apply this today?

- Sensationalistic ideas about “mark of the beast.”

- Sensationalistic ideas about the 666.  
  *How does the interpretation of Nero fit the text?*

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93 Steve Gregg, Revelation: Four Views, 302.  
94 Hailey, Revelation, 298.
1 Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.

2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps.

3 And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth.

4 These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb.

5 And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless.

6 And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people;

1 Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. The scene described here takes us back to the beginning of the church and the preaching of the gospel. These are the same 144,000 we saw in chapter seven. Here they are pictured as standing with the Lamb on the mount Zion.

2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps.

3 And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth. The song sung by the 144,000 is unique. Remember the identification of this group from chapter seven. These are those who lived faithful lives and died prior to the cross of Jesus. They died in faith without having their sins fully cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. The cleansing took place after their death (cf. Heb. 11:13, 39-40; 12:23).

4 These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb.

5 And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless. How could such “perfect” characteristics as mentioned here be ascribed to this group? Because they died before they were cleansed. Their lives are sealed secure through the blood of Lamb. They cannot sin for they have left the earthly realm. They are not defiled with women for in heaven there is no marriage (Matt. 22:28-32).

6 And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; From the very beginning of its proclamation on the Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem (Acts 2), the gospel was intended to go out “to every nation and tribe and tongue and people. The apostle Paul states that it was preached to every creature under heaven (Col. 1:6, 23).
7 and he said with a loud voice, “Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters.”

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

9 Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

11 “And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”

There is salvation in no other name but Jesus (Acts 4:12). For those outside of Christ and those who have purposefully rejected Him, there awaits “a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries” (Heb. 10:27ff).

8 And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality.” Who is Babylon? This will be discussed further in chapter seventeen, but for now, we believe Babylon to be representative of Jerusalem. Here it is called “the great city.” See the same identification in 11:8 where the great city is the place where our Lord was crucified. See comments on that passage.

9 Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, The elements mentioned here were discussed in chapter thirteen.

10 he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

11 “And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.” There are a number of descriptions here relating to the fate of those who worship the beast and his image: 1). They will drink the wine of the wrath of God mixed in full strength. 2). They will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb. 3). The Smoke of their torment will go up forever. 4). They have no rest day or night. All of these are familiar images in the biblical language of divine judgment.

Drinking the wine of the wrath of God is used throughout the Old Testament as a symbol of divine judgment (cf. Job 21:20; Ps. 60:3; 75:8; Isa. 51:17, 22; Jer. 25:15-38; Obad. 16). To drink from this cup is to suffer the fate of God’s punishment, mixed to a strength of intensity (degrees of punishment) as He sees fit. For those who must drink from this cup there is “ruin, horror, a hissing and a curse” (Jer. 25:18). A sword awaits the recipients of this cup that brings punishment (Jer. 25:29). They will drink and become

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as if they had never existed (Obad. 16). They will be slain, fall and rise no more (Jer. 25:27-33).

*The symbol of fire and brimstone* takes us back to the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. There it was said that the Lord rained fire and brimstone out of heaven (Gen. 19:24). The complete destruction of these cities became a model for divine judgments that fell upon others who rebelled against God. In this way, Israel was warned about the consequences they would suffer if they turned from God and violated the covenant He had made with them:

> All its land is brimstone and salt, a burning waste, unsown and unproductive, and no grass grows in it, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the LORD overthrew in His anger and in His wrath.  
> Deuteronomy 29:23

Against the king of Assyria, Isaiah prophesied of the coming and fierce anger of the Lord that would result in a consuming fire ( Isa. 30:30):

> For Topheth has long been ready, Indeed, it has been prepared for the king. He has made it deep and large, A pyre of fire with plenty of wood; The breath of the LORD, like a torrent of brimstone, sets it afire.  
> Isaiah 30:33

Against Edom, Isaiah warned:

> Its streams will be turned into pitch, And its loose earth into brimstone, And its land will become burning pitch.  
> Isaiah 34:9

The same type of divine wrath would be poured out upon the one identified as Gog. God through the prophet Ezekiel declared:

> With pestilence and with blood I will enter into judgment with him; and I will rain on him and on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, a torrential rain, with hailstones, fire and brimstone.  
> Ezekiel 38:22

*Torment ending in rising smoke* would be the results of divine punishment with fire and brimstone. Notice that in Revelation 14:11 it is the *smoke of their torment* that rises forever. It does not say *they* are tormented forever. This same imagery of rising smoke is found in the Old Testament.

Rising smoke symbolizes complete destruction. When Abraham returned to survey the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, all he saw was the smoke of the land, as from a burning furnace (Gen. 19:28). Isaiah prophesied of Edom’s destruction that its smoke would go up forever, adding that the fire will not be quenched night or day (Isa. 34:10). Obviously, we know the land of Edom is still not burning. The language is symbolic of a destruction that totally consumes… a complete and total extinction.
12 Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.
13 And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, “Write, ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!’” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.”
14 Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand.
15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, “Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe.”
16 Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped.
17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle.
18 Then another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, “Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe.”

12 Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. A similar statement was found in 13:10. Once again, it is the knowledge that God is in control and that we have the victory in Jesus Christ.
13 And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, “Write, ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!’” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.” Another one of the beatitudes in the book of Revelation. Why are dead who die in the Lord blessed? Because they have salvation through the blood of the Lamb! They have eternal life (Rom. 6:23).
14 Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. This would appear to be a reference to Jesus as the Son of Man. The cloud upon which He is sitting is white, suggesting a peaceful reaping is about to take place.
15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, “Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe.”
16 Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped. This is a reaping of the faithful... those who were martyred for their faith. As Ogden noted, these may be the overcomers of 7:9 and 14.95
17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle.
18 Then another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, “Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe.” The vine of the earth is none other than Israel. The most commonly used symbol for Israel was a vineyard or vine (Ps. 80:8-11; Isa. 5:1-7; Jer. 2:21; Eze. 17:6ff; 19:10; 12:10; Matt. 21:33ff). This was a very different type of reaping than that which was seen in verses 15 and 16. This is a reaping of a punishing judgment, as the verses which follow clearly illustrate.

95 Ogden, 297.
19 So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God.
20 And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses’ bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.

19 So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God.
20 And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses’ bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles. The language here is very graphic. One cannot miss the picture of destruction it is designed to paint. Though this language is symbolic, it conforms very literally to some of the descriptions given by Josephus.

So the Romans being now become masters of the walls, they both placed their ensigns upon the towers, and made joyful acclamations for the victory they had gained, as having found the end of this war much lighter than its beginning; for when they had gotten upon the last wall, without any bloodshed, they could hardly believe what they found to be true; but seeing nobody to oppose them, they stood in doubt what such an unusual solitude could mean. But when they went in numbers into the lanes of the city, with their swords drawn, they slew those whom they overtook, without mercy, and set fire to the houses wherewith the Jews were fled, and burnt every soul in them, and laid waste a great many of the rest; and when they were come to the houses to plunder them, they found in them entire families of dead men, and the upper rooms full of dead corpses, that is of such as died by the famine; they then stood in a horror at this sight, and went out without touching anything. But although they had this commiseration for such as were destroyed in that manner, yet had they not the same for those that were still alive, but they ran every one through whom they met with, and obstructed the very lanes with their dead bodies, and made the whole city run down with blood, to such a degree indeed that the fire of many of the houses was quenched with these men’s blood.96

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION POINTS:

- Why could no one else learn the song of the 144,000? (vs. 3)
- The meaning of verse thirteen to us today.
- The description of Josephus regarding Jerusalem’s destruction by the Romans.
- The language of judgment used in this chapter. How does it influence our views of hell?
  *The cup of God’s anger, Tormented with fire and brimstone, No rest day and night. The smoke of their torment going up forever.*

  How is the language similar to that which is found in the Old Testament?

96Josephus, Wars 6:8:5.
CHAPTER FIFTEEN

1 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished.
2 And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God.
3 And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, “Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations!
4 “Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; For all the nations will come and worship before You, For Your righteous acts have been revealed.”

1 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished. By way of introduction to this chapter, Ogden made the following comment:

In the heavenly apocalypse (4-11), the stage was set with the introduction of the destructive forces by which the nation of Israel was to be destroyed (chapter 6), followed by the beginning of Christianity and the spread of the gospel (chapter seven). The fall of the nation followed the opening of the seventh seal which signaled the beginning of the end. The earthly apocalypse (12-20) follows a like pattern. The stage is set in chapters 12 and 13. The gathering of the vine of the earth for the wine press of God followed (14:14-20) signaling the fall of the nation. As the opening of the seventh seal (8:1) was followed by the seven trumpeting angels, so the wine press scene is followed by the seven angels with the seven last plagues. These pour out God’s wrath upon the nation to the bitter end.97

2 And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God. The scene here takes us back to the throne scene described in chapter four. There we have mention of the sea of glass before the throne of God (4:6). The throne of glass now appears mixed with fire and the saints are standing upon it giving praise to God. Perhaps the fire is representative of their various trials which they faithfully overcame (cf. 1 Cor. 9-15; 1 Pet. 1:6-7; Rev. 2:10; 3:18).

3 And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, “Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations! These standing upon the sea of glass would appear to be Jews who had become Christians. They are singing the song of Moses (sung by Israel upon their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, Ex. 15), and the song of the Lamb (sung by Christians upon their deliverance from the bondage of sin).
4 “Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; For all the nations will come and worship before You, For Your righteous acts have been revealed.” What powerful words of praise describing God’s greatness!

97 Ogden, 301-302
5 After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened,
6 and the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, clothed in linen, clean and bright, and girded around their chests with golden sashes.
7 Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever.
8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.

5 After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened, This scene in heaven is reflective of the pattern given to Moses in the building of the tabernacle (cf. Ex. 26:33-34; 30:36; 40:20-21). The Hebrew writer tells us these earthly things were a pattern of the heavenly (cf. Heb. 8:1ff; 9:11, 23-24).
6 and the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, clothed in linen, clean and bright, and girded around their chests with golden sashes. This is a priestly type of apparel (cf. Ex. 28:39-40; Lev. 8:7). These same types of garments were pictured earlier as being worn by our great High Priest, Jesus Christ (Rev. 1:13).
7 Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever.
8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished. (cf. Ex. 40:34-38; 1 Kings 8:10-11; 2 Chron. 5:11-14).

CHAPTER FIFTEEN: QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION POINTS:

➢ The words of praise in verses three and four. What can we today learn from them in regards to our own offerings of praise?

➢ The Old Testament symbolism used in this chapter.
   *The song of Moses.*
   *The priestly attire of the angels.*
   *The Temple filled with smoke from the glory of God.*

NOTES:
CHAPTER SIXTEEN

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

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

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

1 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, This is not the temple on earth, but in heaven. We are not told who is speaking here, though contextually it would appear to be coming from the throne of God. The voice is giving instructions to the seven angels. saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.” We have thus far seen seven seals (Rev. 6:1-8:1) and seven trumpets (Rev. 8:1-11:15). We are now introduced to seven bowls of wrath. These bowls of wrath cover the same events previously described in the seals and trumpets, but from a different perspective. See Appendix B for an interesting comparison.

2 So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth; The Greek word translated earth (gē) could also be rendered “land.” Since Revelation is describing God’s wrath being poured upon Israel, the “earth” or “land” would be Israel. and it became a loathsome and malignant sore on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image. One commentator well-noted, that these sores are “a hideous stamp avenging the mark of the beast.” It is as if the “mark” had developed into this “loathsome and malignant sore.” From the sensationalistic authors of end-time doom, we have interpretations such as this one from Chuck Smith:

   These sores that form upon the Antichrist’s followers will apparently be great running ulcers, the sort of thing you get from radiation burns.

   It could be that something will go wrong with the Beast’s numbering system, causing people to go ill. Maybe the boils will result from radiation poisoning, caused by the scanning devices used to read the numbers whenever someone wants to buy or sell something. Perhaps some accident will occur in his storehouse of chemical and biological weapons…

   Such sensationalistic interpretations read modern concepts into the ancient text in order to support a literal contemporary interpretation. As stated in our introduction, it is our belief that Revelation is dealing with first century events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem. In this way, the writings of Josephus describing literally what occurred (once again), provide us with some remarkable similarities with what is symbolically described in the Book of Revelation:

   Now, when these were quieted, it happened, as it does in a diseased body, that another part was subject to an inflammation; for a company of deceivers and robbers got together, and

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99 Chuck Smith, *The Last Days, the Middle East, and the Book of Revelation*, 153.
persuaded the Jews to revolt, and exhorted them to assert their liberty, inflicting death on those that continued in obedience to the Roman government, and saying, that such as willingly chose slavery ought to be forced from such their desired inclinations; (265) for they parted themselves into different bodies, and lay in wait up and down the country, and plundered the houses of the great men, and slew the men themselves, and set the villages on fire; and this till all Judea was filled with the effects of their madness. And thus the flame was every day more and more blown up, till it came to a direct war.  

3 The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood like that of a dead man; and every living thing in the sea died. This bowl of wrath would be consistent with the second trumpeting angel as described in 8:8-9. Be sure to see comments on that verse. Also note this additional description from Josephus about a defeat at sea for the Jews.

But now, when the vessels were gotten ready, Vespasian put upon shipboard as many of his forces as he thought sufficient to be too hard for those that were upon the lake, and set sail after them. Now those which were driven in to the lake could neither fly to the land, where all was in their enemies’ hand, and in war against them, nor could they fight upon the level by the sea, for their ships were small and fitted only for piracy; they were too weak to fight with Vespasian’s vessels, and the mariners that were in them were so few, that they were afraid to come near the Romans, who attacked them in great numbers. However, as they sailed round about the vessels, and sometimes as they came near them, they threw stones at the Romans when they were a good way off, or came closer and fought them; yet did they receive the greatest harm themselves in both cases. As for the stones they threw at the Romans they only made a sound one after another, for they threw them against such as were in their armor, while the Roman darts could reach the Jews themselves; and when they ventured to come near the Romans, they became sufferers themselves before they could do any harm to the other, and were drowned, they and their ships together. As for those that endeavored to come to an actual fight, the Romans ran many of them through with their long poles. Sometimes the Romans leaped into their ships, with swords in their hands, and slew them; but when some of them met the vessels, the Romans caught them by the middle, and destroyed at once their ships and themselves who were taken in them. And for such as were drowning in the sea, if they lifted their heads up above the water they were either killed by darts, or caught by the vessels; but if, in the desperate case they were in, they attempted to swim to their enemies, the Romans cut off either their heads or their hands; and indeed they were destroyed after various manners everywhere, till the rest, being put to flight, were forced to get upon the land, while the vessels encompassed them about [on the sea]: but as many of these were repulsed when they were getting ashore, they were killed by the darts upon the lake; and the Romans leaped out of their vessels, and destroyed a great many more upon the land: one might then see the lake all bloody, and full of dead bodies, for not one of them escaped. (530) And a terrible stink, and a very sad sight there was on the following days over that country; for as for the shores, they were full of shipwrecks, and of dead bodies all swelled; and as the dead bodies were inflamed by the sun, and putrefied, they corrupted the air, insomuch that the misery was not only the object of commiseration to the Jews, but to those that hated them, and had been the authors of that misery.  

4 Then the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood.
5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying, “Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things;
6 for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it.”
7 And I heard the altar saying, “Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.”
8 The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire.
9 Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, ‘If we had been living in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ “So you testify against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. “Fill up, then, the measure of the guilt of your fathers. “You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell? “Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. “Truly I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

Matthew 23:29-36

7 And I heard the altar saying, “Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.” This is not the altar itself speaking, but those under it who had been crying out for vengeance (Rev. 6:9-11).
8 The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. Notice again the correspondence to the fourth trumpeting angel (Rev. 8:12-13).
9 Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory. The fire here may symbolize the devastation by fire felt in the destruction of Jerusalem. God’s name is blasphemed, as they would blame Him for their pain and suffering, forgetting that it was through their own sin, committed of their own free will, that they were being punished.
10 Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain,
11 and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.
12 The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east.
13 And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs;
14 for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.

The whole city presented a frightful caricature of its normal self: fighting and casualties at one point, baths and restaurants at another, here the spilling of blood and the litter of dead bodies, close by prostitutes and their like—all the vice associated with a life of idleness and pleasure, all the dreadful deeds typical of a pitiless sack. These were so intimately linked that an observer would have thought Rome in the grip of a simultaneous orgy of violence and dissipation. There had been times in the past when armies had fought inside the city, twice when Lucius Sulla gained control, and once under Cinna. No less cruelty had been displayed then, but now there was a brutish indifference, and not even a momentary interruption in the pursuit of pleasure. As if this were one more entertainment in the festive season, they gloated over the horrors and profited by them, careless which side won and glorying in the calamities of the state. 

Now at the time when this great concussion of affairs happened, the affairs of the Romans themselves were in great disorder. Those Jews also, who were for innovations, then arose when the times were disturbed; they were also in a flourishing condition for strength and riches, insomuch that the affairs of the east were then exceeding tumultuous, while some hoped for gain, and others were afraid of loss in such troubles; (5) for the Jews hoped that all of their nation which were beyond Euphrates would have raised an insurrection together with them. 

15 (“Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.”)

16 And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon.

17 Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, “It is done.”

18 And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty.

19 The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath.

20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

21 And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe.

13 And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon The devil and out of the mouth of the beast The beast is Rome and out of the mouth of the false prophet, the false prophet is Israel’s leaders. three unclean spirits like frogs; Perhaps the symbolism here is to remind us of the plague upon Egypt that involved frogs (Ex. 8:1-7), indicating that this was going to be a very difficult time. Together, the devil, Rome, and apostate Israel would bring a time of pain and suffering to the world. Jesus said it would be a period of “great tribulation” (Matt. 24:21).

14 for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. These are false signs. The signs deceive those who see them (cf. Rev. 13:13-14; 19:20).

15 (“Behold, I am coming like a thief. Not a reference to the Second Coming of Christ, but His coming in judgment against Israel in the first century. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.”) Another of the seven beatitudes in Revelation (cf. Rev. 1:3; 14:13; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14).

16 And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon. One of the most familiar references in the Book of Revelation is the so-called, “Battle of Armageddon.” This well-known end-time battle has always been a favorite subject of sensationalistic prophecy authors. A casual review of the titles to their many books will demonstrate this to be the case.

- Armageddon: Appointment with Destiny.
- Prophecy 2000: Rushing to Armageddon.
- Arming for Armageddon.
- Armageddon 198?
- Approaching Armageddon: The World Prepares for War with God.
- Final Shockwaves to Armageddon.
- Rush to Armageddon.
- Storming Toward Armageddon: Essays in Apocalypse.

These titles represent only a fraction of the books written about this grossly sensationalized fictional end-time battle. Through the years, Armageddon has received
great attention from prophecy writers, preachers, doomsday cults, politicians, and even Hollywood producers—few have not heard of it.

The thought of a violent climatic end-time battle is not limited to just Christians. Many have labored over such an idea wondering how and when such a deadly conflict would take place. Believers and unbelievers want to know: Is the world headed on a collision course toward Armageddon? Will current troubles in the Middle East lead us to the world’s final battle? What role will the United States play? What about Israel? Will anyone survive?

Futurist writers believe Armageddon will result in Earth’s cataclysmic end. As John Hagee put it, “…God tells us when, how, and where the world as we know it will end: Armageddon.” Unfortunately for Hagee and the many other prophecy writers who hold similar views, the Bible tells us no such thing! This is only their interpretation. Still, this is the popular view of Armageddon that many have been sold. With violently graphic detail, sensationalistic authors sell warning after warning about Armageddon’s deadly and destructive outcome:

“Millions will die in the holocaust, which will effect one-third of the world; and millions more will suffer and die from post-war devastations and supernatural judgments.”

“[Armageddon] will be the battle ground for the greatest blood bath that the world has ever seen.”

“This global catastrophe will involve the entire race of man. No nation will escape. It is within reason to expect a billion casualties.”

Connected with these chilling descriptions, sensationalistic end-time writers have constantly assured us that “Armageddon is quickly approaching!”

We would do well to understand, end-time authors must insist that Armageddon is near. This keeps fearful interest among potential book buyers high, creating a salient market for greater sales. If Armageddon were described as an event in the far and distant future, or worse yet for prophecy writers, only a fictional battle, interest and book sales would undoubtedly, greatly decline.

As a result of all the Armageddon talk and speculation, it ranks at the top of everybody’s list in terms of fear and terror about the end-times. The very word “Armageddon” conjures up all kinds of images of death, destruction, bloodshed, millions of soldiers, and nuclear war. But are these images accurate? Will there really be a world-ending “battle of Armageddon”?

This is the only place in the entire Bible where Armageddon, or as it appears here, Har-Magedon is mentioned. This is the only verse! The way some of the popular Bible teachers talk and write of Armageddon one would think it is found throughout the Bible.

In properly understanding what is being described in these verses in Revelation, we first need to understand that Armageddon, or as it is more accurately rendered here in the

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107 Thomas S. McCall and Zola Lovitt, The Coming Russian Invasion of Israel, 51.
NASB, Har-Magedon, is a place. Har (Mountain) Magedon (Megiddo); that is: The mountain of Megiddo.

There were battles fought at this place. It was at Megiddo that Debra and Barak went to battle against Sisera the commander of Jabin’s army, overthrowing their Midianite enemies (Judges 5:19). In another battle, King Josiah of Judah was killed by Pharaoh Neco, king of Egypt (2 Kings 23:29).

The question relevant to our study is which battle is going to take at Megiddo in Revelation? And the answer is easy, none. That’s right, none. There is no battle at Armageddon described in Revelation! Don’t believe me? Look at the text again. All that is said to take place at Megiddo is a gathering of armies for “the war of the great day of God.” Nothing is said about a battle being fought at Megiddo, only a gathering of armies. In his outstanding commentary on the book of Revelation, Arthur Ogden notes:

Josephus tells us that when Titus left Egypt with orders from his father to subdue the Jews that he returned “to Caesarea, having taken a resolution to gather all his other forces together at that place.” Bear in mind that Caesarea was within sight of Mt. Carmel, the mountain of Megiddo, and that those armed forces coming from the northern regions must pass through Megiddo before reaching the appointed place of gathering.

Megiddo was only a staging ground for the Roman armies. It was from Caesarea, the area of Megiddo, that Titus and his armies moved toward Jerusalem for (as Revelation describes it) “the war of the great day of God” (Rev. 16:14). This was a first century battle. There is no future “battle of Armageddon” described in the Bible.

17 Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, “It is done.” As we have seen throughout this chapter, these seven bowls of wrath contain great similarities to the seven trumpets. The same is true here with the seventh bowl (cf. Rev. 11:15ff).

18 And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty. Ogden notes of the lightning, sounds of thunder and earthquake, “These are symbolic of the great energies of God’s throne being loosed in accomplishment of His purpose. The great earthquake symbolizes the great change in the earth that took place when Israel as a nation under God was destroyed.”

19 The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. The great city is Jerusalem, represented here, and in the next chapter as Babylon. The idea of three parts would appear to come from the book of Ezekiel (cf. Eze. 5:2-12).

20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. Some believe this may be representative of the leaders among the people.

21 And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe. Remember that this is symbolic language. Despite

108 Ogden, 320.
109 Ibid. 320-321.
interpretations from sensationalistic writers which would describe literal hailstones falling from the heavens, Josephus may once again provide us with a possible historical fulfillment. Listen to his description of the Roman catapults and the stones they launched into the city of Jerusalem.

Now, the stones that were cast were of the weight of a talent, and were carried two furlongs and farther. The blow they gave was no way to be sustained, not only by those that stood first in the way, but by those that were beyond them for a great space. As for the Jews, they at first watched the coming of the stone, for it was of a white color, and could therefore not only be perceived by the great noise it made, but could be seen also before it came by its brightness; accordingly the watchmen that sat upon the towers gave them notice when the engine was let go, and the stone came from it, and cried out aloud in their own country language, “THE SON COMETH:” so those that were in its way stood off, and threw themselves down upon the ground; by which means, and by their thus guarding themselves, the stone fell down and did them no harm. But the Romans contrived how to prevent that by blacking the stone, who then could aim at them with success, when the stone was not discerned beforehand, as it had been till then; and so they destroyed many of them at one blow.  

It is interesting that Josephus describes these stones as being white in color, which would make them appear like hailstones falling from heaven. He also gives their weight as being a talent, which is the same weight John gives in Revelation.  

As to the shouts of the Jews recorded by Josephus that “The Son of Man Cometh!” This may have been spoken in derision at Jesus who had promised to come and punish the nation.

**CHAPTER SIXTEEN: QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION POINTS:**

- The similarities between the seven trumpets and the seven bowls of wrath.  
  *What does this tell us about the arrangement of Revelation?*

- Literal historical events and their similarities to those prophesied in this chapter.

- Why is there such interest today in the “Battle of Armageddon”? Is it mentioned in the Bible?

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111 One hundred pounds equals one talent of weight.
1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, “Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters.

1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, “Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, The date one establishes for the writing of the book of Revelation will affect completely their interpretation of the identity of this “great harlot.” Taking a late date approach, Hailey believed this to be symbolic of Rome. In fact, he says, “There can be little or no doubt that the Babylon [the great harlot] of this section is Rome.” Many futurist writers believe the great harlot to be a reference to literal Babylon being rebuilt. In this way, Charles Dyer wrote his book, The Rise of Babylon: Sign of the End Times. The cover of the book had a picture of Saddam Hussein and asked the question: “Could ours be the last generation?” Obviously, Saddam Hussein did not get the Babylon of Revelation rebuilt.

We believe the great harlot (Babylon) to be a reference to Jerusalem. This was discussed earlier at 14:8. See comments there for additional information. We should first deal with the description, “the great harlot.” While other cities or nations might symbolically be considered harlots for their political and immoral activities, the Old Testament prophets used the description repeatedly for Jerusalem. This descriptive title came as a result of Jerusalem’s constant unfaithfulness to God. Jeremiah is very specific in describing Jerusalem as possessing a harlot’s forehead (Jer. 3:3). Jeremiah also describes Jerusalem’s guilt for her adulteries and harlotry (Jer. 13:27). Isaiah and Ezekiel are just as bold in their descriptions of Jerusalem’s abominable harlotries. Ezekiel described Jerusalem as having grown old in harlotries (Eze. 23:43). A fitting description for one called, “The mother of harlots.” Isaiah referred to the people of Judah as the offspring of the adulterer and the harlot (Isa. 57:3). Based on the scriptures, no other city was better fitting of the symbolic description of “the mother of harlots” then Jerusalem (cf. Isa 1:21; 57:1-12; Eze. 16:1-59; 23:1-49; Hos. 1:2; 2:2ff; 9:1).

John is told that this great harlot “sits on many waters.” This type of symbolism for Babylon comes right from the Old Testament. God, through the prophet Jeremiah, described ancient Babylon as sitting on many waters (Jer. 51:13). Literal Babylon dwelt by many bodies of waters. The river Euphrates and other water channels surrounded the city. In contrast, the symbolic Babylon of Revelation sat on many symbolic waters. Fortunately, we are told that the symbol of many waters represents people (Rev. 17:15).

The picture of Babylon sitting upon many peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues, is a perfect description for first century Jerusalem. At this point in their history, Israel as a people had been scattered all over the world. On the great day of Pentecost recorded in Acts chapter two, we are told that there were Jews living in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven (Acts 2:5). In the same scene, the apostles are heard speaking in many different tongues (Acts 2:8ff). In this way, Jerusalem literally sat upon many (symbolic) waters.

Hailey, Revelation, 343.
2 with whom the kings of the earth committed acts of immorality, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality.”
3 And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns.
4 The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality,
5 and on her forehead a name was written, a mystery, “BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”
6 And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. When I saw her, I wondered greatly.

2 with whom the kings of the earth committed acts of immorality, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality.” Can it be said that Jerusalem reigned over the kings of the earth? (17:18) Yes! Jerusalem was God’s city and Israel was His covenant people. No other city could make this claim—certainly not Rome! Jerusalem is the only city in the Bible called, “the holy city” (Neh. 11:1, 18; Isa. 48:2; 52:1; Dan. 9:24; Matt. 4:5; 27:53; Rev. 11:2). The picture here is not physical dominion over the world, but spiritual. Jerusalem again literally fulfills the symbolic picture.
3 And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns.
4 The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet (cf. Isa. 1:18), and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, This same type of description for Jerusalem was given by the Old Testament prophets (Isa. 52:1; Jer. 4:30; Eze. 16:10-11; 16:13). having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality,
5 and on her forehead a name was written, a mystery, “BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” See comments on verse one.
6 And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. When I saw her, I wondered greatly. This picture of deadly persecution has led some to conclude that first century Rome was the symbolic Babylon. While there is no denying that Rome could fit this description, being more consistent with New Testament scripture, a better match is again found in Jerusalem. It was Jerusalem (representative of the first century Jews) who took the lead in the persecution of the Christians (Acts 8:1; 9:1ff). Jesus said, “It cannot be that a prophet would perish outside of Jerusalem” (Lk. 13:33). The parable of the landowner also confirms Jerusalem’s charge as being the persecutor of the prophets. In the parable, Jesus spoke of a landowner who rented out his vineyard to some vine-growers. When he sent his slaves to bring back some of the produce, they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. Finally the landowner sends his son, but the vine-growers killed him also (Matt. 21:33-41). It is also significant to remember the charge of guilt that Jesus laid upon first century Jerusalem: “Upon you will fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on the earth” (Matt. 23:35). There is no doubt that Jerusalem literally fit the symbolic picture of a persecutor.
And the angel said to me, “Why do you wonder? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.

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

“Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits,

7 And the angel said to me, “Why do you wonder? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.

8 “The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. Vespasian takes the throne and sends his son Titus to Jerusalem to destroy the city. And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.

9 “Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits,

10 and they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while. Not only do these seven heads represent seven mountains, they also represent seven kings. Five of these kings have fallen (in death), one is (still living), and the other (the next king) has yet to come. The meaning of this verse was covered in our introduction (see pages 15-17).

11 “The beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction. A reference to Titus, who representing the Beast came to Jerusalem for its destruction. He is “also an eighth” as he would be the emperor following his father Vespasian. In this way, Titus was literally of the seventh (his son).

12 “The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. These were “kings” in the Roman empire by title only. They were territory kings who had no real kingly authority of their own. They were puppet kings who answered to the beast. Herod and his various descendants were among these “kings.”

13 “These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast. This is obvious enough, they serve the beast.

On the whole, we conclude that this symbol signifies the auxiliary princes and chiefs who were allies of Rome and received commands in the Roman army during the Jewish war.

We know from Tacitus and Josephus that several kings of the neighboring nations followed Vespasian and Titus to the war.

113 Hailey, A Commentary on Revelation, 350.
10 and they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while.
11 “The beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction.
12 “The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour.
13 “These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast.
14 “These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.”
15 And he said to me, “The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.
16 “And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire.
17 “For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled.
18 “The woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth.”

14 “These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.” At the time Revelation was written by John, persecution against the church, by Rome, was already in progress. After the destruction of Jerusalem, it would continue. However, the Lamb will overcome them. That is, the church would prove victorious. The fact that it is still alive and active today is proof of this great victory (cf. Acts 5:38-39).
15 And he said to me, “The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues. See comments on verse one.
16 “And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire. As noted in the comments for verse one, there are those who believe the harlot city, Babylon, is Rome. In view of this verse, this is a difficult position to maintain. Here we see the puppet kings, whom we are told serve the beast, actually hate the harlot, and with the beast, would make her desolate, naked, and set her on fire. Would Rome attack itself? The destruction of the harlot city (Babylon = Jerusalem), by the beast (Rome), is consistent with the rest of Revelation. Again, the harlot city can be none other than Jerusalem!
17 “For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled. God was at work in bringing about His purposes. God did not make Rome evil, but He used their evil nature to bring about His righteous purposes. God would then punish Rome for their wickedness. The book of Habakkuk contains some wonderful dialog along these lines.
18 “The woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth.” See comments on verse two.
CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION POINTS:

- The description of Jerusalem as a harlot and Babylon.
  *In what way were these descriptions accurate?*
  *Are similar descriptions found in the Old Testament? Where?*
  *Could Babylon be Rome? (cf. vs. 10).*
  *What is the significance of being clothed in scarlet? (vs. 4).*

- The meaning of verses 9-11.
  *How do they help in establishing a date of writing for the book?*
  *Who was the sixth king?*

- Who were the “ten horns” described in verses seven and twelve?

- Verse fourteen describes a war against the Lamb (representative of the church). How is it that Christians can (and did) overcome persecution?

- God’s working in the nations as described in verse seventeen.
  *Read Habakkuk and note the prophet’s confusion about such matters. How is it like our own?*

NOTES:
1 After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illumined with his glory.

2 And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird.

3 “For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality.”

4 I heard another voice from heaven, saying, “Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues;

5 for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.

The statement, however, that the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury (v. 3), seems to fit Rome better than Jerusalem. Certainly Rome could most naturally be said to have had a major impact upon the world’s economy. On the other hand, Jerusalem was charged with committing fornication with the kings of the earth (v. 3) in Old Testament times (Eze. 16:14-15, 26, 28-30; 23:12-21). The prophet used this imagery to explain God’s reason for bringing judgment upon Jerusalem by the hands of the Babylonians in 586 B.C. It would seem appropriate that the New Testament apostle/prophet would employ the same language in describing a near-identical event, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.\(^\text{115}\)

4 I heard another voice from heaven, saying, “Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues; (cf. 2 Cor. 6:14-18) Get out of Jerusalem! This was a warning for the faithful, described here as “My (God’s) people” (cf. Matt. 24:15ff; Lk. 21:20ff).

5 for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, (cf. Gen. 19:13; 2 Chron. 28:9; Ezra 9:6; Jer. 51:9). and God has remembered her iniquities. These words are again reflective of the words of Jesus (cf. Matt. 23:32-38; 1 Thess. 2:15-16).

\(^{115}\) Steve Gregg, *Four Views of Revelation*, 425-426.
6 “Pay her back even as she has paid, and give back to her double according to her deeds; in the cup which she has mixed, mix twice as much for her.

7 “To the degree that she glorified herself and lived sensuously, to the same degree give her torment and mourning; for she says in her heart, ‘I sit as a queen and I am not a widow, and will never see mourning.’

8 “For this reason in one day her plagues will come, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for the Lord God who judges her is strong.

9 “And the kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her, will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning,

10 standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’

11 “And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes any more—

12 cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and every kind of citron wood and every article of ivory and every article made from very costly wood and bronze and iron and marble,

The expression translated give back double actually has a Hebraic duplication of the term, providing a “double witness,” for purposes of emphasis: Double to her double things. This is the ordinary restitution required by Biblical law (Ex. 22:4, 7).

7 “To the degree that she glorified herself and lived sensuously, to the same degree give her torment and mourning; (cf. Ex. 21:23-25) for she says in her heart, ‘I sit as a queen and I am not a widow, and will never see mourning.’ Her prideful heart would be brought low (cf. Isa. 47:8-9; Lam. 1:1).

8 “For this reason in one day Not in a literal day. Such an expression is similar to “the day of the Lord.” It represents a designated period of punishment. In verse 10, it is referenced as “one hour.” her plagues will come, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; (cf. Lev. 21:9) for the Lord God who judges her is strong.

9 “And the kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her, will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning, See comments on 17:2 as far as the kings of the earth and their relationship with Jerusalem is concerned. They are now mourning her destruction.

10 standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’

11 “And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes any more— These merchants were going to lose a great source of profit. Many of the items listed in the verses which follow were related to the temple service (cf. Ex. 30; 1 Chron. 9:27-29).

116 Chilton, 450.
13 and cinnamon and spice and incense and perfume and frankincense and wine and olive oil and
dine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep, and cargoes of horses and chariots and slaves and
human lives.
14 “The fruit you long for has gone from you, and all things that were luxurious and splendid
have passed away from you and men will no longer find them.
15 “The merchants of these things, who became rich from her, will stand at a distance because of
the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning,
16 saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, she who was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet,
and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls;
17 for in one hour such great wealth has been laid waste!’ And every shipmaster and every
passenger and sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea, stood at a distance,
18 and were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What city is like the great
city?’
19 “And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying,
‘Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in one
hour she has been laid waste!’

Some have argued, based on this verse, that the great city, Babylon,
cannot be Jerusalem since there was no port. However, Josephus says this:

Nor indeed is Judea destitute of such delights as come from the sea, since its maritime
places extend as far as Ptolemais: it was parted into eleven portions, of which the royal city
Jerusalem was the supreme, and presided over all the neighboring country, as the head
does over the body.\(^{117}\)

Many of the products described in this chapter came to Jerusalem from all over the
world. There is no reason to suppose that because Jerusalem itself did not have a port,
that this must be talking about Rome.

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

19 “And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in one hour she has been laid waste!’ Jerusalem’s destruction is mourned by many.
20 “Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her.” The cry of the souls under the altar has been heard (Rev. 6:9-11). Their blood and that of their fellow servants has been avenged by God. This same scene was witnessed earlier in 11:18-19. See comments on those verses and the transitional note that follows.
21 Then a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “So will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and will not be found any longer. (cf. Matt. 18:6).
22 “And the sound of harpists and musicians and flute-players and trumpeters will not be heard in you any longer; and no craftsman of any craft will be found in you any longer; and the sound of a mill will not be heard in you any longer; 
23 and the light of a lamp will not shine in you any longer; and the voice of the bridegroom and bride will not be heard in you any longer; for your merchants were the great men of the earth, because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery.
24 “And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth.” (cf. Rev. 17:6). This further identifies Babylon as Jerusalem (cf. Matt. 21:33-41; 22:1-7; 23:25-35; Lk. 11:49-50; 13:33-34).

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION POINTS:

- The danger of Jerusalem’s attitude as reflected in verse seven. How can we be guilty of the same?
- What lessons might we learn from the instruction in verse four to “Come out so that you will not participate in her sins”? (cf. 2 Cor. 6:14-18)
- Is it right to rejoice when our enemies are defeated? (cf. 18:20).
- Do you believe verse 24 to be descriptive of Rome or Jerusalem? Why?
1 After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; 2 because His judgments are true and righteous; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and He has avenged the blood of His bond-servants on her.”  
3 And a second time they said, “Hallelujah! Her smoke rises up forever and ever.”  
4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, “Amen. Hallelujah!”  
5 And a voice came from the throne, saying, “Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great.”  
6 Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.  
7 “Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.”  
8 It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

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1 After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; 2 because His judgments are true and righteous; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and He has avenged the blood of His bond-servants on her.” Jerusalem had been destroyed, the blood of the prophets and saints had been avenged, God’s word was fulfilled, it was time for celebration. Praise is given to God whose judgments are always true and righteous.  
3 And a second time they said, “Hallelujah! Her smoke rises up forever and ever.” This is not to say that the smoke of Jerusalem’s A.D. 70 destruction continues to rise. The language here is representing an eternal destruction. In the same way, Jude described the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah as undergoing the punishment of eternal fire (Jude 7). Similar language was seen earlier in regards to the beast and the false prophet. The smoke of their torment was said to go up forever and ever (Rev. 14:11).  
4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, “Amen. Hallelujah!” This is the same scene of praise as described earlier by John in chapter eleven (cf. Rev. 11:16ff). “In every outburst of God’s power in the Revelation, the elders and living beings fall down and worship (cf. Rev. 4:9-11; 5:14; 11:16).”  
5 And a voice came from the throne, saying, “Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great.”  
6 Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.

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118 Ogden, 345.
9 Then he said to me, “Write, ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’ ” And he said to me, “These are true words of God.”

10 Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war.

12 His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself.

13 He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

7 “Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.” The identity of the Lamb is obvious enough: Jesus Christ; so too, the bride: the church (cf. Eph. 5:22-32; 2 Cor. 11:1-2). The question to be answered is: When does this “marriage supper of the Lamb” take place? Is this a picture of the saints finally reaching heaven or is this something that takes place right now? Contrary to the English rendering before us, the text would more literally read, “the marriage supper of the Lamb came.”

119 This is not a future event, it is now! As Wallace noted, “Every union of a believer with Christ in baptism is marriage to Christ…” (cf. Rom. 7:1-4). The celebration pictured is due to the victory over her persecutors. The supper can continue uninterrupted by violent persecutions.

8 It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Notice the contrast between the attire of the bride and that of the great harlot (cf. Rev. 17:4-5). See also Matt. 22:1-14; Eph. 5:22ff.

9 Then he said to me, “Write, ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’ ” And he said to me, “These are true words of God.” Another beatitude. The one’s who are invited are those who belong to Christ. Indeed, they are blessed.

10 Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” A great verse to show that we are not to worship angels. How interesting that the angel identifies himself to John as “a fellow servant.”

11 And I saw heaven opened, another scene in heaven. and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. A rider on a white horse was seen in chapter six (Rev. 6:2). As noted in that reference, many believe the rider there to be Jesus Christ. Here the identity is unmistakable as the descriptions clearly reveal. He is Faithful and True. He judges righteously.

12 His eyes are a flame of fire, (cf. Rev. 1:14), and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. The name written on Him was not revealed to John (cf. Matt. 11:27).


120 Wallace, Revelation, 388.
14 And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.
15 From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.
16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”
17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, “Come, assemble for the great supper of God,
18 so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great.”
19 And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.
20 And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone.

13 He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. He is pictured as if returning from battle. He had been victorious over His enemies; their blood had been shed just as they had shed the blood of God’s servants. Another name is here given as a means of identification, His name is called, “The Word of God” (cf. John 1:1-3, 14).
14 And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.
15 From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, (cf. Isa. 11:4-5) and He will rule them with a rod of iron; (cf. Ps. 2:7-9) and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. See comments on 14:18-19. (cf. Isa. 63:1-6).
16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” (1 Tim. 6:15).
17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, “Come, assemble for the great supper of God, This is an invitation to the birds of prey. Symbolically, it is an announcement that God’s enemies are to be destroyed (cf. Deut. 28:26; Jer. 7:33; 19:7; Matt. 24:28).
18 so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great.”
19 And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.
20 And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone.
21 And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

21 And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh. Wallace rightly summarized these verses as follows:

The scene of verses nineteen to twenty-one reverted to the spiritual battle between the heavenly armies of the Rider, and the armies of the Roman beast—the heathen persecutor. It was after the destruction of Jerusalem; and after the evil forces of heathenism were diverted from the scene of Jerusalem and Judaism to converge on the church. But the vision saw the triumph of Christianity. It was declared in verse twenty that the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet . . . with which he deceived them that received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. This beast was the original first sea-beast of chapter 13—personified in the emperor, the source of authority for all the persecutions. The false prophet was identical with the second land-beast, of Judea and Palestine, described in chapter 13, as the subordinate of the imperial beast who seduced the inhabitants of Judea to worship the emperor.

After accomplishing the destruction of Jerusalem and the obliteration of the Jewish state, the vision represents the beast as having lost the battle against the church.121

CHAPTER NINETEEN: QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION POINTS:

- The contrast between the Lamb’s bride and the great harlot.  
  *Compare 19:8 and 17:4.*

- What (and when) is the marriage supper of the Lamb? (19:7). Explain the reasons behind your answer.

- The beatitude of verse nine.  
  *In what ways is this a blessing?*

- The description of Christ in verses 11-16.

- What confidences can we as believers today gain from the message of this chapter?

NOTES:

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121 Wallace, Revelation, 395-396.
CHAPTER TWENTY

Introductory note to this chapter:

This is one of the more difficult chapters in the book of Revelation to fully comprehend. One’s interpretation of the symbolism described here (as with the rest of Revelation) must be consistent with the whole of scripture. In fact, the whole of scripture must be our guide to properly interpreting these words.

It is from this chapter that premillennialism derives its eschatology concerning a thousand year reign of Christ on earth. These thousand years are known as “the millennium.”

Concerning the millennium there are three basic eschatological positions. Within each of the three, there are various differences of opinion in regards to certain details. Each can be summarized as follows:

Amillennialism holds to the belief that there will be no future millennial kingdom on earth (the “a” is a negative prefix as in ‘a’-theist or ‘a’-gnostic). The amillennialist would view the kingdom as having already been established. Christ is now reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords. The thousand years described in Revelation are viewed symbolically as a long period of time, not limited to a single millennium.

Postmillennialism looks for the Second Coming of Jesus after (post) a future period of tremendous gospel success and peace on earth. While not viewing the thousand years of Revelation literally, the postmillennialist hopes for an extended period of great peace and righteousness on earth. As with amillennialism, the postmillennialist views Christ presently reigning as King with the kingdom already established.

Premillennialism is the belief that Christ will return prior (pre) to establishing an earthly kingdom in which He will reign as King for a literal thousand years. There are two basic schools of belief in the area of premillennialism: Historic premillennialism and Dispensational premillennialism. While both view the Second Coming as the event that ushers in the millennial kingdom, their interpretations of various prophetic texts would see some significant differences. Perhaps the greatest difference between the two is seen in their respective views of the church. Historic premillennialism views the church as a distinct subject of Old Testament prophecy, while dispensationalism sees it as only a parenthesis in the plan of God—something never intended to exist.

Dispensationalism derives its title from the systematic way in which it divides Bible time. According to this eschatology, there will be seven distinct dispensations in the course of man’s history. These are as follows:

1. Innocence         Creation to the Fall of Man
2. Conscience        Fall of Man to Noah
3. Human Government  Noah to Abraham
4. Promise           Abraham to Moses
5. Law               Moses to Christ
6. Grace (Church Age) The Cross to Second Coming
7. Kingdom           Millennium on Earth
It is significant to note, that dispensational premillennialism is a somewhat recent development—only dating back to the 1830's. Its relatively short history, while not totally discrediting or damaging, does call into question its validity. Teachers like John Darby and C.I. Scofield popularized the doctrine. First published in 1909, the *Scofield Reference Bible* is still used as a standard for supporting and understanding the teachings of this system of end-time belief. Today, dispensationalism is the most widely taught form of eschatology. It is seen and propagated in contemporary works such as *Left Behind* and *The Late Great Planet Earth*.

Needless to say, a sound understanding of Revelation chapter twenty is essential in refuting the error of premillennialism and dispensationalism. This brief commentary and study guide will present an *amillennial* approach to the text. We believe this to be the interpretation most consistent with the whole of inspired scripture.

**Commentary:**
1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand.
2 And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;
3 and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.
4 Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.
5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.
6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.
7 When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison,
8 and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore.

1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. This angel is holding the key of the abyss. Keys symbolize authority (cf. Matt. 16:19; Rev. 1:18). That the angel is coming down from heaven with this key would indicate that his authority is from God.

2 And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; This was not a total binding of the devil. In the next verse, we see that it was a binding to prevent him from deceiving the nations for a period of one-thousand years. He had been an evil cause of influence on Rome and on Israel. With their defeat as pictured in the previous chapters, God binds the devil for the thousand years. Satan being bound so as to not to deceive the nations, contextually speaks of the fact that God was not going to allow him to go out and entice another nation (such as Rome) to persecute the righteous, until the thousand years were complete (See vs. 3).
9 And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them.
10 And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.
11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.
12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.
13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.
14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.
15 And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

3 and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time. These thousand years should not be interpreted literally. The number one-thousand would itself suggest a symbolic approach. Numbers are often (though not always) used symbolically in scripture, especially in the book of Revelation. Jesus told His disciples they should forgive “seventy times seven” (Matt. 18:22). When they experienced the 491st offense were they no longer to forgive? Revelation 4:5 speaks of the seven spirits of God. Does this mean there are seven Holy Spirits? Should the 144,000 be interpreted literally? (Rev. 7:4; 14:1). This number was made up of 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes. Does this mean 12,000 exactly from each tribe or is the number symbolic? These numbers (like many others) are clearly used symbolically.

The number one-thousand is used symbolically in scripture. God told Israel that He keeps His covenant to a thousandth generation (Deut. 7:9). What happens after that generation? Does God no longer keep the covenant? The psalmist spoke of God possessing the cattle on a thousand hills. Does this mean God does not possess the cattle on any other hills—only the one-thousand? In Psalm 68:17, we learn that God’s chariots are thousands upon thousands. Literally speaking, how many chariots would this represent? Peter tells us, “With the Lord one day is like a thousand years” (2 Pet. 3:8). Literally speaking, could this mean the millennium will only be one day? In each of these examples, one-thousand is used symbolically to express a large number, vastness, immensity. Such would appear to be the case in Revelation twenty. The thousand years simply represent a long and extended period of time.

4 Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. Carefully looking over this text, it is important to note all the elements of premillennialism that are not mentioned—elements that are essential to the doctrine. In this regard, Foy Wallace noted:
Revelation 20:1-6 does not mention the second coming of Christ…. It does not mention a bodily resurrection…. It does not mention a reign on earth, nor does it mention the “reign of Christ”… Is it not possible for souls to live and reign “with Christ” without Christ being on earth? Furthermore, it does not mention the throne of David or any other throne on earth. And it does not mention either Jerusalem or Palestine…  

If this verse is the foundational text for dispensationalism’s earthly millennial kingdom and none of these essential aspects of the doctrine can therein be found, how sure is the foundation?  

Here is another interesting and critical point to consider: If, as some insist, the thousand years are interpreted literally, then the beheaded saints (in this same verse) must be interpreted literally. One cannot be literal and the other be symbolic. Does this mean one must lose their head in order to get into the millennial kingdom?  

The ones beheaded are said to live and reign with Christ for a thousand years. Taken literally, this reigning and living of the saints with Christ would be restricted to the thousand years. When the thousand years are over (literally applied), they would no longer reign or live. What kind of millennial hope is that?  

Having seen what the verse does not say, we need discuss what it does say. John says he saw “thrones.” What are these thrones and who is sitting on them? A throne represents an exalted position, a seat of authority. These are not literal earthly thrones, look again, earth is not mentioned in the verse.  

Who are the ones sitting on these thrones? We are told they are souls who had been beheaded because of their testimony and those who had not worshipped the beast or had received the mark of the beast. These could well be the ones pictured earlier as being under the altar who were crying for vengeance (Rev. 6:9-10). Their blood had been avenged. In addition, the ones sitting on thrones could also represent their fellow servants who were also persecuted to the point of death. As the verse indicates, they did not worship the beast or receive the mark on their forehead or hand. They remained faithful to God.  

The verse states that these souls came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. This is their “throne.” They reign with Christ. These thousand years are the same symbolic thousand years during which Satan is bound so as to no longer deceive the nations. What is this coming to life? Verse five will help us in our interpretation.

5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. The coming to life of the martyred souls (as pictured in verse four) is said to be “the first resurrection.”  

What is the first resurrection? One view would say, it is the resurrection of a cause. These souls had been raised from being under the altar to a place of sitting on thrones. They had at one time been killed for their testimony. Now that their enemies had been destroyed and their blood avenged, it is as if their cause (the cause of truth) has found new life. This interpretation would describe a spiritual or symbolic resurrection and not a bodily resurrection, which is a concept again taken from the Old Testament. The prophet Ezekiel, while in exile in Babylon, spoke of a symbolic resurrection. While in captivity Israel is described as being lifeless, just a bunch of dry bones; but the dry bones are given

122 Wallace, Revelation, 403.
life. Thus, Israel being returned from captivity to their land is described as a resurrection. As God says through the prophet, “I will open your graves and cause you to come out.” Not literally. This was not a bodily resurrection of the literal dead. It was a symbolic resurrection (Eze. 37:1-14). The same type of imagery is seen in the book of Isaiah, who prophesied of the Babylonian captivity of the people of Judah and their eventual coming out of Babylon. In captivity they were said to be dead, coming out, they were said to be alive (Isa. 26:19).

There is another view of this first resurrection which deserves some consideration. It too, would point to a symbolic resurrection. This alternative view would suggest that the first resurrection was Christ’s resurrection from the dead. Essential His resurrection was the first which would bring about eternal life. Verse six tells us, “Blessed and holy are is the one who has a part in the first resurrection.” In other words, it is not so much the resurrection of the believers that John has in view, but the believer’s participation in Christ’s resurrection.

We participate in His resurrection through covenantal baptism, so that we “walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4). When we were dead in transgressions, God “made us alive together with Christ... and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:5-6; cf. Col. 3:1). The First Resurrection is thus spiritual and ethical, our regeneration in Christ and union with God, our re-creation in His image, our participation in His resurrection. This interpretation is confirmed by St. John’s description of those in the first resurrection—it completely corresponds with everything he tells us elsewhere about the elect: They are blessed (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 22:7, 14) and holy, i.e. saints (5:8; 8:3-4; 11:18; 13:7, 10; 14:12; 16:6; 17:6; 18:20, 24; 19:8; 20:9; 21:2, 10); as Christ promised all the faithful, the second death (v. 14) has no power over them (2:11); and they are priests (1:6; 5:10) who reign with Christ (2:26-27; 3:21; 4:4; 11:15-16; 12:10).

Notice that “the rest of the dead do not come to life until the thousand years are completed.” Who are the “rest of the dead”? The resurrection of a cause view would see the rest of the dead coming to life in their cause after the thousand years are complete. These “dead” are the persecutors of the people of God. It is not that they are bodily raised from the dead, it is their cause that finds “new life.” It too then is a symbolic resurrection.

However, the latter view we discussed would say, there is really nothing here to suggest that they experience a resurrection. The rest of the dead (those not in Christ) do not experience reigning with Christ during the thousand years. When the thousand years are complete, they remain in their lifeless state.

6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. Eternal life is found for those who have a part in the first resurrection; that is for those who are serving the cause of truth. For the righteous, the second death has no power. And what is second death? It is eternal death. Later in this chapter, we find that the second death involves being thrown into the lake of fire. The righteous and unrighteous (both) experience a first death: physical death. Only the saints will be saved from the second death.

123 Chilton, 517-518.
Here again is another strike against baptism being the first resurrection. If that were the case, the first death would be our death to sin. The second death would be our physical death. Here the second death is something much more eternal.

7 *When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison,* Satan who was earlier bound will be released after the symbolic thousand-year period. The natural question is, have these thousand years expired? Only God knows. Satan is certainly very active. Remember, that his being bound was only with respect to deceiving the nations. In the next verse, we see what he does when released.

8 *And will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore.* Who are Gog and Magog? What is this war? First, understand the symbolism of Gog and Magog comes from the Old Testament. Specifically, from Ezekiel 38 and 39 (cf. Eze. 38:2). Is this a future world war? No. It is a symbolic way of describing an attack against the people of God.

9 *And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them.* They surround the beloved city, the camp of the saints. This is the church. Old Jerusalem has been destroyed. Wallace and Hailey in their respective commentaries on Revelation, both see this as an attack against the truth, thus an attack against God.

   However, the interesting thing is, this specific last battle effort of Satan against God’s people, apparently never really takes place. Yes, he gathers his forces, but notice that when they surround the city, fire comes down from heaven and devours the enemies. The outcome is decided before it ever begins... and the outcome is, we win!

   Once again, we see the encouragement of Revelation. God is in control, so be faithful until to death. To him who overcomes, I will grant access to the tree of life.

   As far as God being victorious in Revelation, in chapter eighteen, we see the defeat of Babylon, symbolically Jerusalem. In chapter nineteen we see the defeat of the beast and the false prophet, Rome and the her pagan religions. Here in chapter twenty, we see the defeat of the devil.

10 *And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.* The devil is defeated and cast into the lake of fire (cf. Matt. 25:41).

11 *Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.* Pictured here, and in the following verses is the final day of judgment.

12 *And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.* The Bible is clear (whether all wish to accept it or not), there will be a day of judgment. There will be a day when all must give an account for their life. The reality of such a day is not just a New Testament teaching, even the Old Testament scriptures described this appointed time (Pr. 24:12; Ecc. 3:17; 12:13-14; Rom. 2:5-6, 16).

13 *And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.*
14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.
15 And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. The imagery here cannot be missed. Something thrown into a lake of fire is consumed. This is more Old Testament language. When God’s enemies were defeated, they were often described as being consumed (cf. Num. 16:35; Dt. 4:24; Judges 24:20; Eze. 22:31; Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 12; Heb. 10:27; 12:29).

CHAPTER TWENTY: QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION POINTS:

➢ What are the differences between: Premillennialism and Amillennialism?

➢ Should the thousand years be interpreted literally or symbolically?

➢ Possible interpretations for “the first resurrection.”
   *Which do you believe best fits the text and why?*

➢ What is the second death?

➢ Who were “the rest of the dead” as described in verse five?

➢ Do you believe satan has now been released to deceive the nations?

➢ The imagery of being cast into a lake of fire.

NOTES:
CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Introductory note to this chapter:
Perhaps because of its placement in the Book of Revelation (following the scene of final judgment portrayed in chapter twenty), and its beautifully descriptive language describing the New Jerusalem, many believe this chapter is describing heaven. Many of our favorite hymns about heaven derive their poetic language from this text. Consider some of these familiar lyrics and their associated verses in Revelation chapter twenty-one.

- “And someday yonder we will never more wander but walk the streets that are purest gold.” (cf. Rev. 21:21).
- “No tears in heaven, no sorrows given…” (cf. Rev. 21:4).
- “Within its pearly portals, angelic armies sing…” (cf. Rev. 21:21).
- “In the land of fadeless day lies the city foursquare; It shall never pass away, And there is no night there.” (cf. Rev. 21:16, 25).

Contrary to the favorite hymns of many a believer, and the interpretations of many a recognized Bible scholar, it is very possible that this chapter is not talking about heaven. Once again, remember that Revelation is a book full of symbolic language, much of which comes from the Old Testament. When the symbolic language of chapter twenty-one is interpreted contextually and with a view toward various Old Testament prophecies concerning the Kingdom, the picture that develops is that of the church. More specifically, the church victorious over her enemies: Babylon (Jerusalem) and the beast (Rome). This will be the interpretation presented in the verses which follow.

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.
2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.
3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,
4 and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; Those who view this chapter as a description of heaven, would interpret this “new heaven and a earth new” literally. However, the language here takes us back to the book of Isaiah and the promise of a “new heaven and earth” (Isa. 65:17). Isaiah was not speaking of our eternal home in heaven. This become obvious when one is confronted with the fact that (according to the

124 Mansion Over the Hilltop, Ira Stanphil.
125 No Tears in Heaven, Robert S. Arnold.
126 There is a Habitation, Love H. Jameson.
127 In the Land of Fadeless Day, John R. Clements.
prophecy) death is still occurring (Isa. 65:20). This is a promise of the Kingdom the Messiah would establish. Peter referred to this same promise (2 Pet. 3:13). **for the first heaven and the first earth passed away.** To make way for the new heavens and earth, there first had to come the destruction of “the first heaven and earth.” Again, those who view chapter twenty-one as being descriptive of heaven would interpret this as being the destruction of the literal planet earth and the surrounding heavens. The apostle Peter used this same type of imagery in his second New Testament epistle. Many believe the text in Peter is describing the burning end of the literal earth and heavens. They would read the destruction of the heavens and earth described by Peter literally (2 Pet. 3:7ff). Interestingly, this same literal interpretation would read the “new heavens and earth where righteousness dwells” (2 Pet. 3:13), symbolically, as the eternal dwelling for God’s people (heaven). In the introduction to this study, we noted that in the Old Testament, Israel as a Covenant people were symbolically referenced as “a heaven and earth” (cf. Deut. 32:1; Isa. 1:2; 51:6, 15-16; Jer. 4:23-24; 5:1). It is in this way, that both Peter and John (in Revelation) were referencing the burning end coming upon Old Covenant Israel (Be sure to revisit introductory comments on pages 9-10). **and there is no longer any sea.** Seas divide people. Bodies of water separate nations. Symbolically this would speak of the Law (cf. Acts 15:7-11; Rom. 3:21-23; 10:11-13; Eph. 2:13-15). In Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek (cf. Gal. 3:28).

2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, Notice that this “new Jerusalem” is coming down out of heaven. It is not in heaven but from heaven. There may be some typology in this chapter concerning heaven, but the overall picture is that of the church. This is a picture of “the new Jerusalem.” What happened to the old Jerusalem? As we have seen in the message of Revelation, she has been destroyed. **made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.** It is pictured as a bride. This is a description of the church found in the N.T. (cf. Rom. 7:4; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:22-23).

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them.** If this were a description of heaven men would be pictured as dwelling among God. Here it is God dwelling among men. This verse states the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy concerning the New Covenant, that God would dwell among His people ( Isa. 25:6-9; Hos. 1:9-11; Eze. 37:19-28; Zec. 2:11-13). For other passages in the New Testament which also show the fulfillment of these prophecies see Rom. 9:24-25; 2 Cor. 6:15-16; 1 Pet. 2:10.

4 and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; This was the Old Testament promise of Christ’s Kingdom (Isa. 25:8; 30:19; 51:11; 60:20; 61:3; 65:18-19). **and there will no longer be any death;** How can this be the church if there is no longer any death? We still die. While we still experience physical death, we have the hope of a resurrection from the dead. This hope is only found in Christ (cf. Jn. 5:24; Rom. 6:23). In another way, this would speak of there no longer being any death from sin. Our sins have been forgiven. Paul tells us we have been set free from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2). **there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”** In the church, there is great joy. Paul said we are to “rejoice always in the Lord” (Phil. 4:4). We are not to sorrow as those who have no hope (1 Thess. 4:13).

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128 Ogden, 376.
5 And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” And He said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.”

6 Then He said to me, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.

7 “He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.

8 “But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

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

10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,

11 having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper.

5 And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” And He said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.” The idea of making all things new is what the new covenant is all about (cf. Eph. 2:15; Heb. 9:15). We have “new life” (Rom. 6:4). We are a “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:24). We are in the “new Jerusalem” (Rev. 21:2). We have a “new name” (Isa. 62:2; Rev. 2:17; 3:12).

6 Then He said to me, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. This was another promise of the new covenant (cf. Jn. 4:14; 6:35; 7:38).

7 “He who overcomes will inherit these things. The blessings described in these verses are not enjoyed by all, only those who overcome. The one who overcomes does so through faith Christ. In this he overcomes sin (1 John 3:4-9), death (Heb. 2:14-15), eternal death (Rom. 6:23), the world (1 John 2:15ff), and the devil (1 John 3:10). and I will be his God and he will be My son. The one who overcomes enjoys a relationship with God (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 3:29-4:7; 1 John 3:1).

8 “But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” Notice these people are still alive. In the future (if not repentant), they will suffer the fate of the second death. This indicates that the scene being symbolically described is not heaven.

9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, “Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” Another clear picture of the church.

10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, This was the new Jerusalem, the church. Those who view this chapter as descriptive of heaven, interpret this as the church in her final eternal glory. However, notice that she is seen coming down out of heaven, not going up into heaven.

11 having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper. Imagery to describe her beauty and purity. Beauty and purity made possible by the Lamb (cf. Eph. 5:25-32).
12 It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel.
13 There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west.
14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.
15 The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall.
16 The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal.
17 And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements.
18 The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.

12 It had a great and high wall, Symbolically, perhaps the walls are to represent security and protection from the enemy (cf. Isa. 26:1-4). With twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. The faithful remnant of Israel played an important part in God’s plan to bring the Christ into the world.
13 There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west.
14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The church is guided and instructed by the authoritative writings of the apostles (cf. Eph. 2:20). Together, the image of the twelve tribes and the twelve apostles combines the Old and New Covenants.
15 The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall.
16 The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. The picture here is the immensity of the New Jerusalem. Such a city with walls so high and thick (72 yards see vs. 17) and high would be impossible to conquer (Dan. 2:44).
17 And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements. Earlier in Revelation, the old Jerusalem was measured for destruction (11:1-2). The New Jerusalem is measured for preservation. The city was pure gold, like clear glass.
18 The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.
19 The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst.
20 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. Notice that it is a street (singular) of gold. Perhaps this indicates the one and only way to God (cf. Isa. 35:8-10).

129 Ogden, 385.
19 The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst.

20 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

21 And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb are its temple.

22 And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.

23 And the nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it.

24 In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it;

22 I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The old Jerusalem had a physical temple within it. The New Jerusalem has no physical temple. God and the Lamb are the temple (cf. Eze. 37:26-28). They are the place where the covenant people find forgiveness. The Lamb is the atoning sacrifice. Jesus Christ is the High Priest (Heb. 2:17; 4:14-16). This is another indication that this cannot be describing heaven. When we reach that final eternal dwelling place the role of Christ as the “Lamb” will be no more (cf. 1 Cor. 15:24-28).

23 And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. Many a city, with the reflection of the sun upon its buildings, glows. Such was the case for old Jerusalem. Josephus said this of Jerusalem’s temple:

Now the outward face of the temple in its front wanted nothing that was likely to surprise either men’s minds or their eyes, for it was covered all over the plates of gold of great weight, and, at the first rising of the sun, reflected back a very fiery splendor, and made those who forced themselves to look upon it to turn their eyes away, just as they would have done at the sun’s own rays. But this temple appeared to strangers, when they were at a distance, like a mountain covered with snow; for, as to those parts of it that were not girt, they were exceeding white.130

The New Jerusalem is not dependant upon the sun or the moon to shine on it, for “God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.” This is another fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (cf. Isa. 60:18-20).

24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. Once again, how can this be describing heaven if the nations are walking now by its light?

25 In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; In the old Jerusalem, the gates of the city closed at night (Neh. 13:19). The promise of the Old Testament, that in the New Jerusalem, the gates would never close (Isa. 60:11). Access to God is always available!

130Josephus, Wars, 5, 5, 6.
27 and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

27 and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life. One must be cleansed by the blood of the Lamb before they are able to enter into the city. In this, only those names that are found written in the Lamb’s book of life are found therein.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE: QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION POINTS:

➤ Which do you believe has had the greater impact on our views of heaven: the uninspired hymns we sing or the inspired scriptures?
   How does the Bible describe heaven? Give some verses.

➤ The challenges faced in applying this text to heaven.
   What challenges are faced in applying it to the church?

➤ The consistency of the interpretation offered with the message of Revelation.

➤ The symbolism presented and its consistency with the church.

NOTES:
CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

1 Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb,
2 in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.
3 There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him;
4 they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads.
5 And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.
6 And he said to me, “These words are faithful and true”; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must soon take place.
7 “And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.”

1 Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, This chapter is a continuation of the previous, in which the New Jerusalem (the church) was being described. Here we see a river of the water of life flowing from the throne of God. Ogden believes this to be a reference to the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn. 6:35; 7:37-39). Wallace sees it as “the fullness of life and salvation in which the redeemed shared with unrestrained access.” Perhaps there is intended here both of these views. Without the work of the Holy Spirit we would not enjoy the fullness and salvation found in Christ (cf. John 3:5; Eph. 1:13-14).
2 in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. This is not the tree of life that was originally planted in the Garden of Eden. This tree of life would appear to be representative of the cross (cf. Rev. 2:7). The cross continually bears fruit, “every month.” The cross provides healing to the nations.
3 There will no longer be any curse; On the cross, Christ became a curse for us (Gal.3:13). He paid the price for our sins and provided cleansing and access to God. and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him;
4 they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. This in contrast to those who would wear the mark of the beast on their foreheads (cf. Rev. 7:3; 9:4; 14:1).
5 And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.
6 And he said to me, “These words are faithful and true”; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must soon take place. Here begins a repetition of the truth that the things prophesied in this book will happen soon (cf. vs. 7, 10, 12, 20).

131 Wallace, Revelation, 449.
8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things.
9 But he said to me, “Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God.”
10 And he said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.
11 “Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy.”
12 “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.
13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”
14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.
15 Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.
16 “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.”

7 “And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.” Not a reference to Christ’s Second Coming, but to His coming in judgment against Jerusalem. Here is the sixth beatitude of Revelation (See vs. 14).
8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things.
9 But he said to me, “Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God.”
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16 “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.”
17 The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.
18 I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book;
19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.
20 He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming quickly.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.
21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

15 Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying. These persons are living and operating outside the New Jerusalem. This again tells us that heaven is not in view.
16 “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.”
17 The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.
18 I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book;
19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book. “This book” is not a reference to the entire Bible, though it is certainly wrong to add or take away from God’s word. However, contextually, “this book” is a reference to the book of Revelation.
20 He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming quickly.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. Again, emphasis is made to the soon arrival of these events, not in our time, but in the days of the first century.
21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO: QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION POINTS:

➢ What is the river of the water of life flowing from the throne?

➢ How is the cross a tree of life?

➢ How are symbolic descriptions of this chapter consistent with the church interpretation presented in chapter twenty-one?

➢ The beatitudes of verses seven and fourteen. How do they apply today?

➢ How has this study of Revelation helped you?
**APPENDIX: THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA: AN OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY**

<table>
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**Ephesus**
- Stars
- Fallen
- Left first love
- Tree of Life
- Paradise of God

**Smyrna**
- Dead, but came to life (Isaac, Joseph, Israel)
- Poor, but rich (Strangers in a land of promise)
- Tribulation ten days (Ten plagues)

**Pergamum**
- Balaam/Balak
- Hidden Manna
- White Stone (cf. Ex. 28:9-12)

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<td>Sardis</td>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>Laodicea A.D. 70</td>
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**Thyatira**
- Jezebel
- Tribulation (cf. 1 Kings 9:22-37; Js. 5:17)
- Messianic Promise (Ps. 2:8-9)

**Sardis**
- Spirit
- Seven Stars
- A few people (Remnant)
- Wake up!
- Coming judgment

**Philadelphia**
- A little power
- Those who say they are Jews, but are not.
- Temple
- New Jerusalem

**Laodicea**
- Spiritual blindness
- Promise to reign with Christ
# APPENDIX: B

## A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE SEVEN BOWLS OF WRATH, THE SEVEN TRUMPETS, AND THE PLAGUES ON EGYPT

Adapted from Chilton’s *Days of Vengeance*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Trumpets</th>
<th>Bowls of Wrath</th>
<th>Plagues on Egypt</th>
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<tr>
<td>2. On the sea; third of the sea becomes blood, third of the creatures in the sea die, third of the ships destroyed (Rev. 8:8-9).</td>
<td>2. On the sea; becomes blood, every living thing in the sea dies (Rev. 16:3).</td>
<td>2. Waters become blood (first plague, Ex. 7:17-21).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. On the rivers and springs; third of the waters became wormwood, bitter (Rev. 8:10-11).</td>
<td>3. On the rivers and springs, they become blood (Rev. 16:4-7).</td>
<td>3. Waters become blood (first plague, Ex. 7:17-21).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Armies released from the Euphrates, kill third of mankind (Rev. 9:13-21).</td>
<td>6. On the Euphrates, it is dried up to make way for the kings of the east; an invasion of frog-demons (Rev. 16:12-16).</td>
<td>6. Frogs from river (second plague, Ex. 8:2-4).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY


