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COURSE NOTES

REVELATION

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INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHY	4
BACKGROUND	5
OUTLINE	24
EXPOSITION	25
CH 1-11—THE STRUGGLE ON EARTH	25
<i>Ch 1-3—Christ in the Midst of the Seven Golden Lampstands</i>	25
Ch 1—Background and Opening.....	25
Ch 2—The Seven Churches (part 1)	31
Ch 3—The Seven Churches (part 2)	46
<i>Ch 4-7—The Book with Seven Seals.....</i>	56
Ch 4—The Throne Scene.....	56
Ch 5-7—The Seven Seals.....	59
<i>Ch 8-11—The Seven Trumpets of Judgment.....</i>	75
Ch 8-9—Seals, Trumpets and Woes	75
Ch 10-11—The Angel, Book and Vision Continues	82
Ch 12-22—The Deeper Spiritual Background.....	87
Ch 12-14—The Woman and the Man-Child Persecuted.....	87
CH 15-16—THE SEVEN BOWLS OF WRATH.....	98
CH 17-19—THE FALL OF THE GREAT HARLOT AND THE BEASTS	104
CH 20-22—JUDGMENT ON SATAN AND THE NEW HEAVEN AND EARTH	116
<i>Ch 20—The Thousand Years and Final Judgment</i>	116
<i>Ch 21—The New Jerusalem (part 1).....</i>	122
<i>Ch 22—The New Jerusalem (part 2).....</i>	130
APPENDIX.....	137
APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE	138
CITIES OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF THE APOCALYPSE.....	140
FORGIVENESS OF SINS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT	141
<i>Appendix A—Omniscience and Old Testament Forgiveness of Sins.....</i>	150
<i>Appendix B—The Church in Purpose.....</i>	151
HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE LUKEWARM LAODICEANS.....	154
REVELATION—WHEN WRITTEN?	156
ROMAN EMPERORS - 1	161
ROMAN EMPERORS - 2	162
ROMAN PERSECUTIONS OF CHRISTIANS	163
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	164

INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHY

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Biography:

Chuck was born in 1933. He and his wife Loretta have been married 60 years. They have 3 children, 5 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren. He is an alumnus of Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, where he majored in actuary science and minored in accounting. He graduated from the Bear Valley School of Preaching, Denver, Colorado in 1974. He has served on the administrations of York College and the Bear Valley Bible Institute of Denver. He served both as an instructor and as director in the Southwest School of Biblical Studies in Austin, Texas. In the fall of 1986 he helped start World Video Bible School where he serves as an instructor and trustee.

REVELATION

VICTORY OF CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH OVER SATAN AND HIS HELPERS (Revelation 17:14)

BACKGROUND

I. GENERAL:

What if this book had not been preserved and only those in the first century had read it? It is certain that they would have understood it, it would have meant something to them. They would not have needed to know of any future events (before they happened) in order to understand the meaning of this book!

But, since the book of Revelation has been preserved, we today can draw lessons from it also.

However, caution is needed in that we only draw general lessons from it. And those lessons must be based on the same knowledge that those in the first century had. No lessons we draw today should ever be based on historical events that have taken place since those days.

Nothing taught in the book of Revelation (just like the rest of the Bible) is based on any point of history after the first century!

The only exception to this is the second coming of Christ (judgment day).

No conclusions or teachings should ever be based on events after the first century - to do so is to add to the things written in this book (22:18-19).

This book is difficult for a modern person to understand.

Some have declared it unknowable, and

Some have used it as a playground for many religious fantasies.

Many fear this book. Calvin, Zwingli and others refused to comment on it. Many Christians never study it, but there is a blessing for those who read, hear and do (1:3).

Luther said the book of Revelation did not belong in the New Testament. But, he also said James, Jude, 2 Peter and Hebrews did not belong in the Bible.

How easy it is to create your own system of religion when you can remove from the Bible any books or passages that become inconvenient.

Also, a mark of those who would twist the scriptures is to change the meanings of words to fit their doctrine. That way they can misguide people by using the same words we use but meaning something altogether different.

The apostle John not only knew the Old Testament thoroughly, he was totally familiar with the apocalyptic books written between the testaments.

He refers to the Old Testament over 240 times, most of which come from Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Jeremiah, and Zechariah as well as the Psalms and Exodus.

There was a great number of apocalyptic writings created in the period between the time of the completion of the Old Testament and the writing of the New Testament.

In these writings the Jews were looking for their own idea of the Messiah.

They thought He was to come and set them free, gather them from all over the earth and then set up a physical kingdom with them as the chosen ones ruling the Gentile world.

However, history has shown this only led them into a long string of failures and disasters. As a result it became clear no human deliverer could rescue them.

All apocalyptic literature is cryptic. It tries to describe the undescribable, to say the unsayable and paint the unpaintable.

See APPENDIX: Apocalyptic Literature.

Prophet versus apocalypticist.

Prophets were optimists.

The world needed to be brought back to God's standard first and then God's kingdom would become what it was intended to be.

Apocalypticists were pessimists.

They did not believe the world could be cured.

They were convinced a golden age would come, but only after this world had been destroyed.

"In apocalyptic (literature) there was nothing human or gentle about the Messiah; he was a divine figure of avenging power and glory before whom the earth trembled in terror" (Barclay, p. 1.6). Parenthesis added – cmh

"The 'Revelation' does have some marked differences from the typical apocalyptic literature.

1. The 'Revelation' is called a prophecy (1:3; 22:7,10, 18,19) and apocalyptic is usually distinguished from prophecy. Apocalypses abound in history rewritten as prophecy in the mouth of the great figure of the past with which they are concerned. This prophecy given directly to the living writer.
2. The 'Revelation' deals with real churches who have real problems now and need to repent now.
3. The writer of 'Revelation' gives his real name (1:4) and not a pseudonym.
4. The pessimism of the apocalypticists is not found in the Revelation.
5. The apocalypticists characteristically retrace history in the guise of prophecy. From the standpoint of someone in the remote past, they forecast what will happen up to their own day. Not so with the 'Revelation.'
6. The apocalypses normally contain a great deal of vision explanation by the heavenly guide. Some of this is present in the 'Revelation' (17:7 ff.) but not like apocalyptic writing outside the inspired writings.
7. In general, the apocalypticists looked forward to the coming of the Messiah. 'Revelation' is of the Messiah who has already come and won a decisive, resounding victory!" (Chamberlain, p. 12).

II. ROMAN EMPIRE:

We must remember that in the book of Acts the Roman magistrates were the friends of Christian missionaries. For instance, they protected Paul from the raging mob and granted him much freedom in his house arrest. However, by the time Revelation is written, Rome is their enemy.

The explanation for this lies in the development of emperor worship. Nero had persecuted the Christians, but that was as a result of his trying to divert blame for the burning of Rome. This persecution was mainly close to Rome itself.

The people all over the empire knew they owed Rome respect and obedience for the peace they lived in.

There was impartial Roman justice instead of the tyrannical oppression they had lived under.

Security instead of insecurity; Roman roads spanned the empire and they were safe from brigands; the seas were cleared of pirates.

The Pax Romana was one of the greatest things to happen in the ancient world.

People were free to conduct their businesses, provide for their families, send letters anywhere in the empire and make journeys without concern for personal safety.

Emperor worship before Domitian was not imposed by the emperors.

The people began to worship the emperors in gratitude for the peace of the world they lived in and for the life styles they were allowed to follow.

Many emperors refused worship, or at least discouraged it.

Later, Domitian, in the 90s, truly believed he was deity. Every person in the empire had to burn a small amount of incense to him and say "Caesar is Lord." But, the faithful Christian would say "Jesus is Lord."

It was then that persecution of Christians began in earnest empire wide.

See APPENDICES: Roman Emperors 1 and 2
Roman Persecutions of Christians

Some of the reasons Christians were hated and persecuted:

1. Christianity was an illegal religion.
2. Christianity is an exclusive religion (all others are wrong).
3. Christians were cannibals (eating flesh and drinking the blood of a human - the Lord's Supper).
4. Christians were traitors (refused to go to war and refused to take an oath to idols as part of their oath and service as a soldier).
5. Christians were not respectable (many poor and outcasts responded to the gospel).
6. Christians would not compromise their beliefs, just as the Jews would not and were therefore despised.
7. Christians were looked upon as fanatics because of their enthusiasm in evangelism.

8. Christians were hated by the makers and sellers of idols (also hated by the sellers of animals to be sacrificed to idols).
9. Christians refusing to worship the emperor was the main reason.

III. REVELATION IS A BOOK OF SYMBOLS AND VISIONS:

The opening and the closing of the book have literal sections, but the rest of the book is composed completely of visions.

Nothing else is historical, nothing else is literal.

These visions were presented in the form of symbols! What John saw was not the actual persons or events, but images which could be understood.

IMPORTANT – We are not to fix our thought on the symbols themselves, but upon the ideas which the symbols were designed to represent!

This is oriental symbolism! The images presented are not to be taken as actual representations.

The visions are made up of symbols and as a result are very complex.

To try to find a meaning for every detail is futile.

We must, as the readers of the first century did, interpret each vision as a whole.

The details will deepen the impression of the vision to us, but they must not be allowed to divert us away from the total thought being presented.

These are visions, not literal accounts of things to come. In other words - “see the vision,” do not try to tear it apart using its details.

John, and God, expected the messages of the Revelation to be understood!

Many of these symbols are borrowed from the Old Testament. Some were borrowed from the apocryphal writings of the time (i.e. 1,2,3 and 4 Maccabees, Enoch, The Sibylline Oracles, The Ascension of Isaiah, The Assumption of Moses, The Apocalypse of Baruch or 4 Ezra).

These writings almost always appeared under false names.

They were crude, confused, unedifying, untrue and often fanciful.

They were products of unbridled fancy, whereas Revelation is orderly, dignified, serious and purposeful (Erdman, p. 17).

The visions are a series of reviews of the same story – victory of Christ over all opponents.

The visions do not all start in the same place and time but they all lead to the same end and goal.

In this book sin is depicted in its most satanic forms and with its inevitable penalty and doom.

Use of numbers. Man had by this time developed an extensive use of numbers as symbols (cryptology). Notice the following -

- 3 – The perfect divine number (the Father, Son and Holy Spirit).
- 4 – The perfect world number - the 4 corners of the earth, or the 4 directions (North, East, West, South - we get our word “news” from these directions).
- 5 – Some feel this represented the number of fingers or toes. If a person had all 5 fingers on a hand it was complete.
- 6 – The number of man - 6 was a sinister number, it was just short of perfection (7), it means defeat when success was just in reach, it had the ability to be great but fell short.
- 7 – Expresses perfection when combining the meanings of numbers 3 and 4 (7 Spirits, 7 lampstands, 7 stars, 7 churches).
- 10 – If a person had all 10 fingers (or toes) it showed completeness, fullness (notice the 10 Commandments).
- 12 – Stands for organized religion in its completeness (12 tribes of Israel, 12 apostles, 12 gates to the Holy City here in Revelation). It was arrived at by the multiplication of the perfect world number by the perfect number of deity ($4 \times 3 = 12$).
- 70 – The sacred number 7 multiplied by the complete number 10 equals a very sacred number (70 members of the Jewish high court, 70 translators of the Greek Old Testament).
- 666 – The number of absolute imperfection.
- 1,000 – Absolute total completeness ($10 \times 10 \times 10$).

144,000 – Absolute completeness physically and spiritually (12x12x10x10x10).

3½ – The perfect number (7) cut in half, stood for indefinite, incomplete, dissatisfied. Sometimes stated as “a time, times, and a half time;” as “42 months,” or as “1,260 days” (3½ times 360 days).

In the rest of the New Testament truth is imparted to the mind, but in Revelation it is communicated to the eye.

Truth that had been preached and written by apostles, prophets and evangelists is now emphasized in pictorial action.

IV. REVELATION WAS WRITTEN TO CHRISTIANS WHO WERE IN DANGER OF LOSING THEIR FAITH:

They might lose it because of the present persecution and its impending disasters for them, or because of the allurements of a godless world.

The book reminds them that Jesus is present among them even though they cannot see Him.

They were reminded that Jesus would return again at the end of time to judge the living and the dead.

They are told in this book to fight against the forces of evil with the weapons of patient endurance and unwavering loyalty to Christ.

They and we are to believe that to be on the side of Christ is to be on the ultimate victor's side.

When Christians were having their property stolen, being exiled and killed for refusing to renounce their religion - when false doctrine was threatening the life of the church from within, the question had to be asked - “Is there any hope for the future?” This book is God's answer to that question – YES!

V. INTERPRETATION:

Some principles of interpretation:

1. Bible its own best interpreter.
2. Larger context, then immediate context.
3. Background (history, purpose, style, etc.).

4. New Testament interprets Old Testament quotations.
5. Remember prophetic nature.
6. Symbolism.
7. Total meaning rather than details.
8. Do not make obscure passages key to the book.
9. Blessings to readers.
10. Prolepsis (e.g., 2:11 explained in 20:14). (Pack, pp. 1.1-7)

Theories Of Interpretation:

Futurist Method:

Generally believe most of the book refers to the end-time.

Chapters 2 and 3 represent stages in church history.

They look upon the book as a book of unfulfilled prophecy.

They see the events from chapter 4 to 19 taking place in a 7 year period preceding a literal 1,000 years (1 Thess 4:13-17 is misapplied here).

They say this is the period of Daniel 9:24-27.

The 70th week is separated from the 69th week by the Jews' rejection of Christ.

They believe Jesus came to establish a physical kingdom and rule on this earth.

"Jesus set out his standards for this kingdom, but the Jews rejected him and his plans. The offer was then withdrawn, and the kingdom was postponed until the second coming. As a parenthesis in history Christ established his church. The church is not a fulfillment of the Old Testament. It is temporary and will come to an end at the "rapture," which is the sudden miraculous removal of all true believers to meet Christ in the air when he comes again. This "rapture" will not be visible to the world at large. The public part of the second coming of Christ will take place seven years later and is called "the Revelation." The seven year period mentioned corresponds to the seven-

tieth year of Daniel. The sixty-nine weeks closed with the first coming of Christ (his birth), but when the Jews rejected Christ prophetic time ceased and does not begin again until the “rapture” (Summers, pp. 29-30).

While agreeing some things in Revelation are symbolic and cannot be taken literally, this school of thought insists the normal assumption should be that the figurative represents some literal happening.

They believe in a personal antichrist. A central belief they hold is that the first beast of Revelation 13 refers to the great symbol of personal unrighteousness (Dan 7:25; 8:25; 11:26), which is the same as Paul’s “Man of Sin” (2 Thess 2) and which is to be understood as a person (antichrist) to be revealed in the period just before the end of the world (Roberts, lecture notes p. 14).

However, the term “antichrist(s)” only occurs in the books of First and Second John where the contexts show it does not refer to any one particular person, but to anyone denying that Jesus has come in the flesh (1 Jn 2:18,22).

Positive Points of the Futurist Method:

“This section should perhaps be prefaced by a question mark. A thorough study leads one to wonder if there are any strong points in favor of this method” (Summers, p. 34).

Futurists claim their method just takes the Bible literally, without adding to it or subtracting anything from it. BUT, to translate visions and symbolic language as literal passages destroys the meaning of those passages.

They also claim their method of interpretation is the only one which will keep alive the hope for the return of the Lord and the only way to keep evangelistic fervor alive. BUT, this is simply not true as proven by history.

Negative Points:

They must change the meaning of the Greek word translated either as “quickly” or “shortly” in verse one to mean “certainly.” The Greek word does not have that meaning.

Also in verse one – “The Greek word dei “must” implies moral necessity. Thus it was morally necessary for the things to be fulfilled shortly in order for God’s oppressed people to see his arm revealed and his comfort given in a time of disaster” (Rogers, p. 1).

They interpret almost everything as literal and very little as symbolic.

This method of interpretation deals with the book as being almost entirely physical in its application rather than spiritual.

"It is readily observed that in this amazing interpretation of the book of Revelation for the most part has nothing to do with those who first received the book, for any who have used it, or for any of those who will use it up to the time of the last three and one-half years before the Lord's return. Thus the book has no word for the Christian church in its dangers, conflicts, and triumphs. The entire system appears to be unscriptural and unsound" (Summers, p. 31).

Preterist Method:

To them all events in this book, except the specific happenings of the second coming of Christ, were fulfilled in the days of the Roman Empire.

The word "preterist" is a Latin word meaning "past" or "beyond."

They believe it is all history to us.

The letter starts and ends in the first century.

There are two schools of thought within this method which are -

- a. "Left wing - generally made up of radical and liberal scholars who have no respect for Bible inspiration. This group believes John shared the ideas of most Jewish apocalypticists, (i.e., 1st. Enoch: Testaments of the twelve Patriarchs; Psalms of Solomon) who thought that the messianic age would be preceded by severe upheavals of the earth and visitations of God upon the unrighteous. Since (they believe) it all pointed to Rome's destruction and Rome did not fall immediately then John was wrong. They also connect fall of Rome (in John's mind) with end of world.
- b. "Right wing - believes the book to be inspired of God. Whereas, the left-wing group would place all of Revelation in the past, the right-wing group would make Chapter 20:1-6 "a millennial" and 20:7-21 and 22 still in the future" (Chamberlin, p. 8).

Positive Points of the Preterist Method:

This letter would have helped the church under the Caesars.

Negative Points:

They do not see any application of the book applying to us today.

Continuous-Historical Method:

They believe this letter gives the history of Western Europe since the first century.

They see Revelation as a symbolic picture of the events of the church from Pentecost until the end of time.

The word “symbolic” is made up of two Greek words which mean “to cast” and “with.” Therefore the word, as used in Revelation, means a word picture to “cast with” the message to illustrate it. It is not intended to be a literal description.

They make the book prophecy, in detail, the apostasy and development of the Roman Catholic Church.

This view is held by several including Albert Barnes, Adam Clarke, B.W. Johnson (Johnson Notes Bible), Guy N. Woods and John T. Hinds.

Some of them believe all you would have to do to convince non-believers of the truth of Christianity is to give them a copy of the book of Revelation and a copy of Gibbon’s book “Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.”

This view limits the history of Christianity to the West, what about Christian movements in the East or in Africa?

Another goal they have is to try to know where our age fits into the book along with specific battles (Battle of Tours), movements (Mohammedism, Protestantism), individuals (Napoleon, Hitler, the Pope) or events (Constantine’s Edict of Toleration).

In their view the early church could not have gotten much out of this epistle if its concern was for later periods.

For them the epistle must be a totally unsolvable puzzle.

Positive Points of the Continuous-Historical Method:

It sees the complete overthrow of evil.

It avoids a literal interpretation of visions and symbolic passages.

Negative Points:

It places an undue importance to the apostasy of the Roman Catholic Church.

It has no meaning to the Christians of the first century to which it was written.

“No interpretation can be regarded as the correct one if it would be meaningless to those who first received the book” (Summers, p. 38).

They lead people into false calculations of time. They use the theory that “one day = one year.” There is no proof that this theory is valid!

“This method is not based upon anything in Revelation itself. This allows the interpretation of details to be different according to the interpreter and the time in which he is living” (Chamberlin, p. 9).

Philosophy of History Method:

This group feels the book of Revelation deals with the truth concerning the most powerful influences which work in the background and underneath all human activity.

The principles revealed in this book are universal and apply to all ages.

Therefore, this book is full of ideal principles and completely symbolic.

Events depicted in the book may be repeated over and over in history.

There are few or no references in Revelation to happenings, whether at the time of the writer or subsequently (Chamberlin, p. 8).

Positive Points of the Philosophy of History Method:

It recognizes the book had some meaning to those who received it.

It recognized the providential hand of God in history.

It also recognizes that good will ultimately triumph over evil in the end.

Negative Points:

This method removes most of the book from any meaning for the first century Christians.

Historical-Background Method:

They believe the apostle John wrote the book primarily for the encouragement of Christians who were living at the time he wrote it.

They also believe the background and conditions in the first century are important in understanding this book.

The book is written primarily in symbolic language.

The book speaks to Christians of every age.

When the book's prophecies find fulfillment in an event that prophecy may still find further fulfillment in future events.

Positive Points of the Historical-Background Method:

Of the methods of interpretation (here and above) this seems to be the most accurate and productive.

Negative Points:

None noted.

Method Used in this Study:

The book of Revelation is inspired of God and is therefore profitable for anyone of any age to study it.

The background of the book is in the first century and to interpret it without knowledge of those times is to misrepresent the book.

It is primarily a book of symbols, therefore to try to interpret every detail of the symbols is foolishness.

In this course we avoid a literal interpretation of visions and symbolic passages.

Revelation revealed to its original readers, and everyone since, the ultimate victory of God (and good) over Satan (and evil).

The book makes no specific reference to specific historical events such as the rise of the papacy, Mohammedanism, the reformation or the restoration movements.

Some of the prophecies in this book have multiple fulfillments, it is a book for all ages, not just one.

Some of the prophecies in Revelation are still to be fulfilled, such as the resurrection, the judgment, the final reward of the righteous and punishment of the wicked.

VI. DATE OF WRITING:

A. Two Possible Dates (69 A.D. - 96 A.D.).

1. The Neronian Period - 69 A.D.
2. The Domitian Period - 96 A.D.

B. The most probable date - 96 A.D. (Date used in this course.)

1. Not the Neronian date because:

- a. No proof the temple actually standing.

Chapter 11 is as symbolic as Chapter 21.

- b. No demand upon Christians to worship Nero as Deity. The Christians are blamed and persecuted for the burning of Rome in the time of Nero (A.D. 64).

1) Neronian persecution seems to be confined to Rome.

2) Investigations of Christians at this time will separate them from the Jews as a separate sect without legal status.

- c. No “burden” in the writing concerning that awful destruction of Jerusalem.

- d. No unanimous (seems to be a minority) holding to the theory of the “Nero Caesar” cryptograph -

1) Greek for “Nero Caesar” is “Neron Kaisar.”

2) Reduced to Hebrew is “Nron Ksr.”

3) These seven letters reduced to Hebrew numbering system -
50-200-6-50-100-60-200 = 666 the number of the beast.

2. The Domitian date because:

- a. The Nicolaitan party, of which there is no certain trace before A.D. 70, is now in 90-96 A.D. widely distributed and firmly established (cf. Rev 2:6,15).
- b. The persecution of the saints, as depicted in the Revelation, better fits the Domitian period.
 - 1) Caligula demanded that his statue be worshiped although there is no evidence of any attempt to enforce this requirement 37-41 A.D.
 - 2) Claudius reversed the policy of Caligula but drove Christians from Rome because of the conflict of the Jews - 41-54 A.D. (Acts 18:2).
 - 3) Nero persecuted Christians in the Rome district but did not push for emperor worship 54-68 A.D.
 - 4) Galba 68-69 A.D. - reigned too short a period of time to initiate emperor worship.
 - 5) Otho 69 A.D. - reigned too short a period of time to initiate emperor worship.
 - 6) Vitellius 69 A.D. - reigned too short a period of time to initiate emperor worship.
 - 7) Vespasian 69-79 A.D. and
 - 8) Titus 79-81 A.D. - both practical men who were not concerned thusly.
 - 9) Domitian 81-96 A.D. - seems to have regarded himself as a god (see Suetonius, Domit. 13). Emperor worship was not imposed by the emperors, at least before Domitian.
- c. The condition of the churches best fits this period.
 - 1) Deterioration has set in at Ephesus, Pergamum, Thyatira and especially "dead" Sardis and "tepid" Laodicia. This was not so according to Paul's letters.
 - 2) Consider the church at Ephesus which at the time of the Revelation was condemned for having "left its first love" (2:4).
 - a) In about 58 A.D., Ephesus was seemingly on the right track (Acts 20:17-38).

- b) In about 62-63 A.D. they are commended for their “love which you show toward all the saints” (Eph 1:15).
- c) In 1 Timothy Paul makes no mention of a lovelessness - about 64-65 A.D.
- d) In 2 Tim the evangelist was to warn of a “coming apostasy” - about 67 A.D.
- 3) In the Revelation, the church at Laodicia is seen to “be rich” and “has need of nothing” (3:17). But as the city was destroyed by an earthquake in A.D. 60-61, this must have been considerably later.
- 4) In consideration of a letter addressed by Polycarp to the church at Philippi, it would seem that the church at Smyrna was not in existence in Paul’s day.
- d. The beast of Revelation 17:8 would seem to fit the later date in a much easier way - “That thou sawest was” Nero - “and is not”; “and is about to come up out of the abyss” - Domitian.
- e. Irenaeus (A.N.F. Vol. 1, Pgs. 416,559) holds with the Domitian date.

See APPENDIX: Revelation – When Written?

VII. AUTHORSHIP (Chamberlain, pp. 12-13).

- A. At the beginning of the writing and at its end, the “Revelation” claims to be John’s writings (cf.1:1,4,9 and 22:8).
- B. The writer makes the following claims:
 - 1. “Servant” of Jesus Christ (1:1).
 - 2. “Brother” and fellow-sufferer with the Christians of Asia Minor (1:9).
 - 3. Named “John” (1.1).
 - 4. In exile “for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus” (1:9).
 - 5. He, himself “heard and saw” the things written in this book (22:8).
- C. The evidence upholds the claim for John the Apostle.
 - 1. External:

- a. Justin Martyr - 140 A.D.
- b. Irenaeus - 190 A.D.
- c. Clement of Alexandria - 200 A.D.
- d. Tertullian - 220 A.D. (no dissenting voice until about 210 A.D.)
- e. Origen - 223 A.D.
- f. Hippolytus - 240 A.D.

2. Internal:

- a. The casual statement of the name as “John” infers that this would be a John who was well known, i.e. the apostle John.
- b. Comparison of doctrine and terminology in Revelation with that of the gospel account.
 - 1) “The lamb of God” (Jn 1:29 {only John} cf. Rev 5:6 {and 28 times more}).
 - 2) “The Logos” (Jn 1:1 cf. 1 Jn1:1, cf. Rev 19: 13).
 - 3) The pre-existent Christ (Jn 1:1-3, cf. Rev 1: 17-18).
- 4) “Who was pierced” (Jn 19:34 {only recorded by John} cf. Rev 1:7).

VIII. THE HISTORICAL SETTING OF THE APOCALYPSE (Chamberlain, pp. 25-26).

A. The Empire - Rome.

1. Its power:

- a. Rome was the world.
- b. Rome was the Great Military Machine - invincible (?).
- c. Rome’s greatness built on two things - conquest and commerce.
- d. Rome though great in riches was just as magnanimous in poverty.

1) There was no work for hire because of slaves.

- 2) This resulted in idleness, immorality and false superstitious religions.

2. Domitian.

- a. 81-96 A.D.
 - 1) He demanded to be worshiped.
 - 2) He, more than any other, insisted upon emperor (deity) worship supported by cruel threats and vehement tortures and persecutions.
- b. Domitian demanded deity worship of himself, and of himself he wrote:
 - 1) "Our Lord and God commands that it be done . . ." (Suetonius).
 - a) He formally decreed that no one address him other than by the title of deity he had given himself; either by word of mouth or pen.
 - b) He erected images of himself throughout the empire to make worship to him more convenient - "Caesar is Lord" ("Deus et Dominus").
 - c) He, according to Pliny the Historian, caused entire hosts to be slaughtered for refusal to worship him ("Caesar and Christ" by Will Durant, pg. 291.)
 - 2) "He (Domitian) had always been coldly severe; now he slipped into cruelty..." (Ibid.).
 - a) "Vanity.. had no check on Domitian...he filled the capitol with statues of himself."
 - b) "In 93 A.D. Domitian executed some Christians for refusing to offer sacrifice to his image." (Ibid.)

B. The Lord's Church (recipients of Revelation) and Rome.

1. Christianity entered into a life and death struggle with the self-deified imperial power.
2. A sharp collision was certain - conflict unavoidable (1:9; 7:14; 16:6; 17:6;

19:2).

3. The forms of punishment were many - exile, spoiling of possessions; torture and death (2:10; 6:8-10; 7:16; 20:4; 3:13).

IX. PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE:

“Showing the churches the things that must come to pass hereafter, is to encourage them and assure them, amid persecutions, of their ultimate victory and the victory of the cause of Christ. Though they are few in number, poor and distressed, yet the mighty forces of evil will not overwhelm them, for Christ has conquered and guarantees their ultimate triumph. Yet they are realistically told that they must suffer, that more persecution awaits them, and that the Lord demands faithfulness to His will in spite of all the pressures that may come” (Pack, p. 1.11).

X. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS:

The future does not belong to any earthly political or religious leader (ie: emperors, popes, etc.), but belongs totally to Christ.

Every vision stands on its own, and we should never try to force all of them into one pattern with a central meaning or theme.

Note Well - the Holy Spirit did not inspire this book in order to refute false doctrines.

Many teach false doctrines based on their interpretation of this book. And many teach this book using its truths simply to refute false doctrines.

This course teaches the truths contained in this book regardless of what false doctrines may be refuted by it.

The aim of this course is to understand the book as they understood it in the first century.

OUTLINE:

I. THE STRUGGLE ON EARTH	Ch 1-11
A. Christ in the Midst of the Seven Golden Lampstands	Ch 1-3
1. Background and Opening	Ch 1
2. The Seven Churches (part 1)	Ch 2
3. The Seven Churches (part 2)	Ch 3
B. The Book with Seven Seals	Ch 4-7
1. The Throne Scene	Ch 4
2. The Seven Seals	Ch 5-7
C. The Seven Trumpets of Judgment	Ch 8-11
1. Seals, Trumpets and Woes	Ch 8-9
2. The Angel, Book and Vision Continues	Ch 10-11
II. THE DEEPER SPIRITUAL BACKGROUND	Ch 12-22
A. The Woman and the Man-child Persecuted	Ch 12-14
B. The Seven Bowls of Wrath	Ch 15-16
C. The Fall of the Great Harlot and the Beasts	Ch 17-19
D. Judgment on Satan and the New Heaven and Earth	Ch 20-22
1. The Thousand Years and Final Judgment	Ch 20
2. The New Jerusalem (part 1)	Ch 21
3. The New Jerusalem (part 2)	Ch 22

EXPOSITION

I. THE STRUGGLE ON EARTH	Ch 1-11
A. CHRIST IN THE MIDST OF THE SEVEN GOLDEN LAMP-STANDS.....	Ch 1-3
1. BACKGROUND AND OPENING	Ch 1

1:1-3 Inscription.

“The very first word of this book, ἀποκάλυπτις (translated *The Revelation*), sets the stage. The word means an uncovering of something hidden, the making known of what man could not find out for himself. It makes plain that the book it introduces is not a book of human wisdom, nor for that matter a discussion of philosophical or theological problems. It is revelation. It is a setting forth of what God has made known” (Morris, p. 45).

1. The author is God the Father.

Given to Christ to give to His servants.

The apostle John is to be the writer.

Servants . . . servant - δούλοις . . . δούλω - “The normal translation of *doulos* is *slave*. The real *servant* of God is, in fact, his *slave*. A servant can leave his service when he likes; he has stated hours of work and stated hours of freedom; he works for a wage; he has a mind of his own and can bargain as to when and for what he will give his labour. A slave can do none of these things; he is the absolute possession of his owner, with neither time nor will of his own. *Doulos* . . . brings out how absolutely we must surrender life to God” (Barclay, p. 1.24-25).

Things which must shortly take place. Lit: “things which must happen with swiftness.”

Shortly - τάχει - quickly, speedily, shortly, hastily, without delay, soon.

The visions in this book are taking place during the lives of the people to whom the Revelation was written.

These visions DO NOT refer to times hundreds or even thousands of years in the future. The only exception is the second coming of Christ.

Signified - to make known, report, communicate something beforehand.

The idea is to show by signs. It is a revelation (unveiling) of God's message by means of signs (symbols).

Angel - Lit: "messenger."

2. John bore witness (ἐμαρτύρησε - testified) to:

Word of God,

Testimony of Jesus and

All things he saw.

John was an eye-witness, an ear-witness and a touch-witness!

The testimony of Jesus Christ = Word of God.

3. Blessings are promised to the one (singular) who reads and to those (plural) who hear. In other words those who believe and obey the words of this book.

Prophecy.

The word "prophet" means one who speaks for another.

The primary idea here is that these are the words of God – this message comes from Him.

The word does allow the idea of prediction, but basically the idea is that this book is of divine origin.

Remember – scripture is a guide to conduct as well as being the source of doctrine. This letter is primarily a guide to conduct.

For the time is near.

Near - ἐγγύς - at hand, already here, imminent, near, soon to come to pass, urgent.

Here is proof that it is wrong to use Revelation as a mysterious timetable of what is going to happen a thousand years from the date it is written.

- 1:4-8 Salutation.

4. “These seven churches were representative of the whole church in that world and in all ages. Thus John is addressing the entire book to the church universal” (Erdman, p. 37).

Asia - does not refer to the continent of Asia. It is addressed to a small Roman province which had Ephesus as its capital.

Seven Spirits = the Holy Spirit in His fullness, completeness.

- 5-7. Mini lesson:

Verse 5 — What Christ has done and is continuing to do.

Verse 6 — What Christ has made of His followers.

Verse 7 — What Christ has yet to do.

5. *Jesus Christ, the faithful witness* - even when it cost Him His life.

What Jesus did was to set us free from our sins at the cost of His own blood (Barclay, p. 1.34).

Firstborn from the dead - should be “firstborn of the dead.”

The word “from” is not in the Greek text.

This is a position – not literally the first one brought back from the dead. Compare Lazarus, Jairus’ daughter, the man placed in the tomb of Elijah (2 Kgs 13:21).

6. *Has made us kings and priests* - should be “has made us a kingdom of priests.” Every Christian is a priest and therefore has access to the Father and does not go through any other priest.

The principle work of a priest is mediation.

He speaks to men on behalf of God, and to God on behalf of men.

As priests today we are to do this as well:

We are to pray to God on behalf of the world, and

We are to speak to the world (evangelism) for God.

Because of Jesus' perfect life, death, burial and resurrection every Christian has access to the presence of God.

For ever and ever - εἰς τοὺς αἰώνας τῷ ναιώνων - "into the ages, the ages."

7. *Every eye will see Him* - no secret return of Jesus and then slipping back into heaven as claimed by many premillennialists.

And they all who pierced Him - see Zechariah 12:10; 13:6; Psa 22:16-18.

8. *I am the Alpha and the Omega* - ἐγώ εἰμι - I, I am. He is the source, support and end of all things.

He was before all things, and nothing survives Him.

Says the Lord – when God speaks we do well to listen.

The Almighty - the One who controls all - omnipotent.

Omnipotent – the power to do anything that is an object of power, and when finished have no less power than when begun.

- 1:9-20 Christ Among the churches, a vision of the risen, glorified Christ.

9. *Companion* - κοινωνὸς - partner, fellowshipper.

Tribulation - Θλίψει - pressures. As in a winepress.

Here it is a pressure that appears to crush and ruin, but in the end makes those who are pressured to be of greater service.

In the kingdom – “John protects against later false interpretations regarding the Kingdom (the church); it has already come in his day, and he was in it” (Gipson).

Patience - ὑπομονὴ - active endurance.

Patmos - an island about 40 miles northwest of these churches.

10. First vision of the book and the only one in chapters 1-3.

In the Spirit = inspired by the Holy Spirit to see the visions and to write them.

Note “*on the Lord’s day*” is literally “in the Lord’s day.”

11. Jesus claims to be God.

He is the beginning and the end and everything in between.

What the apostle is to do - see, write and send.

The vision was not for John alone, but to transmit to others.

Question - Why would God have the apostle write these things down if the readers would not be able to understand what is written?

Again, this book is a “revelation” (v. 1), not a mystery which cannot be understood!

12. The voice captures John’s attention.

The meaning of the lampstands is explained in verse 20. They are the seven churches to whom this letter is addressed.

13-15. A description of the “One like the Son of Man.”

13. *In the midst* - Christ did and still knows His congregations and walks among them.

This is a very important lesson for us to learn today. Jesus walks among His churches, knows their every action, including every member’s actions.

Christ is not far away in heaven and only observing our actions from afar, but is here walking amongst us, caring for us with His providence and will remove the church’s lampstand if it fails to remain faithful.

The churches (and we) live in His constant sight and must trust His unfailing power.

The church then, and we today, are being reminded and assured that the Lord is an abiding, personal presence.

Garment down to His feet - a garment of dignity, possibly priestly.

Girded - golden band - the seven angels of 15:6 wore these also.

14. *White* - a picture of incredible age.

Eyes like a flame of fire - eyes that burn into the soul of men.

15. *Feet like burning brass* - strength and stability.

His voice the sound of many waters - compare the voice of the God of Israel in Ezekiel 43:2.

16. *Seven stars* - seven angels, see verse 20.

Leaders of the churches - elders (preachers?).

Sharp two-edged sword - Hebrews 4:12 describes this as the word of God (cf. Isa 11:4; 49:2; Eph 6:17; Heb 4:2).

Countenance was like the sun shining in its strength - Jesus also at His transfiguration in Matthew 17:2.

17. *I fell at His feet as dead* - proper response in the presence of God.

Do not be afraid - comfort, not fear.

Stop being afraid!

I am the first and the last - the title of Jehovah in Isaiah 48:12, also applied to Christ in Revelation 22:13.

18. Jesus lived, died and lives forever. Compare John 5:26.

Forever - εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῷ ναιώνων - Lit: into the ages, the ages. Into all ages, all of them!

I have the keys of Hades and Death - death claims the body and hades claims the soul, but Jesus overcame both. Compare Acts 2:31.

Jesus has total supremacy over hades – He can call men back from the grave!
Men can only dream of such power.

19. *Write . . . have seen* - the vision of the glorified Christ.

Which are - present state of the church and the world.

Take place after this - the future and reaching all the way to the second coming.

From John's day until the dawn of eternity.

20. *Mystery* - the true meaning of these symbols.

The word does not mean “mysterious,” it stands for things men could never understand or work out for themselves - what has been made known by God.

Seven stars = seven angels (messengers). These would be the elders of the congregations, or the evangelists if there were no elders.

The seven churches - of chapters 2 and 3 specifically, but all of the Churches of Christ by extension.

2. THE SEVEN CHURCHES (PART 1)..... Ch 2

It must be remembered these first three chapters picture characteristics of the church in all ages, and give warnings and encouragement to every local congregation and to every individual in them during all the coming years until the return of Christ.

Every conceivable type of problem in the church is covered in these letters and by them any congregation can be examined, the trouble diagnosed and the remedy prescribed.

Presently God's church is in the world, not in heaven. Therefore it suffers along with the world.

Children of God do not escape the horrors of war, famine and pestilence.

If they did, many would "join" the church in order to avoid all of these problems.

Christians are "in" the world, not "of" the world.

However, some Christians are sinful and even some congregations are sinful, therefore we are in need of purification.

We need renewed faith, repentance and obedience in order to receive forgiveness.

These letters are to real churches which were in existence when this epistle was written.

This is shown as each of their messages has relevance to conditions we know existed in them from secular history.

See APPENDIX: Cities of the Seven churches of the Apocalypse.

2:1-7 EPHESUS

It is natural that this is the first church to be addressed. It was the chief commercial and religious center of the province of Asia.

"Although Ephesus was not the titular capital of Asia (Pergamum retained this honor), it was a city of great political importance. As a free city it had been granted by Rome the right of self-government. It also served as an assize city in which the Roman governor

on a regular schedule tried important cases and dispensed justice. It boasted a major stadium, marketplace, and theater. The latter was built on the west slope of Mt. Pion overlooking the harbor, and seated some 25,000 persons" (Mounce, p. 86).

"It was the terminus of the great system of Roman roads which constituted the trade route from the Euphrates Valley" (Erdman, p.47).

It was where the temple to the goddess Diana (Artimis) was built. It was one of the Seven Wonders of the World.

The city was a hotbed of many false religious cults and superstitions.

"The imperial cult was not neglected in Ephesus. Temples were built to Claudius, Hadrian, and Severus" (Mounce, p. 86).

Religion and magic were intermingled, magical arts were very popular (Acts 19:17-19).

As with all great cities it had its wealthy and cultured as well as its illiterate and poor.

It was a very corrupt city.

"The Christian faith came to Ephesus perhaps with Aquila and Priscilla about A.D. 52 when Paul left them there en route from Corinth to Antioch (Acts 18:18-22). On his next missionary journey the apostle remained in Ephesus more than two years (Acts 19:8-10), and some time later Timothy ministered there (1 Tim 1:3). It was the apostle John, however, who is most closely associated with the city" (Mounce, p. 86).

The church here was about 40-45 years old. Which is time enough to have second or third generation members.

1. To whom and by whom written.

To the angel of the church of Ephesus write - "angel" here means "messenger."

It would be absurd for the Lord to write to an angel in Heaven.

He is writing to an elder of the church, or to their evangelist.

Even though these letters are addressed to individuals they are intended for the churches.

In each letter a part of the description of the glorified Christ is used to show the letter to the church was coming from Him.

He who holds the seven stars in His right hand - Jesus holds the churches firmly in His hand. This represents the security which comes from strength and watchfulness.

Who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands - Christ was in the midst of His churches then just as He is today.

Because He is in our midst He knows everything about us. Not simply omnipresent, but His attention is directly on us (omniscience).

Omnipresent – God is everywhere that is an object of presence.

Omniscience – God knows everything that is the object of knowledge, past, present, future or eternal, whether real or imagined.

2. *I know your works* - and He still does. Notice Peter in John 21:17.

Your works - ἔργα - Lit: "your energies spent."

Your labor - κόπον - trouble, vexation, uneasiness, weariness, travail, toil, consequences of labor.

Patience - ὑπομονήν - Lit: "a standing under."

Steadfastness, endurance in their works and labors.

Cannot bear - as a burden - endure them, suffer them.

He is not speaking of those outside the church, but of false brethren.

Paul had warned that "grievous wolves" would trouble this congregation (Acts 20:29).

It appears the church was using discipline.

Liars - ψευδεῖς- false.

3. *For My name's sake* - Christ's cause here on earth.

Not become weary - not to be faint or spent with labor.

These are the attributes one would expect from any congregation of the Lord.

Especially one which had had the help of men and women like Paul, Apollos, Timothy, Priscilla and Aquila and the apostle John.

4. *Nevertheless* - ἀλλὰ, Lit: “but.” As opposed to what good you have done.

Whatever Christ held against a congregation when He wrote this letter He would also hold against any congregation today.

You have left your first love - Christ. They have gone into apostasy.

Left - ἀφῆκες - a strong word which can be translated “abandoned.”

Remember, their good works continued, but without the love of Christ in them.

All of the good works they have done while in this condition will not be acknowledged nor credited to them (Exek 33:12-16, esp. v. 13; Phil 4:17).

Sometimes conservative Christians become so severe in condemning false doctrine, and looking for any heresy they can find they end up without love.

We can become such ardent doctrinal detectives and religious bloodhounds looking for heretics that we become hotheads with cold hearts.

Beware of saying we are doing things because of a love for Christ when in fact that love has grown cold.

If the love of Christ is not our compelling motive, God will not accept our services.

Love for brethren, love for the church, love for doing the works of the church all grow out of a love for Christ.

So also does our love to attend all of the services of the church. When our love grows weak our attendance suffers.

People go where they want to go. Where their hearts are, their feet will follow.

The congregation which has lost its first love can be of any size numerically.

“A church which is crowded with people and which is a hive of energy is not necessarily a real Church. It is possible for a Church to be crowded because its people come to be entertained instead of instructed, and to be soothed instead of confronted with the fact of sin and the offer of salvation; it may be a highly successful Christian club rather than a real Christian congregation” (Barclay, p. 1.104).

5. Christ gives the church three steps they need to take in order to return to Him:

1. Remember,
2. Repent and
3. Do the first works.

Remember - restoration begins with remembrance.

Thinking of the good at the father's house started the "prodigal" home (Lk 15:17-18).

Repent - μετανόησου - undergo a change of mind, to make a change in principles and practice.

Go back to your first love!

The hardest thing about repentance is the acceptance of personal responsibility for your own failure (Barclay, p. 1.65).

Quickly - same word as in verse 1.

This coming is to punish, not the second coming in judgment.

The Lord is merciful, but will not continue to approve of a congregation that persists in sin (no matter what the sin is).

Remove your lampstand from its place - no longer recognize the congregation as faithful.

It will be recognized as an apostate congregation if it does not repent and return to its first love.

This is just as true today as it was when this letter was written!

6. *Hate* - μισεῖς- to detest, abhor, regard with ill-will.

Love for what is good carries with it a hatred for what is wrong.

Even though it only states here that Christ hates their deeds the Bible also tells us that God hates the persons themselves who do evil (Psa 5:5; Deut 25:13-16 cf. Jn 3:16).

This is hard for us as humans to understand, but God both hates and loves the sinner at the same time.

Nicolaitains – “The claim of these heretics was that they were not destroying Christianity but were presenting an improved version” (Barclay, p. 1.66).

They were “reforming” the Lord’s church to match their own desires.

There has been so much of this down through the centuries there are hundreds or even thousands of varieties of the “Christian” church.

What is needed today is a “restoration” of the original church which appears on the pages of the New Testament.

We need “restoration” not “reformation” (Rev 22:18-18; Deut 4:2; 12:32; Prov 30:6; Gal 1:1-9).

This teaching, among many others, became known as “Gnosticism.”

They taught that there were ten levels of knowledge.

Christians started out on the first level after baptism.

Then through increased special hidden knowledge they advanced up through the higher levels.

They also had 10 gods (on 10 levels) and 10 consorts with Jehovah being the god of the lowest level.

The god of the highest level was totally pure and could not touch or create anything physical. Each successive god down was less pure until you came to Jehovah who could touch or create physical things.

Therefore Jehovah was the least pure of all these gods.

Sample teaching - all thing physical were evil, only the spirit could be pure.

The two aspects of man (physical and spirit) were separate and, if a person’s body sinned it would not affect the soul.

If you were advancing in the hidden knowledge your body could practice every form of sin and your soul would still go to heaven.

This is not an enemy for outside the church openly seeking to destroy the faith, these are professing Christians.

“If their teaching had been successful, the world would have changed Christianity, and not Christianity the world” (Barclay, p. 1.68).

7. *He who has an ear* - listen! Individuals have ears, but the congregation is made up of individuals.

The ones who hear first must help the rest of the church to hear also.

This message is not just for those in this congregation, but is broadened to “all who has an ear.”

To him who overcomes - this overcomer (conqueror) is the one who fights against sin, the devil and his whole dominion, then, in his love for Christ, perseveres to the very end.

Tree of life - compare to the tree in the Garden of Eden. In the garden it was for physical life on earth, here it is for spirit life in heaven.

Says to the churches - plural word showing that these things, though written to one church, were good for all churches.

Jesus was speaking, telling us we are to listen to the Holy Spirit!

Paradise of God - here this refers to the final joy of the saints in the presence of the Father, Christ and the Holy Spirit.

2:8-11 SMYRNA

Smyrna was only forty miles north of Ephesus on the eastern shore of the Aegean Sea.

It was second only to Ephesus in its importance.

This city was destroyed at about 580 B.C. and then rebuilt at about 280 B.C. It was rebuilt according to a plan and is one of the few cities of the ancient world that was so layed out.

“Its excellent harbor was sufficiently narrow at the mouth that it could be closed for protection in war. Eastward from Smyrna extended an important road over which the produce of the rich valley of the Hermus moved” (Mounce, p. 91).

It claimed to be the birthplace of the great poet Homer.

It was wealthy, given to immorality and famous as a center for emperor worship.

There was a very large number of Jews there and they were bitter opponents to Christianity.

This was in part because many of the converts to the church came from them or from those who had been influenced by them (Barclay, p. 1.76).

Polycarp, one of the most famous martyrs of the early church, was from Smyrna.

8. *The First and the Last* - the beginning and end and everything in between. Compare Hebrews 1:3.

In verse 10 He is going to tell them “do not fear.” So He begins here by saying in effect - “I was here before there was anything to fear, and I will be here after all things you fear have passed away.”

Who was dead and came to life - Lit: “who became dead and lived” (same as in 1:18).

Jesus is not someone who was alive and then dead! That was true of Mohammed and Buddha as well as every person who started denominations. Our Lord is not in their category, for His tomb is empty.

When under persecution, a message from the resurrected Christ would be very welcome indeed.

This message would be meaningful to a city which had died and lived again.

9. *Tribulation* - Θλίψιν - pressure from all sides like a grape being squeezed into juice.

This is trouble they would not have had if they were not Christians.

Poverty - this could be physical or spiritual or both.

If physical, it could be most of their converts were mostly from the poor, or their goods could have been confiscated (Heb 10:34).

Rich - spiritually. No man is richer than his soul is rich.

True riches are not material (Lk 12:15).

Some congregations have no treasure either in heaven or on earth. But, we must be poor in spirit, as though we had nothing and are willing to lose it all for Christ's sake.

Blasphemy – βλασφημίαν - verbal slander (“to blast the fame”).

Say they are Jews and they are not - they are Jews by physical descent, but not spiritually (Rom 2:28; 9:6).

A synagogue off Satan - this tells us there is no place on earth that is so bad that we cannot preach and teach the gospel there.

10. *Do not fear* - Matthew 10:28 - fear God not men!

You can kill a faithful Christian, but you cannot harm him eternally.

The devil is about to throw - persecution is coming!

That you may be tested - 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 all are tested.

Tribulation ten days - ten, a short definite time. There is a limit set by God on the length of the persecution.

Faithful unto death - this means we must remain faithful all of our life, even to the point of being put to death.

Here it is because of the coming persecutions.

They were not promised deliverance from tribulation, poverty or reviling. In fact, the worst was yet to come; death and martyrdom lay ahead.

If they could live right while being surrounded by all of the evil they were, so can we!

Jesus does not explain why they must suffer so much. This brief message leaves so much unanswered - God can trust some saints with silence.

No Christian will be tempted above what he can withstand (1 Cor 10:13).

There appears to be an attitude in the church today that we are to avoid trouble:

Be diplomats not soldiers;

Use liaison not loyalty;

Get along with every doctrine and everybody, including Satan himself.

Every Christian is not called upon to die for Christ. If all were, there would be quite a thinning out of members.

Crown of life - the crown which consists of eternal life.

Many of these Christians did not escape death, but they were promised deliverance from the second death, the lake of fire.

Many today are afraid of the first death.

But, if we were afraid of the second death more than we are the first we would be a much stronger church.

For the Christian life comes after death, and a crown after the struggle.

11. *He who has an ear* – again this shows these commands are to individuals also, not just to congregations.

Not hurt by the second death - first death = physical death; second death = spiritual death.

2:12-17 PERGAMOS

Pergamos was located about forty miles north of Smyrna and about ten miles inland from the Aegean Sea.

The city was a place of learning as they had a very large library there.

It is said that there were over 200,000 scrolls in the library.

Legend says that parchment was invented here after a dispute arose between them and Alexandria, Egypt.

Alexandria had cut off their supply of papyrus because of the argument.

“Of greatest import for the Christians living in Pergamum was the fact that it was the official center in Asia for the imperial cult. It was the first city of Asia to receive permission to build a temple dedicated to the worship of a living ruler. In 29 B.C. Augustus granted permission that a temple be erected in Pergamum to ‘the divine Augustus and the goddess Roma’ (Tacitus, *Ann. iii.37*)” (Mounce, p. 96).

“Of all the seven cities, Pergamum was the one in which the church was most liable to clash with the imperial cult. To the church Christ writes as the one who has ‘the sharp two-edged sword.’ In the context of life in a provincial capital where the proconsul was granted the ‘right of the sword’ (*ius gladii*), the power to execute at will, the sovereign Christ with the two-edged sword would remind the threatened congregation that ultimate power over life and death belonged to God” (Mounce, p. 96).

12. *He who has the sharp two-edged sword* - another description of the Lord.

This is another reminder that Christ's power is greater than any earthly power.

13. *I know your works* - Christ is omniscient.

And where you dwell - He knew the circumstances they were living under, and He knows our circumstances.

Where Satan's throne is - where the temples of the false god Asclepios were.

He was supposed to be the god of healing.

His temples were the nearest approach to hospitals in the ancient world. People came from all over the world for healing of many diseases. The task of healing these people was partially the work of his priests and partially of doctors (Barclay, p. 1.89).

The emblem of Asclepios was a serpent.

We see this symbol around us all of the time - it is the symbol used by medical doctors.

Pergamos was also the center of emperor worship for the province of Asia.

They had a temple dedicated to Augustus Caesar at about 29 B.C.

Essentially this city was the center of two false religions plus a large population of Jews (whose religion had been nailed to the cross - Col 2:14).

You hold fast - He knows our faithfulness and actions. They were refusing to say "Caesar is Lord," but were holding to Jesus' name - "Jesus is Lord."

My faithful martyr - Lit: "My witness, My faithful one." Emphatic construction in the Greek.

14. Some there *hold the doctrine of Balaam* - they were putting a stumbling block before their brethren in two ways –

Eat things sacrificed to idols, and

Committing sexual immorality.

Both of these probably refer to idolatry practices.

The eating of this sacrificed meat and fornication were normal parts of these idolatrous religions.

It appears there were some here who were doing the same as Balaam had done.

They were willing to make spiritual compromises in order to further their material security.

They were advising emperor worship as a means of safety and to avoid persecution.

They were teaching the brethren to do evil things as a means of being friends with the Romans and escaping persecution.

15. *Doctrine of the Nicolaitans* - lust and luxury.

It appears they were trying to be broad-minded towards both the Balaamites and the Nicolaitans when they needed to be using discipline.

Sometimes we become so sentimental about offending someone we risk the health of the whole congregation.

If we dealt with them as we should, they might judge themselves, so that they would not be judged (by the church and the Lord).

Which thing I hate - God does not just hate the sin, He also hates the sinner (Psa 5:5; Deut 25:13-16).

16. *Repent or else* - a strong ultimatum!

Or else I will come to you quickly - punishment is delayed only to allow time for re-pentance.

When will we learn that a faithful congregation (or individual) cannot be popular with the world?

The sword of my mouth - the word of God (Eph 6:17).

This would stand for the “words” Christ speaks.

This word (New Testament) will either be a comfort to us or it will destroy us.

17. *He who has an ear* - we must heed both what and how we hear.

Hidden manna - Christ himself.

White stone - great reward.

White represents holiness, beauty and glory.

The stone itself symbolizes durability and imperishability.

The white stone then represents a soul cleansed of all sin and abiding in this state forever.

It is possible the white stone here has its origin in the white stone used in the ancient world as a vote for an acquittal in court (a vote for innocence).

New name - individual recognition.

2:18-29 THYATIRA

“The longest and most difficult of the seven letters is addressed to the least known, least important, and the least remarkable of the cities” (Hemer, C. J. as quoted by Muonce, p. 101).

Thyatira was a center of manufacturing and trade and as a result had a large number of trade unions.

“Ramsay notes that inscriptions, although not especially numerous, mention ‘woolworkers, linen-workers, makers of outer garments, dyers, leather-workers, tanners, potters, bakers, slave-dealers and bronze smiths’” (Mounce, p. 101).

Acts 16:14ff. mentions Lydia (a convert to Christianity) is a seller of purple and is from Thyatira.

“The purple dye of Thyatira was not taken from shellfish, but was a ‘turkey red’ brewed from the madder root which grew in abundance in the valley” (Mounce, p. 101).

18. Again, another description of Christ as the author – Son of God (only here in this epistle).

It was claimed that their local deity Apollo Tyrimnos was a son of Zeus (a god), again this would remind the early Christians who the true Son of God was.

19. At first glance this seems to be the perfect congregation.

The last are more than the first - they were not standing still, they were growing in all of these areas.

On the surface this church appeared to be strong and flourishing. But, that does not mean this congregation is faithful to the Lord.

It is possible for a congregation to have many members and have lots of activities going on all at the same time and still not be faithful.

Many may be attending just to be entertained instead of being instructed; to be soothed instead of being confronted with the fact of sin in their lives and hear the Lord's offer of forgiveness.

It may be a highly successful "Christian club" rather than a devoted Christian congregation.

20. *Allow . . . Jezebel . . . teach and beguile* - they have allowed a false teacher free access to the congregation.

The twin evils, *teach* (doctrinal impurity) and *beguile* (moral looseness) often go hand in hand.

These same evils were in Pergamos.

There are so many Christians who will not believe the plain word of God, but will fall for any "ism" with double-jointed words that are hard to pronounce, much less understood.

All liberals either create new words or change the meaning of words to match their theories.

When using words they have changed the meanings of they are purposefully deceiving the saints.

There is some truth in all heresy. There has to be just enough to hold the lies together.

Any philosophy that makes it easier to sin is of the Devil.

There are many members of the Lord's church who would not think of being untrue to their marriage vows, but have no conscience against breaking their vows to Christ and His church.

21. Again, the Lord gave her, and them, time to repent.
22. Punishment is coming - in this world, or in the next.

It is not possible to get along with evil or live at peace with sin unless we pay their price!

Tribulation - same word as in 1:9.

Why should you or I suffer? Why not – should we be exempt?

Unless - time for repentance has not run out.

23. *Her children* - her followers.

Each one of you according to your works - sin is personal not hereditary. Compare Ezekiel 33:10-20, especially verse 16.

And all of the churches shall know - this tells us what should happen when a congregation must reject a wicked member.

24. *Have not this doctrine* - the faithful.

Not know the depths of Satan - refers to Gnosticism (ophite diagram, etc.)

This indicates intellectual pride has been a problem in the church almost from the beginning.

“*No other burden*” - the rest were doing well, see verse 19.

The Lord will never put any other burden on His people other than what He has already put on them in the New Testament.

Men have put other burdens on the Lord’s church, but the Lord will never acknowledge them as binding (22:18-19).

25. *Hold fast* - the secret to faithfulness, see 22:18-19.

26. *Power* - ἐξουσία (power, authority) - the gospel is God’s power to and over men (Jn 1:12 - same word for power is used).

Until the end - this shows the Christian life is not a single battle, but is a campaign which lasts his whole life.

27. Quotes Psalm 2:8-9.

Rule - ποιμανεῖ (shepherd) - we normally think of the attribute of kindness and tender care. However, the shepherd also has absolute control over the flock and this is how we should look at this passage.

Rod of iron - a symbol of the certainty of their vindication and triumph with Christ.

Received from My Father - John 8:28; 12:49.

28. *Morning star* - "The Revelation itself calls Jesus 'the bright morning star' (Revelation 22:16). The promise of the morning star is the promise of Christ himself. If the Christian is true, when life comes to an end he will possess Christ, never to lose him any more" (Barclay, p. 1.110).

They must follow this Morning Star and refuse to follow the false leadership of Gnosticism.

29. Hear and obey or perish!

3. The Seven Churches (part 2) Ch 3

3:1-6 SARDIS

Sardis was situated at the junction of five roads about 50 miles east of Ephesus.

It became a wealthy city because of all of the trade it enjoyed.

In A.D. 17 Sardis was hit by a tremendous earthquake, but was rebuilt with much help from the emperor Tiberius

The city sat at the top of a very tall hill which had steep inclines on three sides of about 1,500 feet.

As a result they felt very secure from enemies.

However, the city was overtaken twice because of their lack of vigilance.

Laxness seems to follow when people are affluent and feel safe in their environment.

This has happened to the Lord's church many times down through history.

Proof of this is the number of churches that have denominated themselves from the original that was begun on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus the Christ.

1. Christ is still the speaker.

Seven Spirits of God - the Holy Spirit (all of Him, without measure - Jn 3:34; 1 Jn 5:6-8).

Without measure = what the Holy Spirit enables one to do - it does not mean measuring out of parts of the Holy Spirit as some teach.

The Holy Spirit cannot be doled out in parts, He cannot be divided!

I know your works - and you do not have any accruing to your credit! (Jn 15:15 cf. Phil 4:17)

They were doing plenty of “things” but nothing was reaching its full biblical objective or fulfillment.

You have a name that you are alive, but you are dead - looking at this congregation many would say that she is very much alive, but there was no real spiritual life in her.

Proverb - “There are few things better organized than graveyards, but there is little life in them.”

The attitudes of a city are almost always found in the church.

2. *Watchful* - γρηγορῶν - attentive, vigilant, circumspect.

Strengthen - τήρησον - Lit: to guard, ward, to perform strictly.

The things which remain that are ready to die - τὰ λοιπὰ ἀ ἔμελλες ἀποβάλλειν - Lit: “the remaining things which you are about to throw away.”

I have not found your works – “Christ is looking for something from us. We so often regard him as the one to whom we look for things; for his strength, his help, his support, his comfort. But we must never forget that he is looking for our love, our loyalty and our service” (Barclay, p. 1.119).

Not . . . perfect - not completed, not accomplished, not performed fully, not discharged.

In our churches today much of the blame of this condition lies with the elders and preachers because they lack enough enthusiasm to move the members to do what they should, and in the way they should do it.

Not . . . Before God - before men, but not before God.

3. *Remember* - the first requirement for any repentance.

Watch - same word as in verse 2.

“It has been said that ‘eternal vigilance is the price of liberty’ and eternal watch-

fulness is the price of salvation" (Barclay, p. 1.118).

Hold fast – “Many a time men act as if the Church belonged to them, but it belongs to Jesus Christ and all in it are his servants. In any decision regarding the Church, the decisive factor must be not what any man wishes the Church to do but what Jesus Christ wishes to be done” (Barclay, p. 1.116).

As a thief - they were not ready for His return.

How does the prospect of His return make you feel? Do you dread it or do you welcome it?

Do you “love His appearing?” Does it thrill you so that you are purifying yourself?

When He says, “Behold, I come quickly,” do our hearts respond, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”?

And you will not know - καὶ οὐ μὴ γνώσῃ, Lit: “and not not will you know.”

This verse alone shows that all assigning of a specific time for the Lord’s second coming is wrong.

4. *Not defiled their garments* - this verse proves there is no “Guilt By Association” as proposed by certain commentators.

They are worthy - of value, suitable, deserving of good.

Be faithful and the Lord will confess you before His father, even though the congregation you are a member of has lost its lampstand.

In some of these other congregations those in error were in the minority, but here they are in the majority.

5. *Overcomes* - νικῶν - victor. Our English word “niki” comes from this.

Clothed in white garments - clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

I will not blot out - καὶ οὐ μὴ ἔξαλείψω, Lit: “not not shall I wipe out.”

However, those going to hell will have their names obliterated, completely wiped out of the book of life.

And those going to heaven will have their tears obliterated and completely wiped away.

Confess - to declare openly and solemnly.

Before My Father and before His angels - not just to the Father, but to all the angels in heaven.

If we confess Him here, He will confess us there! And this is when all eternity is hanging in the balance for our souls.

When Jesus the Christ vouches for a person, that person is accepted by the Father.

6. When God speaks - listen!

3:7-13 PHILADELPHIA

This city was founded about 140 B.C. at the junction of the approaches to Lydia, Phrygia and Mysia.

It was often called "the Gateway to the East."

The city's economy was strong as it was based on both industry and agriculture

It was subject to earthquakes and was destroyed in the same earthquake as Sardis and ten other cities were in A.D. 17.

The city was famous for its many temples and religious festivals.

There is no fault found in this congregation.

It is possible for an entire congregation to be acceptable to the Lord!

How about the congregation where you work and worship?

7. *Holy* - eternally holy.

True - not truthful, but true as opposed to anything false.

"In Greek there are two words for *true*. There is ἀληθής, which means *true* in the sense that a true statement is different from a false statement. There is ἀληθινός, which means *real* as opposed to that which is unreal. It is the second of these words which is used here. In Jesus is reality. When we are confronted with him, we are confronted with no shadowy outline of the truth but with the truth itself" (Barclay, p. 1.127).

The key of David - exercising all authority in heaven, on earth and in hades (1:18).

He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens - all providence is in His hands and no one can undo whatever He does.

The door to heaven is open now, enter in!

Nobody can deny you entrance if you believe and obey, however it will be shut by the Lord on judgment day, and then it will be too late to enter in.

This door (v. 8) could also refer to an opportunity to evangelize or to have a greater influence in the community.

8. *I know your works* - and their works were good.

What a comfort to know He knows our good works.

An open door - good works always opens doors of opportunity.

A little strength - God has always been able to accomplish great things through those with little strength.

It is not a matter of great strength, nor great ability, but great faith and dependency.

Kept My word - faith and obedience.

Have not denied My name - they were refusing to say "Caesar is Lord," but continued to say "Jesus is Lord."

This shows they had already been suffering some persecution and had conquered it.

Verse 9 seems to give the source of this persecution.

9. *Synagogue of Satan . . . say they are Jews and are not* - claiming to be following God and claiming to be teaching truth.

Although they boasted of being Jews (God's chosen people) because they were of the fleshly seed of Abraham, they were actually under the influence of Satan, representing him rather than the God of heaven (Rom 2:28).

But lie - they had wandered from the truth and therefore no longer belong to God! All liars will be lost (21:8).

How many churches today falsely claim to be Churches of Christ?

Worship before your feet - not worship them, but worship God in their presence.

It is also possible the persecutors could be converted (Saul/Paul is an example).

And to know that I have loved you - the implication is that God hates the sinners, not just their sins (Psa 5:5; Deut 25:13-16).

10. *Kept My command to persevere* - Lit: "kept the word of My patience."

This is not a command to be patient or persevere, but refers to the teaching which centers in the patience of Christ (Heb 12:1-3; Rev 14:12).

Keep you - Christ keeps those who keep His word.

The keepers are kept.

The forgiving are forgiven (Mt 6:14).

Those who do not judge are not judged (Lk 6:37-38).

Those who dwell on the earth - seems to refer to the entire unbelieving world (cf. 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8,14; 17:8).

11. *Hold fast* - faith and obedience.

No one may take your crown - no one may literally take your salvation and reward from you.

But, they may so entice you that you fall. Then you and the deceiver will both be lost.

12. *A pillar* - overcoming on earth produces strength and stability to become a pillar in heaven.

Temple - *vaω* - the holy of holies!

"This is, of course, symbolic and there is no contradiction with xxi. 22, which tells us that there will be no Temple in heaven. John is not in the slightest concerned to keep the details of one vision consistent with those of another. In each he is making a point with emphasis, and we should not try to dovetail one vision into the details of another" (Morris, p. 80).

He shall go out no more - God has closed the door, no one can open it.

The name of my God - this name is written on the heart of every believer by the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 3:3).

The name of the city of My God - to bear the name of the city of God is to be openly recognized as one of her citizens (Phil 3:20).

The new Jerusalem - the church is from heaven.

My new name - we wait for judgment to have this name revealed.

Even though the name Philadelphia has persisted through time it had received a new name twice. “Neocaesarea” as a sign of gratitude for Tiberius’ help in rebuilding the city after an earthquake, and “Flavia” the family name of emperor Vespasian.

13. The usual close again.

3:14-22 LAODICEA

Laodicea was at the junction of two major Roman trade routes.

In Roman times it was the wealthiest city in Phrygia.

It was famous for a soft, black wool they had from specially bred sheep.

The city did not have adequate water supply, therefore had a large aqueduct built to bring in water.

This made the city weak militarily.

“The church was probably founded during the time Paul spent at Ephesus on his third missionary journey (Acts 19:10)” (Mounce, p. 124).

There was a very large Jewish concentration here with an estimated 7,500 Jewish males.

This, with emperor worship, would make it difficult for the Christian church to survive.

14. *The Amen* - God is the God of truth (amen - truly).

This is the only place in the Bible where this word is used as a proper name.

Jesus often prefaced urgent truths with “verily, verily” (amen, amen).

The beginning of the creation of God - beginning = ἀρχὴ - source, origin.

Jesus is the cause (source) of creation (Jn 1:1-3; Heb 1:1-2).

This does not mean that Jesus was the first thing created (Jehovah Witness teaching). If He were created He is not deity.

15. Notice, there is no commendation for this congregation.

I know your works - omniscience and omnipresence required in able to do this.

Neither hot nor cold – see APPENDIX: Historical Context of the Lukewarm Laodiceans.

Alternate lesson when not knowing the historical background -

Hot - fervent in the spirit, serving the Lord (Rom 12:11).

Cold - the cold disciple quits all pretense at being faithful.

This congregation is a has-been - it knows it, and so does everyone else.

I could wish you were - Jesus said: "he who is not with Me is against Me" (Lk 11:23).

"To profess Christianity while remaining untouched by its fire is a disaster. There is more hope for the openly antagonistic than for the coolly indifferent" (Morris, p. 82).

16. *You are lukewarm* - no harder task faces a preacher or an eldership than warming a lukewarm congregation.

They have heard all of the sermons, seen good examples and half-heartedly tried one plan after another.

The plans did not work because the brethren did not work.

I will spew you out of My mouth Lit: "spit, vomit."

A lukewarm church makes the Lord sick.

How many lukewarm people sit in their pews satisfied they are right with the Lord and totally unaware of their danger? Too many!

Any preacher or teacher who would dare to point out their condition would be labeled as a disturber of the peace. But, that is just what the Lord is doing here.

It is appalling how many Christians do not know what they are required to believe.

Some do not know what they believe.

Others do not believe what they profess to believe.

And so many more do not practice what they believe.

And many Christians privately hold strange beliefs and run after fads and “isms” contrary to the word of God.

17. *Rich . . . have need of nothing* - this was a proud, rich city and the church followed her ways.

How about many wealthy congregations today?

An indication of their wealth was their ability to rebuild the city without imperial help after a heavy earthquake in about A.D. 60.

“Laodicea arose from the ruins by the strength of her own resources, and with no help from us” (Tacitus).

Wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked - our view of ourselves may not be what Christ’s view of us is.

In the Greek there is a “definite article” before the word wretched. This translates to “you are the wretched one.”

Materially wealthy, but spiritually bankrupt.

The person who has nothing but money is wretchedly poor.

If we are lukewarm we easily deceive ourselves.

Christ’s view of us is accurate, our view of ourselves is most often not accurate.

18. *Buy* - ἀγοράσαι - to redeem, to acquire by ransom or price paid.

Gold - the pure gold of righteousness.

Refined - a refined faith is worth more than gold (1 Pet 1:7).

White garments . . . nakedness may not be revealed - garments made from the glossy dark wool they produced were world famous.

The member's pride was also in their clothing, but their souls were naked and they did not know it.

Anoint . . . may see - the medical school they had was also worldwide famous.

It was famous for its eye powder widely used as a remedy for weak and failing eyes.

They were helping physical eyes, but their own spiritual eyes were blind.

Christ has everything the church needs and lacks.

He is ready to bestow all we lack:

True wealth,

True raiment and

True vision.

But, He will not force these on us if we do not want them!

19. *Love . . . rebuke . . . chasten* - God still loved these people enough to warn them.

Rebuke - primarily verbal.

Chasten - primarily physical.

Both with spiritual correction as its goal.

How we respond to the Lord is up to each individual.

20. *If anyone hears* - hears and obeys.

Again, this shows these admonitions are to individuals as well as congregations.

If we do not open the door of our hearts now, we shall be knocking in vain when Christ returns and then shuts the door to heaven.

Come in . . . dine - the idea is of living together.

21. *He who overcomes . . . sit with Me* - no greater promise could be made.

Jesus, despite His disgust of this church, still loves them.

He wants them to repent and share in His glory.

Since our lives are hidden in Christ (Col 3:3) we share in all that He wins for us.

Sit down with My Father on His throne - compare the “faithful saying” in 2 Timothy 2:11-13.

Christ overcame by way of the cross - that seemed like it was His defeat when it was actually His victory.

They needed to not worry about their suffering for Christ and His church, for in this way they will overcome also.

22. He is still pleading with the churches.

Because Jesus loves them He has given them the truth about themselves and the solutions.

The messages to the churches is now complete, the sermon is finished; all that remains for them to do is repent and obey!

B. The Book with Seven Seals Ch 4-7

1. The Throne Scene Ch 4

The focus now moves from earthly realities to heavenly realities.

Chapters 4 and 5 are the “throne scene.” Chapter four focuses on the Father and chapter five focuses on the Son.

“The great throne-room vision of chapters 4 and 5 serves to remind believers living in the shadow of impending persecution that an omnipotent and omniscient God is still in control” (Mounce, p. 131).

1. *After these things I looked and behold* - this shows that the things John is seeing is in the present. Action does not start until chapter 6.

“There is no way of knowing for sure just when and how John recorded his visionary experiences. Since the vision moves on naturally to the breaking of the seals and ultimately to the unveiling of the close of history, it is best to understand it as referring essentially to a time yet future. While God is eternally adored in heaven, the book of Revelation reveals those specific events with which history is brought to a close” (Mounce, p. 132).

A door standing open in heaven - doors had been opened on earth (Acts 14:27).

And the first voice which I heard . . . speaking to me - the voice of Jesus (1:10 cf. Heb 12:26).

Come up here and I will show you things which must take place after this - John had already seen “the things which are” (1:19) in the messages to the seven churches. Now he will see visions of glory that are in the future.

God is in absolute control – John is not writing about things that might happen, he is writing about events that will actually happen because they are a part of the divine plan.

“A true insight into history is gained only when we view all things from the vantage point of the heavenly throne” (Mounce, p. 133).

2. *Immediately was in the Spirit* - ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι - Lit: “I came to be in the spirit.”

John was being led by the Spirit (inspired).

A throne set in heaven - God’s throne is in the temple, the Holy of Holies.

The throne is in the very center of the spirit universe.

These brethren were concerned about “Caesar’s throne” and the troubles coming from it, but John is reminding them that there is a higher throne than Caesar’s.

3. *And He who sat there was like a jasper . . .* - the appearance of God the Father is described only in terms of flashing light from precious stones.

John makes no attempt to describe God in any human shape.

Here John sees the book’s first guarantee of victory - God on His throne!

There was a rainbow around the throne - in Genesis 9:11-16 the rainbow indicates the storm is over - here life’s storms are calmed in the presence of the rainbow around the throne.

Rainbow - ἱρις - halo, radiance, rainbow (complete circle and colored in all cases). Compare with the iris of the eye.

Emerald - or green, the color of living things, the predominate color of this rainbow.

4. *Twenty-four thrones . . . elders* - probably representing the victorious saints under both covenants.

Twelve patriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel, and

The twelve apostles.

Clothed - Lit: “arrayed.”

White robes - purity.

Crowns - στεφάνους - victor’s crowns, not rulers crowns!

5. *Lightnings, thunderings, and voices* - symbolizing divine power, majesty and glory.

This can also symbolize the majesty and power of God in exercising His judgment upon the ungodly.

Seven lamps = *seven Spirits of God* = Holy Spirit.

Lamps can also be translated “torches.”

6. *A sea of glass* - Lit: “a glassy sea” - not glass, but reflecting light like a mirror.

It is like the sun being reflected off of water.

The glassy sea like crystal separates John and us from God, but in 21:1 the sea is no more and the faithful have direct fellowship with God.

In the midst of the throne - in the vicinity of the throne.

Four living creatures – they are to be understood as “an exalted order of angelic beings who, as the immediate guardians of the throne, lead the heavenly hosts in worship and adoration of God” (Mounce, p. 138).

Full of eyes in front and in back - all-seeing, ceaseless vigilance for God.

7. *Creatures* - not eternal beings, but created like humans were created.

Four living creatures described:

Lion - strength.

Calf - service.

Man - intelligence.

Eagle - swiftness.

These attributes are also given to angels (Psa 103:20; Heb 1:14; Dan 9:21; Lk 12:8).

8. *Six wings* – speed to carry out the will of God?

Full of eyes around and within - the four not only see everything that is external, but also everything that is within themselves.

And they do not rest day or night - tireless, ceaseless, endless praise to God.

These four living creatures seem to be a special order of heavenly beings because of their proximity to the throne.

Holy, holy, holy - some manuscripts have this line repeated twice (9 Holies in all).

This entire picture produces encouragement to the obedient and terror to the disobedient.

“Here as elsewhere we are dealing with visions which were meant to stir the imagination, not yield to the drawing board” (Mounce, p.138).

9. *Forever and ever* - εἰς τοὺς αἰώνας τῶν αἰώνων - Lit: “into the ages, the ages.”

No heathen deities are like God for they begin with their human creators and perish with the humans who created them.

10. *Cast their crowns before the throne* - this suggests one of two things:

Homage paid to a ruler, or

One seeking mercy from a conqueror.

The throwing down of their crowns shows that God alone reigns and that all other thrones (authorities) must yield to Him.

Praise to the eternal God who is the creator of all things and is therefore the only One who can supply salvation.

11. *And by Your will they exist and were created* - Lit: “by means of your will they existed and were created.”

What this is saying is that all things existed in the mind of God in eternity, then, as a result, were created.

2. **The Seven Seals Ch 5-7**

Chapter 5 - Because of coming persecution this chapter records the vision of Christ in the place of power.

In this chapter Jesus the Christ takes His place at the right hand of God the Father.

As the saint beholds this wondrous scene, and catches its spirit, he is prepared to face persecutions, tribulations and even death if need be.

He is strengthened in the assurance that the great God and His victorious Son rule in every realm of creation and that through them he can be victorious under any circumstance and in every conflict.

Therefore let the devil and his forces charge the citadel of Zion with assault after assault. The faithful saint, in his faith and strength of the Lord, has nothing to fear, for ultimately the victory is his!

5:1 A *scroll* - this scroll seems to be the will of God as it unfolds (in visions through chapter 11).

Written inside on the back - Lit: "having been written inside and outside."

In other words the scroll was written to the full.

No more can be added to it.

All that can be written has been written.

This scroll contains all that can be written on its subject.

Sealed with seven seals - the seven seals make it impossible for men to open.

This confirms the three points just made above.

This also indicates the book was in seven parts, and each part had its own seal. It was therefore opened one section at a time as each seal was broken.

2. Worthy - ἄξιος - suitable, deserving, estimable, weighty enough.

The concern here is of worthiness not naked power.

Loose its seals - Lit: "break its seals."

Allowing the scroll to be opened and its contents made known.

3. *No one . . . able to open the scroll, or to look at it* - no one in the entire universe (living or dead), or even the mightiest angel, could open it.

Was able - ἔδύνατο - no one possessed power or ability, physically or mentally to open the scroll.

Not even John was given the scroll.

Nor even to look upon its contents, it is sealed absolutely.

To look at it meant to comprehend, disclose and execute its contents.

4. *I wept much* - this infers that man's destiny depends on the information in the sealed scroll.

It appears John was weeping because he would not be shown the things “*which must take place after this*” (4:1).

Therefore John and the saints would be deprived of this knowledge, and the purpose of God, because no one was able to open the book (Jesus has not been introduced into the vision as of yet).

It also appears that the promise of 4:1 . . . “is about to be thwarted. Unless the seals are broken and the scroll of destiny unrolled, God's plan for the universe will be frustrated. Hence the Seer breaks out in unrestrained weeping” (Mounce, p. 144).

No one was found worthy - the problem was worthiness, no creature is worthy to open it.

5. *Do not weep* - Lit: “stop the weeping you have begun.”

Behold - indicates one who is worthy has been found.

The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David - this removes all doubt of His identity, He is the Messiah!

Has prevailed - Jesus has overcome, conquered and prevailed over Satan.

In this victory He secured redemption for all in the world who will accept it through faith and obedience.

Therefore, He is suitable, worthy, deserving, estimable, weighty enough to break the seals, open the scroll, read it and be the Active Agent fulfilling and completing the Father's plan for man and nature.

It is because He is the Christ crucified that He is able to open the seals.

6. “John now looks to the center of the celestial scene and beholds, not a Lion, but a Lamb! A Lamb with seven horns and seven eyes, bearing the wounds of sacrificial slaughter, yet standing in readiness for action. In one brilliant stroke John portrays the central theme of NT revelation—victory through sacrifice” (Mounce, p. 144).

Been slain - ἐσφαγμένον - slayed, killed or slaughtered (plural word).

The idea is He was killed as a sacrificial animal, not murdered.

He overcame and is worthy, not by kingly might, but by His sacrifice through love.

Seven horns – omnipotence - the power to do anything that is an object of power.

Seven eyes – omniscience - perfection is seeing, nothing escapes Him.

“Any attempt to visualize a seven-horned, seven-eyed lamb in a totally literal fashion should remind us of the symbolic nature of John’s visions” (Mounce, p. 145).

Sent out into all the earth - the Holy Spirit has been given to all believers as was promised.

7. *He came and took the scroll* - Jesus now has possession of the scroll.

Jesus (the Lamb), by overcoming, has proven Himself worthy in every way to take the scroll from the hand of the Father.

He will execute the scroll’s contents by revealing and carrying out the plan of redemption.

All of this was not happening during the time John was seeing this vision, but had taken place at His ascension when Jesus sat down on the right hand of God and was given all authority in heaven and on earth (Mt 28:18).

8. *Harp, and golden bowls full of incense* - symbols.

“With the handling of the scroll to the Lamb we enter into one of the greatest scenes of universal adoration anywhere recorded” (Mounce, p. 146).

Only the last is identified, but the harp more than likely represents worship. No man made instrument is used in New Testament worship so the harp would not only represent music but all of worship.

Incense - no known use of incense in worship until after the Council of Nicea (325). And that was an addition made by men!

While on earth the brethren were despised and even hated, but in heaven their prayers were precious and brought into the presence of God Himself.

Worship is reserved for God alone, and this is proof that Jesus is in fact deity.

9. *And they sang a new song* - again in 14:3.

New name - 3:12.

New Jerusalem - 3:12; 21:2.

New heaven and new earth - 21:1.

All things new - 21:5.

Right now we are *new creatures* - 2 Corinthians 5:17.

New - καίνος - new in respect to kind, character or type.

Another Greek word for “new” is νέος - “new” in respect to time (but not used here).

They sang - ᾄδουσιν - 3 per, pl, pres, indic, act - Lit: “they are singing.”

Song - Lit: “saying.”

Worthy . . . for You were slain - better: because You were slain.

Redeemed . . . by Your blood - compare Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 6:20; Gal 3:13; 4:5; 1 Peter 1:18-19.

The price was His blood!

To God - the things purchased (us) were and are destined for His service (Rom 6:22).

Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation - no national distinctions (Gal 3:26-29).

“It is fruitless to attempt a distinction between these terms as ethnic, linguistic, political, etc. The Seer is stressing the universal nature of the church and for this purpose piles up phrases for the rhetoric value. In contrast with the exclusivism

of Judaism which prided itself in having been chosen out from among the nations, the church was genuinely ecumenical, recognizing no national, political, or cultural boundaries" (Mounce, p. 148).

Tongue - γλώσσης - language, compare 1 Corinthians 12:10.

10. *Made . . . reign* - both present tense.

More results from the sacrifice of the Lamb.

Made us kings - Lit: "made them a kingdom."

We reign on the earth - these words are in a vision and represent a spiritual reign not a physical reign.

11. *The voice of many angels* - Lit: "as it were a voice of many angels."

Ten thousand times ten thousand - μυριάδες μυριάδων - Lit: "myriads of myriads."

The idea is not just of vastness, but that they are innumerable.

12. *Great voice* - a shout of acclaim.

The Lamb is worthy to receive seven things -

Power (δύναμιν),
Riches,
Wisdom,
Strength (ἰσχὺν),
Honor,
Glory and
Blessings.

All of this suggests that Christ is able to protect us against all harm.

It is important to remember that the protection Christ offers is spiritual not physical.

13. *And every creature* - all creation exists only to glorify the Father and the Lamb.

Power - κράτος - power, sway, dominion.

Not the same word as in verse 12.

14. After all creation glorifies God the four creatures closest to the throne in heaven say

“Amen.”

Chapter 6

“With the opening the sealed book in the hand of the Redeemer, the dramatic movement of the Apocalypse actually begins. The preceding chapters have been introductory. The seven letters have shown the character, the temptations, and the rewards of the church. The vision of the glorified Christ has revealed the creative power and redeeming purpose of God.

“The chapters now beginning will present pictures of the sufferings of the church, the divine judgments upon its enemies, the ultimate triumph of Christ. The first great cycle of visions shows a series of events which follow the successive opening of the seven seals of the book of destiny. In these visions the seer sweeps the whole horizon of the future. The events he records are typical. No specific incidents are to be sought for in human history exactly corresponding to the occurrences here depicted.

“The visions of the opening seals describe movements which will characterize the entire age, from the ascension of Christ until his return in glory. These are visions of peace and war, of famine and death, of persecution of the church, and of the revolutions and judgments in which the age will end” (Erdman, pp. 77-78).

When the seals are broken the contents are not read but acted out.

These are visions recorded and acted out, not written material on a scroll.

An example in the book of Ezekiel would be a “wheel within a wheel” enabling the chariot to move in any of four directions without turning. In the physical world this is impossible. Any vehicle must have an axle extending from one set of wheels to the other. This is impossible in a “wheel within a wheel.” But, in a vision this is totally possible.

Again, see the total picture, do not try to destroy it by explaining every part.

1. FIRST SEAL - the Lamb (Christ) begins to open the seals.

Four living creatures - notice these are living creatures.

Heavenly creatures and the souls of redeemed men live in heaven as they are not separated from God (dead).

These are the creatures closest to the throne.

Come and see - earliest manuscripts do not have “and see.”

The word “come” is directed to the horsemen.

2. *White horse* - most feel this represents a period of peace, especially in relation to the one who follows.

He who sat - this is not Christ as He is the one opening the seals.

Crown - στέφανος - a victor’s crown, not a ruler’s crown.

Conquering and to conquer - the theme of Revelation is God conquering all.

This expression indicates purpose – conquest is his whole aim.

How is the world conquered during this age? By the gospel!

3. *SECOND SEAL* - another living creature calls out this time.

4. *Fiery red* - flame colored.

To take peace from the earth - the peace the previous horseman had secured.

Persecution, or civil strife, always follows the gospel wherever it goes.

Kill - σφάξωσι - to slay, slaughter, kill, wound mortally, used of sacrificial animals.

Better slaughter.

Kill can be used singular or plural, but slaughter is always plural. You cannot slaughter just one.

Great - μεγάλη - compare English word “mega.”

Sword - μάχαιρα - the sword used in combat.

A soldier’s sword used in war.

Not a short sword or dagger, a massive sword to inflict great harm.

5. *THIRD SEAL* - a third living creature calls out this time.

Black - this color stands for evil.

A pair of scales - this indicates scarcity, especially when matched with verse 6.

Economic hardships are the lot of believers (Heb 10:32-34).

The prices here seems to be ten to twelve times higher than they were normally (Mounce, p. 155).

6. *Denarius* - a day's wages.

Quart of wheat . . . quart of barley - just enough for subsistence.

These stand for economic hardship.

Do not harm the oil and the wine - the rich always seem to have enough even when the rest are suffering.

7. FOURTH SEAL - the fourth and last of the living creatures surrounding the throne.

8. *Pale horse* - greenish yellow, very sickly looking.

Death - the rider's name.

Hades - the dwelling place of all dead.

The inseparable companion of death.

Death and Hades are the lot of all believers and unbelievers.

Power - ἐξουσία - authority or power, not physical might.

A fourth of the earth - not final or complete, only partial.

Sword - ὀρμφαία - a large and broad sword used in war.

Famine - λιμῷ - complete lack of food.

Death - normal mortality.

Beasts - θηρίων - wild beasts.

Of the earth - τῆς γῆς - physical beasts, not spirit creatures.

In the first four seals we see a vast empire, outwardly victorious and successful, but has the elements of destruction within itself – unrest, danger, misery, wars, scarcity and pestilence alongside great wealth.

This picture illustrates many instances in the history of mankind.

9. FIFTH SEAL - Christ is still opening the seals.

Souls . . . slain - martyrs.

Under the altar - described this way because in those days the blood of the sacrificed was poured out at the foot of the altar. Life is in the blood (Lev 17:11).

“This gives us the meaning of our passage here. The souls of the martyrs are beneath the altar. That is to say, their life-blood has been poured out as an offering to God” (Barclay, p. 2.111).

“Throughout history there has been a persistent hostility towards deeply-committed Christians on the part of those wielding power” (Morris, p. 108).

“That the souls of the martyrs were underneath the altar is a way of saying that their untimely deaths on earth are from God’s perspective a sacrifice on the altar of heaven” (Mounce, p. 157).

Word of God . . . testimony - they not only believed the word of God, but they taught it to others.

10. *They cried* - martyred souls crying for action on God’s part.

Compare: Genesis 4:10; Luke 18:7; Hebrews 12:24.

How long - “until when?” (Psa 94:3; Hab 1:2)

Vengeance is not ours or theirs, vengeance belongs to God (Rom 12:19; Rev 19:2).

Many feel their cry is not for personal revenge –

But for vindication of divine justice, and

A concern for the reputation of God Himself as being a just God.

The real issue here is not so much the relationship between these souls and their persecutors, but the validity of the plea.

This just might be a picture of the blood itself (not the martyrs themselves) that is crying out for justice as was the case of Abel’s blood (Gen 4:10 cf. Job 16:18-19).

O Lord, holy and true - the only one with the authority and power.

Those who dwell on the earth - the non-Christian world, persecutors in particular.

11. *White robe* - Lit: long white robe.

A symbol of purity and honor.

Rest - no more toil or persecution for them on this earth.

The number of - not in the original text, but supplied for clarity.

Who would be killed - persecution was not over for the living faithful Christians.

Was completed - Lit: "until they should complete their course."

Only God who is omniscient knows when the last martyr will be killed.

"This is a message of tragedy and triumph.

"It indicates that the days of martyrdom are not done.

"A further time of testing awaits the church on earth" (Erdman, p. 80).

12-17. "We need not expect that these cataclysmic events will take place in a complete literal sense, although whatever they depict is sufficient to drive men in terror to the mountains where they plead for death rather than face the wrath of the Lamb (vss. 15-17)—an unlikely consequence if they symbolize no more than social and political upheavals. Elsewhere in Revelation man is pictured as so adamant in pursuing his own goals that neither demonic plague (9:20) nor scorching heat is sufficient to make men repent. Nothing short of the awesome dissolution of the world itself will strike terror to the heart of man in the last days" (Mounce, p. 162).

12. SIXTH SEAL - when this seal is opened seven things happen in verses 12-14.

The whole universe is affected in this scene.

① *Great earthquake.*

② *Sun became black.*

③ *Moon became like blood.*

13. ④ *Stars of heaven fell to the earth.*

14. ⑤ *Sky receded.*

⑥ *Every mountain moved.*

⑦ *Every island moved.*

Seven instances = completeness.

15. Everyone hid themselves.

① *Kings.*

② *Great men.*

③ *Rich men.*

④ *Commanders.*

⑤ *Mighty men.*

⑥ *Slaves.*

⑦ *Free men.*

Again, seven instances = completeness.

16. *Hide us from the face of Him* - like Adam in Genesis 3:8.

The first instinct of people when they sin is to hide.

But, when sin has hardened a person they are then said to have “a harlot’s forehead.”

The unashamed are always bold.

When I was young there was a saying – “people blush when they are embarrassed.” But, today it seems “people are embarrassed if they blush.”

This verse describes the terror of an impenitent world.

They are not so much afraid of death as of the presence of God and the righteous anger of Christ (Swete, p. 94).

“The sting of a guilty conscience, the torment of remorse, the dread of meeting a holy God and the face of a rejected Savior — these give more terror to the soul than all of the tumult of crashing empires” (Erdman, p. 81).

Wrath of the Lamb - not the wrath of the Lion!

"We do not readily associate wrath with the Lamb, but rather gentleness and kindness. But the wrath of God is the wrath of love" (Barclay, p. 2.17).

Many see this as a great paradox, however Revelation is primarily concerned with Christ as the Messiah, not as a sacrifice.

Yes, the Christ was sacrificed, but here He is the victorious Christ bringing final justice to all men (to evil men in these passages, but to the justified as well).

17. *Great day of His wrath* - in the Old Testament it was any time of vengeance.

Compare: Joel 2:11; 2:31.

Chapter 7.

Now comes two parenthetical visions (between the sixth and the seventh seals) which answer the question - "What happens to the people of God during this time?"

1. No force can prevent God from recognizing His own and then caring for them (Rom 8:35-39; 2 Tim 2:19).
2. *Ascending from the East* - glory from the East (Ezek 43:1-2).

Seal – used to validate documents or mark property.

Seals were basically a mark of ownership which was important in an age when so many of the people could not read.

Ownership entails protection, God protects His own.

Living God - contrasted with "no gods" (1 Cor 8:4).

This contrasts Jehovah, the living God, with the false and idolatrous gods that are unable to seal and protect their followers.

3. *Do not harm* - history has proven nobody can harm God's purposes.

Herod - Jesus was to die in Jerusalem, not Bethlehem.

Paul - not perish in the sea, but to go to stand before Caesar.

War, famine, pestilence or earthquakes do not frighten Christians who are prepared to die for the Lord.

10th plague in Egypt - blood on the door-post spared God's chosen people.

4. Twelve = organized religion.

Mathematically this would be (12x12) times (10x10x10) = 144,000.

This would seem to indicate a very large group religiously.

However, verses 4 through 8 = verse 9.

Notice verse 4 says "all the tribes," but the tribe of Dan is not listed.

However, this is consistent because there were 13 of the 12 tribes of Israel. When stated this way the tribe of Levi is omitted.

There were also 13 of the 12 apostles (counting Paul and omitting Judas).

Remember – this is a vision and the number is not to be taken literally.

Conclusion - this represents a very large group of souls who are acceptable to God. But does not include all of them.

5. The tribes are not listed in the order of their patriarchs' birth.

The tribes are listed in 19 different orders in the Old Testament.

Apparently one tribe is not more important than any other.

It seems that in total these represent God's spiritual Israel on earth today.

We are the ones protected by His seal on our foreheads.

6-8. The listing of the tribes.

Dan - this tribe is not listed. Why? I do not know!

"One of the basic thoughts of the New Testament is that the Church is the real Israel, and that the national Israel has lost all of its privileges and promises to the Church" (Barclay, p. 2.24).

Compare Romans 2:28-29; 9:6-7; Galatians 3:29; 6:16; Philippians 3:3.

9. *After these things* - this introduces a separate vision in this interlude.

This is the same group in a different vision with all troubles ended, and standing in glory with the Lord.

In the first vision they are being prepared for immanent peril; in the second they are victorious and secure.

A great multitude which no one could number - man cannot, but God can.

Of all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues - the gospel is for all.

Palm branches - emblems of peace.

They were carried at the Feast of Tabernacles, and used in the construction of the shelters required then (Lev 23:42).

They were regarded as appropriate at any time of joy, as Jesus when He entered Jerusalem (Mt 21:8-9).

10-12. This pictures our rejoicing before the Father and the Lamb when the redeemed are at home.

10. *Crying out with a loud voice . . . salvation* - these crying out have all received salvation.

They ascribe salvation to both the Father and the Son.

God our savior (1 Tim 1:1; Titus 1:3; 3:4).

Christ Jesus (Titus 1:4; 2:13; 3:6).

“God is the great savior, the great deliverer of his people. And the deliverance which he gives is not the deliverance of escape but the deliverance of conquest. It is not a deliverance which saves a man from trouble but one which brings him triumphantly through trouble. It does not make life easy, but it makes life great. It is not part of the Christian hope to look for a life in which a man is saved from all trouble and distress; the Christian hope is that a man in Christ can endure any kind of trouble and distress, and remain erect all through them, and come out to glory on the other side” (Barclay, p. 2.27).

Non-believers at this time in Asia ascribed salvation to the emperor, but Christians ascribed it to God the Father and God the Son.

11. All of heaven worship God.

"God is to be worshipped. It may be that sometimes we come to think of him as some one to be used; but we ought not to forget the claims of worship, so that we not only ask things from him but offer ourselves and all we have to him" (Barclay, p. 2.28).

12. The definite article is used in all seven places!

Blessing - both to receive and to give (Abraham Gen 12:2 - both used).

Power - δύναμις - all power.

Might - ἴσχὺς - to be strong, to prevail.

13-14. These are the saved who are surviving the tribulation!

The ones who come – present tense, "the ones who are coming."

The blood of the Lamb – the full effect of Christ's blood in atonement is being strongly asserted here – it is because of the sacrificial blood of Christ that men are able to stand before the throne fully clothed in white.

"To us *blood* indicates *death*, and certainly the blood of Jesus Christ speaks of his death. But to the Hebrews *the blood* stood for *the life* . . . When the New Testament speaks about the blood of Jesus Christ, it means not only his death but his *life and death*. The *blood of Christ* stands for all Christ did for us and means for us in his life and death" (Barclay, p. 2.31) (emphasis in original).

These verse clearly show that men have a part to play in their own salvation – these Christians washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. God's part of our salvation is in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

"But the effect is not passive and man has to appropriate it. There might be available to a man all the apparatus to cleanse his garments, but it remains ineffective until he uses it for himself" (Barclay, p. 2.34).

The New Testament of Jesus Christ tells us how in this day and age we may appropriate salvation. We do this by –

Hearing the word of God (Rom 10:17).

Believing Jesus is the Christ (Rom 10:17).

Repenting of our sins (Lk 13:3-5; Acts 2:38).

Confessing Jesus as the Christ of God (Rom 10:9-10).

Being baptized (immersed) in water (Acts 2:38).

Remaining faithful unto death (Rev 2:10).

15. *Serve Him day and night* - heaven is a place or service and safety.

Temple - ναῷ - holy of holies.

- 16-17. These verses are the fulfillment of 2 Corinthians 4:17.

16. This verse is also the fulfillment of Isaiah 49:10.

Shall not strike - οὐ μὴ πέσῃ - “not not strike,” emphatic!

In the first century there were Christians who were slaves and many of them knew what it was like to go hungry, be thirsty or know the heat of the sun on their backs as they toiled for their masters.

17. This verse is the fulfillment of Isaiah 25:8.

Notice it is the Lamb who is doing the shepherding!

C. The Seven Trumpets of Judgment..... Ch 8-11

1. Seals, Trumpets and Woes Ch 8-9

Chapter 8.

The first five verses belong to chapter seven in order to complete the seven seals.

The sequence broken by the two visions in chapter seven is now taken up again.

1. *Opened the seventh seal* - the Lamb opens the last seal, and the scroll can now be opened and read.

Silence in heaven - heaven, previously filled with sound, is now silent.

No angel lifts his voice, no trumpets blow, no elder speaks, no chorus sings, no thunders issue from the throne.

All sound ceases so that the prayers of the saints may be heard!

Who can estimate the value, or power, of the prayers of the saints?

For about an half an hour - a short time.

And yet, it could seem like a very long time after all of the action and praise that had just taken place.

A temporary suspense of revelation.

A very impressive break after the breaking of the seals and the beginning of the trumpets.

Remember that this is a vision – in heaven (eternity) there is no actual time, therefore this is nothing more than a picture emphasizing the importance of what is to follow.

2. Seven angels - a perfect number.

This could be a literal seven or just a full number.

Because of the trumpets it appears to be literal.

Who stand before God – “To stand before God is to maintain oneself in readiness for service” (Mounce, p. 180).

3. *Another angel* - not of the seven.

The role of this angel is NOT to make the prayers of the saint acceptable to God!

Nowhere in the New Testament do angels fulfill a role of mediation between men and God.

The mediatory role of angels is found in some Jewish apocalyptic literature and in some denominations today, but this is not biblical and should cease. Especially if we want to be acceptable to God by not adding to His word.

Much incense - given for a particular purpose; to add to our prayers!

Incense was used in the tabernacle and temple by the Jews.

Incense is a sweet smelling savor to God.

Not a small amount, but much incense because these prayers are from the saved!

And, this is the true throne in heaven!

Prayers – “Before the angels blow their trumpets the prayers of the saints are offered. This is not an unrelated parenthesis. John means us to see that the prayers of

God's people are supremely important. Even the cataclysmic judgments which follow are held up until these prayers have been offered. Indeed in a sense it is these prayers that set the judgments in motion (verse 5)" (Morris, p. 120).

4. *Smoke . . . prayers . . . ascended before God* - in the Old Testament the tabernacle and temple were always heavy with the aroma of the incense, and so it is here in heaven as well.

Prayers of the saints - not just the martyrs, but all of the saints!

Christians can offer prayers at any time and in any place, and there will always be an angel ready to bring the prayers before God.

5. *The angel . . . took . . . filled . . . threw . . . the censer* - the prayers of God's saints are answered.

Judgments are poured out on unfaithful men.

6. The vision of the angels with the trumpets is now to begin.

7. FIRST ANGEL.

And hail and fire followed, mingled in blood - not "with" but "in" blood; blood is the major part.

A third - the earth's plant life and trees experience a third-part destruction, not full.

A third-part gives men a warning and an opportunity to repent and turn to God.

"Their purpose is not so much retribution as it is to lead men to repentance" (Mounce, p. 184).

8. SECOND ANGEL.

A third of the sea became blood - this is only a third part.

"Again the judgment is partial. It affects but one-third of the sea, its life and commerce. The purpose is to warn and lead to repentance" (Mounce, p. 187).

These actions are a terror to the wicked, but God's people have nothing to fear from God's judgments against the wicked.

9. The first trumpet had affected the earth's ground, and not even in the vast sea can man escape the warnings of God's judgments, yet God did not completely destroy.

10. THIRD ANGEL.

Now, a third of the fresh water on earth is affected.

11. *Wormwood* - suggests the bitterness of suffering for doing evil.

“The star is named for the effect it has on the water. It is called Wormwood after the strong bitter taste of the plant of that name. In the OT wormwood was used as a symbol of bitterness and sorrow” (Mounce, p. 187).

See Proverbs 5:3-4; Lamentations 3:19; Jeremiah 9:15; 23:15.

When men reject the sweet waters of salvation God gives them bitterness to drink.

This a reverse operation from the water of Marah where the bitter waters were made sweet (Ex 15:23-25).

This reminds one of the “Screwtape Letters” where Screwtape writes his nephew Wormwood and advises him how he is to help people become evil (C.S. Lewis).

Reminder – this is another warning for the wicked to repent!

Who are the wicked? They are any who:

- 1) Reject God,
- 2) Change God’s word (by adding to or taking away from His pattern of salvation and/or worship) or
- 3) Those who after accepting God through faith and obedience become lukewarm or lose their first love.

12. FOURTH ANGEL.

Here, a third of the heavens is affected.

It appears the Lord is using the entire universe to call men to repentance.

Reminder – do not try to harmonize the details of John’s pictures. He is not writing a scientific journal.

13. *An angel (eagle) flying* - no trumpet.

Woe, woe, woe - the negative side of the gospel!

oúáí, oúáí, oúáí - expresses great grief or denunciation.

Remaining blasts - you think it is bad now, wait until the rest of the trumpets are sounded.

Chapter nine.

Read Joel 2:1-11 as a background for this section.

1. FIFTH ANGEL.

A star fallen - this star had fallen before this scene, it is not now falling.

Many believe this star is an angel.

To him was given the key - the power to open and to shut.

This power is only exercised at the sufferance of God.

Behind this key is the omnipotent hand of God which controls all things.

Bottomless pit - better “shaft of the abyss.”

The idea here is that this area is entered by a deep shaft or well.

This is not a place of torment, it is a place of restriction.

The place of torment is described as a lake of fire (20:10,14)

2. *And he opened the pit of the abyss* - the forces of hell released by the sinfulness of men.

Darkened because of the smoke - sin darkens and tries to conceal the light of truth.

3. *Locusts . . . given power as the scorpions* - power, but not fatal.

These locusts have the power, rather than the appearance, of scorpions.

Throughout the Old Testament the locust is a symbol of destruction.

Sin is terrible, but it does not have to be fatal. Repent!

4. *Harm . . . only those men who do not have the seal* - only the unrighteous can be harmed.

The men and women of God are not hurt!

Notice that here the locusts are not sent against vegetation, which is natural for them, but are sent against wicked men.

Seal - a most precious thing:

Seal protects (ie. tomb of Jesus),

Seal marks ownership and

Seal certifies genuine character.

5. Not to kill, but to torment - suffering worse than death.

This can apply here, or in the world to come.

To torment them - βασανισθῶσι - Lit: "to apply the touchstone."

The idea is of deep distress or torture.

Five months - a limited duration in which this power is granted.

Scorpion – the sting of the scorpion can be very painful, but it is seldom fatal.

6. *In those days men will seek* - Lit: "in those days the men will seek."

The men = evil men.

Death can seem to be preferable to life.

But, not to those who die in sin!

To exist, and exist, and exist forever and never find relief, ease or release from pain is frightening!

Death will flee from them – present tense, "death keeps running from them."

- 7-10. *The shape of the locusts was like horses* - even with all of the animal symbolism they still have human faces.

No special significance should be applied to these details for they simply suggest completeness of power to torment.

Hurt men five months - again a short period of time.

11. *They had as king* – present tense, “they have as king.”

Abaddon . . . Apollyon - both names mean “destroyer” or “destruction.”

12. More woes are coming!

13-21. Behind these judgments is love - God wants evil people to repent, come to Him and live.

“John was not writing for the pagan world. He was writing for the Christian church. Believers must live in this world, not an imaginary world of their own choosing. John is making plain to a little group of persecuted believers that they must not expect to live in a world that understood them and welcomed their witness. No matter how severe the judgments of God on it, the world continues its idolatries and its manifold sins. Believers must not delude themselves. This world that John depicts, with sinful men resisting God to the limit no matter how much they hurt themselves in the process, is the world believers must live in. There is no other” (Morris, p. 132).

13. SIXTH ANGEL and SECOND WOE.

Sounded - sixth trumpet.

A voice - we are not told whose or what voice this is.

14-15. *Release the four angels* - the idea presented by the angels of God at Euphrates is that the day of vengeance was held back only until God’s time had come.

Again a third, only partial destruction. There is still time to repent!

16. *Number . . . 200 million* - μυριάδες μυριάδων - Lit: myriads of myriads.

This number forbids interpretation.

17-19. *Three plagues* are the result.

The colors and features are for emphasis only.

Brimstone – known as sulfur today, yellow in color.

This is a description of the horses, not the riders.

“Their description in the following verses is grotesque to say the least. Beasley-Morris says, ‘The picture is meant to be inconceivable, horrifying, and even revolting’ (p. 165)” (Mounce, p. 202).

Notice that this is identified as a vision in verse seventeen.

20. After all of this repentance still does not come.

Idols . . . which can neither see nor hear nor walk - these are not really gods.

Idols are a visible symbol that men's hearts are not right.

The rest of mankind are revolting against God.

The rest of mankind are excluded from God's kingdom.

Their preference is for impotent idols.

21. *Murders*, etc. - a partial list of evils men do.

Sorceries - φαρμάκων - Lit: drugs, or witchcraft.

The English word "pharmacy" comes from this Greek word.

Thefts - κλευμάτων – the English word kleptomaniac comes from this Greek word.

2. The Angel, Book and Vision Continues..... Ch 10-11

Chapter 10.

"There will be no corresponding interlude between the sixth and seventy bowl judgments (the final series yet to come) because at that time all warning and preliminary judgment will be over. When the bowls of divine wrath are poured out, the consummation will have been irrevocably set in motion" (Mounce, p. 205).

1. *Another mighty angel* - a different angel than we have seen so far.

Not Christ, He is never called an angel in the New Testament.

Mighty - ἰσχυρὸν - Lit: to have power, to be able, to have efficiency.

Clothed in a cloud - the vehicle associated with ascending or descending.

Rainbow . . . sun . . . pillars - great beauty.

2. *Little book* - Lit: little scroll.

Both land and sea are solid under his feet.

His message is universal – it concerns everyone whether on land or sea.

This must have been an encouragement to John sitting there on an island.

3-4. *As when a lion roars* - not THE lion, but as a lion.

Seven thunders respond. It appears these thunders are understandable by John.

Seal up - some things of God we do not or should not know.

Compare with Paul (2 Cor 12:4).

5-7. An oath - prophecy will be fulfilled, no more delay!

Him who lives forever and ever – this designation is especially appropriate in this context of impending martyrdom.

“Soon many believers in the Asian churches will be called upon to sacrifice their lives out of a faithfulness to the Christian faith. Only a God who lives beyond the threat of death can promise them life after the sword has taken its toll” (Mounce, p. 211).

8. New instructions from the angel who had told him to stop writing.

9-10. The angel does not give the scroll, but tells John to take it.

Some think this means John is fit for the tasks ahead of him.

This scroll is already open, it needs to be consumed.

The gospel is something the messenger must take for himself as well, he cannot be passive.

Sweet as honey - this expresses the joy of the gospel.

The glory of the revelation of it.

Make your stomach bitter - but, the gospel has another side.

It brings division as well as unity,

Persecution as well as promises and

Sorrow as well as singing.

Whoever shares the secrets of the gospel must partake of both the joy and the sorrow.

There is also sweetness and then considerable bitterness occasioned by disobedience.

11. *And kings* – this shows us the gospel from God is superior to any message or rulings from earthly kings.

What was John to do while waiting for the next trumpet? Spread the gospel!

What are we to do while waiting for the end of time? Spread the gospel!

Chapter 11.

1. *Measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there* - God has standards for His city, His temple His people and how He is to be worshiped.

In previous visions John was an observer, now he is to be a participant.

Measure - may mean for protection or for destruction.

Temple - *vaòv* - holy of holies.

2. *Court . . . outside . . . given to the Gentiles* - the unbelievers have no right to the inner sanctuary and protection of God.

Tread the city underfoot for forty-two months - persecution is coming, but it is not to last permanently.

3. *Two witnesses* - who are they?

- a. Old Testament and New Testament?
- b. Moses and Elijah?
- c. Two other actual persons?
- d. The entire church represented by her preachers and teachers?
- e. We are not told!

Under the old law two witnesses were required in making judgments, here God has provided all of the witnesses that are needed.

1,260 days = 3½ years. A longer, but still a relatively short time to preach the gospel.

Sackcloth - represents repentance as opposed to affluence in worldly ways.

Any congregation of the Lord's church is a powerful congregation when it is a penitent one.

A comfortable, self-satisfied congregation has no power to stir the worldly, either to salvation or to opposition.

4. *Two lampstands* - may represent spiritual Israel.

Two olive trees - may represent the trees that perpetually feed the lampstands.

God of the earth - Jehovah is still in charge of all circumstances on earth.

5. *If anyone wants to harm them* - to destroy God's witnesses is impossible.

As long as their testimony is incomplete anyone who attempts to destroy them will themselves be destroyed in the end.

6. They have powers like Elijah and Moses because their desires are God's desires.

It does not say they actually control these things, but they have the power to do so.

These are not shown as wilful actual acts, but that their desires are the desires of Jehovah.

- 7-10. This gives the appearance of evil winning.

But, this is always temporary - just like all of sin's pleasures.

7. *The beast* - is powerless to stop the message, but he may persecute the messengers.

This beast may represent physical kingdoms of men as in Daniel 7:17.

8. *Dead bodies* - apparent victory for evil.

Great city – every city dominated by evil.

Any city, but no particular city.

Sodom - sensual evil, and spiritual bondage.

Egypt - physical bondage.

But, the measured sanctuary is still secure and safe.

Where also our Lord was crucified – “The inclusion of a reference to the crucifixion is not to identify a geographical location but to illustrate the response of paganism to righteousness” (Mounce, p. 226).

9. Evil believes it is triumphant.

3½ days - it is short lived!

Not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves – a very strong sign of contempt against Christians.

10. Evil rejoices. This is very difficult not to apply this to our day and time.

This clearly suggests the hatred evil people have for Christians and one way it shows itself is in the joy they feel over any government edict against Christian ideals.

Because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth - the reason Christians are persecuted!

Our lives and our teachings judge them and therefore torment them because they will not give up their evil ways.

“Why does the Church of Jesus Christ today sit so easy to her surroundings? Why do Christian people live such comfortable and such undisturbed lives in this evil and disturbed world? Surely it is because we are not true to the Word of God.” (Torrance as quoted by Morris, p. 151)

11. *After 3½ days* - the joy of the wicked is short-lived.

The witnesses return to life - just as Ezekiel (37:10) saw God infusing new life into Israel while they were in captivity, John sees new life for God’s witnesses while under intense persecution.

12. *They ascended to heaven . . . and their enemies saw them* – perhaps this is a preview of the final resurrection.
13. *Earthquake . . . tenth . . . 7,000* - this disaster was only partial.

It was a warning.

This was not an unusual number to perish in an earthquake in the 1st century.

These events were so striking and so clearly from God that sinful men gave God the glory.

14. *3rd woe is coming quickly* - perhaps indicating events will start moving faster toward the end of time.

15. The mystery of 10:7 is now finished.

The past tense is used in this verse – the coming event is so certain it is as good as already having happened.

16-18. The 24 elders continue to worship God.

17. *And who is to come* - NOT in the original!

No more future, only the eternal now!

God has suffered opposition, but that is all in the past now.

18. The useless violence of men is silenced by the eternal judgment of God.

Reward Your servants – salvation is a free gift! But, rewards are based on what each has done (1 Cor 3:8).

Great and small - no respect of persons (partiality) with God.

Compare Romans 2:11; Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 3:25; James 2:1,9; 1 Peter 1:17.

Destroy those who destroy the earth - the destroyers will be destroyed.

“The consummation will bring not only reward to the faithful but destruction to the destroyers (cf. 2 Thess 1:6-7). God repays in kind, and for those who wreck havoc upon the earth, there is reserved the wrath of a righteous God (cf. Rom 2:5). Those that destroy would be for John the Roman Empire and all who serve their sinister designs. The pagan empire of his day becomes the model for the final assault which knows no limitations, national or racial” (Mounce, p. 232).

19. This section ends just as it had begun (4:1), a glimpse into heaven.

Temple - ναὸς - holy of holies.

II. THE DEEPER SPIRITUAL BACKGROUND..... Ch 12-22

A. The Woman and the Man-Child Persecuted Ch 12-14

“Chapter 12 marks a major division in the book of Revelation . . . John turns aside to explain the underlying cause for the hostility about to break upon the church . . . The death struggle of a defeated foe will bring severe tribulation, but the outcome is certain—God will come in judgment to destroy his enemies (chaps. 15-19) and reward his own (chaps. 20-22)” (Mounce, p. 234).

Chapter 12.

Satan thrown out of heaven.

Satan’s power on earth is real and horrible to the faithful.

Satan is horrible (and fierce) not because he is triumphant, but because he is beaten and he knows his time is short.

This gives the church encouragement, in the face of many of us becoming martyrs, because we know the ultimate victory still belongs to God!

1. *Sign* - first time used in the book of Revelation.

Woman - first female figure to appear in Revelation.

She represents the entire Messianic community in all of time (cf. v. 17).

Sun . . . moon - light, purity.

Garland - στέφανος - victor’s crown.

Twelve stars - the angels (or messengers) of the churches.

Twelve - the number for religion (cf. Jas 1:1; Rev 21:12).

2. *Child* - Christ.

Labor and pain - all of the pain associated with bringing God’s final religion into the world.

Being with child – “The woman is not Mary the mother of Jesus but the messianic community, the ideal Israel . . .

“It is out of faithful Israel that Messiah will come. It should cause no trouble that within the same chapter the woman comes to signify the church (vs. 17). The people of God are one throughout all redemptive history” (Mounce, p. 236).

3. *Dragon* - Satan.

Diadems - διαδήματα - ruling crowns.

Not victor's crowns!

4. *A third of the stars* - partial destruction.

Stood before the woman . . . to devour her child - in order to totally defeat God's plan of salvation.

"There are forces of evil, spiritual and human, which are set on the destruction of the community of God . . . however strong the opposition against it is and however sore its sufferings, the community of God is under the protection of God and, therefore, it can never be ultimately destroyed" (Barclay, p. 2.76).

5. *Male Child who was to rule all nations* - Christ.

Rod of iron - not a harsh rule, but an unbreakable rule (= the gospel).

Caught up to God and His throne - Christ now rules from that shared throne.

John's point is that God protected His Son from destruction by Satan.

Satan tried hard to destroy Christ, but he did not succeed.

Yes, Jesus was killed, but He rose again and ascended up to heaven as the ultimate victor.

They, and we, can take heart – God always brings His purposes to their successful end!

6. *Wilderness* - persecutions and troubles of the church.

Prepared - perfect tense - having been prepared.

Her flight was foreseen by God (omniscience), and provision was made for her Escape (omnipotence).

God providentially takes care of His church!

1,260 days - or 3½ years.

A shortened time, not forever!

Perhaps represents the gospel age when the church is undergoing trials in preparation for the glory of life in eternity.

7-9. *War broke out in heaven* - the conflict between Christ and Satan.

This is the real and ultimate underlying struggle.

Michael - the only angel named as an archangel in the Bible (Jude 9).

And his angels - we do not know how many there are, but there are myriads of them.

Dragon . . . did not prevail - Lit: was not strong enough.

The great dragon was cast out - Satan's power is limited, he is not omnipotent!

Neither is he omniscient or omnipresent.

What a great encouragement that is!

His defeat is absolute – *nor was a place found for him in heaven any longer*.

Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world - except those who believe and obey the Lord.

Devil - Διάβολος- Lit: Slanderer.

"His angels were cast out with him" - aorist tense, once and for all!

10-12. The point of these verses is to reveal the supernatural cause (Satan) behind all opposition to the church whenever and wherever it occurs. It should come as no surprise that as the end draws near this hostility increases in intensity (Mounce, p. 243).

10-11. *Power of His Christ* - ἐξουσία - Lit: authority of His Christ (Mt 28:18-20).

The accuser of our brethren - Satan not only induces men to sin, but then accuses them before God and demands justice in damnation for them.

And they overcame him - how?

*By the blood of the Lamb,**

By the word of their testimony and

They did not love their lives to the death.

*In the Old Testament times also? Yes!

See Appendix: Forgiveness of Sins in the Old Testament.

Compare Revelation 13:8; Psalms 32:5; 103:1-3,12; Matthew 2:5,10-11.

They did not love their lives to the death – the same quality of devotion is required of all of God's children.

"Martyrdom is itself a conquest of Satan. The martyr, has proved superior to every seduction and every threat and even the violence of Satan . . . every time we choose to suffer rather than to be disloyal is the defeat of Satan" (Barclay, p. 2.83).

We may never be called upon to die as martyrs, but we must always put our loyalty to Christ above any desire for comfort or any neglecting of our faith.

12. *Therefore rejoice . . . those in heaven - they have already won.*

Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and sea - this is where Satan must direct his energies.

Short time - not only are Satan's powers limited, but his time is also limited.

The persecutions we have on this earth are not because Satan is so strong, it is because he is already beaten.

He is doing all of the harm he can while he can.

But, he will not be able to continue this much longer for his time is short!

13-17. Persecution of the children of God.

The earth helped the woman – "all things work together for good to those who love God" (Rom 8:28).

The woman (the true Israel) who gave birth to the Messiah (v. 5) now shares in Satan's hostility towards her Son.

To make war with the rest of her offspring - all evils brought on the saints.

“The major theme of the paragraph is the persecution of the woman and her seed. It is important to note that the antagonism directed against the church has its origin in the hatred of Satan for Christ” (Mounce, p. 245).

Chapter 13.

1. Sea beast = tyrannical political powers.

Heads . . . horns . . . crowns - claiming great authority.

Any government founded on brute force and not on moral principles is anti-God.

Both nations and men have the choice of being instruments of God or Satan.

Blasphemous - to speak or say against.

2. *Leopard . . . bear . . . lion* - all predators.

And the dragon gave him:

Power (δύναμιν),

His throne and

Great authority (ἐξουσίαν).

3. *Mortally wounded . . . healed* - a probable theory is that this beast represents an emperor who was a persecutor and died, then another persecutor came to power and was just like the first.

In other words it seemed persecution was coming to an end when the emperor died, but another arose who resumed the persecution.

4. It also appears that nobody can defeat this earthly power.

5. *To continue for forty-two months* - 3 ½ years - an abbreviated time, not all time.

The amount of time of our suffering is already determined by God!

The beast did not determine the amount of time left, he does not have that power.

“The reign of the beast is by divine permission. He operates within the limitations determined by God” (Mounce, p. 254).

6. To speak against and try to remove true Christianity from the face of the earth.

“*His tabernacle*” = His dwelling place, the church.

This blasphemy is directed at God and His Christians in whom He dwells.

To regard the emperor as God and worship him would be a great blasphemy.

This statement would have meant much to the first century Christians.

7. *To overcome them* – “Although the saints are to be overcome (that is, put to death) by the beast, the real victory belongs to them . . . In the crucial test of faith they relinquish their lives rather than their confidence in God. This is the true victory!” (Mounce, p. 255).

Over every tribe, tongue, and nation - this attack is universal.

8. All except faithful Christians follow the beast’s ways.

When people began to look upon the government as their savior and provider it naturally evolved into worship of their emperors (political leaders).

Beware, this is subtilely happening all over this world!

Lamb slain - participle, perfect, passive - the slaying is in the past and the victim (Christ) allowed it to happen to Him.

Slain from the foundation of the world - READ 1 Peter 1:20; 2 Timothy 1:9; Ephesians 2:8-9.

God’s eternal purpose is what is in view here, as opposed to the power of Satan which is feeble compared to God’s.

9. Pay attention.

10. You reap what you sow.

The KJV translators understood this passage to refer to the persecutors

Compare RSV – *If any one is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if any one slays with the sword, with the sword must he be slain.*

The first part refers to acceptance of the realities of life (Jer 15:2), but the second part deals with requital (Mt 26:52).

If a Christian takes the sword he cannot evangelize with it for truth cannot be

furthered or spread with force. He will simply perish by the sword.

But, the faithful Christian, when persecuted, knows that the final word is not with his persecutors.

This is not fatalism but the true knowledge that God can and will work out His perfect will.

11-12. Land beast = tyrannical religious powers.

The world is full of those who try to get the Church to compromise with the world or people who want the Church to alter her beliefs from those stated in the Bible.

Every time this happens Christ is betrayed again!

"It remains true that the world knows how to bring pressure to bear on those who will not accept its standards. Often still a man has to choose between material success and loyalty to Christ" (Barclay, p. 2.98).

Two horns like a lamb - trying to imitate the Lamb of God.

13-14. False signs for a false religion.

15. *Cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed* - to not say "Caesar is Lord" was to receive the death sentence.

16. *Receive a mark* - not a literal mark, but evil ones know their own when they see them.

As faithful Christians are sealed on their foreheads to escape the final destruction of all that is evil, so the followers of the beast receive a mark in order to escape Satan's wrath against the church.

17. *No one may buy or sell* - all who do not fall in line with their rule are held back and/or down.

18. *Here is wisdom* - know God's word and therefore know the enemy!

666 - this figure is a symbol, not a cryptogram.

It is not to be used to assign numerical values to letters of the alphabet to determine who on earth this is.

This number is a constant falling short of perfection, each digit is 1 short of 7.

Chapter 14.

Here the attention is changed from the forces of evil to the forces of good.

God reaping the earth's harvest.

Notice the Lamb is standing on a firm mountain while the beast (13:1) was standing on sand.

1. *A Lamb* - Lit: The Lamb.

$144,000 = 12 \times 12 \times 10 \times 10 \times 10$ - the number of religion (12) multiplied by itself and then multiplied by 1,000 (absolute completeness).

Simply stated - all of the redeemed!

Having His Father's name written on their foreheads - owned by God and approved by God.

2-3. A new song - we must win over this world and its temptations before we go to heaven and sing this victors' song.

Redeemed from the earth – purchased by the blood of the Lamb.

Not removed from the earth, but they have separated themselves from a life of evil to a life of service to God.

4. *Not defiled with women . . . virgins* – symbolical, morally pure.

They have kept themselves pure by not having intercourse with the world, they have kept their vows as the bride of Christ.

If this were interpreted physically rather than spiritually it would imply that the sexual relationship in marriage is sinful. This violates all teaching in the New Testament on the subject.

Who follow the Lamb wherever - faith and obedience.

Firstfruits - refers back to the Levitical system.

They had sacrificed themselves to God.

5. *No guile* = no deceit.

The worldly find lying comes easy, Christians would have stood out as different.

Without fault - ἄμωμοι - blameless.

A Levitical term for sacrifices not defiled by any flaw, therefore to be without fault is to be sacrificially perfect!

6. An angel with the gospel calling all to worship Jehovah.

Remember, the gospel is a two-edged sword:

There is salvation and eternal life for those who accept it in faith and obedience.

There is condemnation and eternal death for those who reject it.

7. *Fear God* – give reverence to Him.

Give glory – give God the respect and honor due Him.

8. *Another angel* - this one is announcing the fall of Babylon.

Babylon is a symbol of the worldly and godless spirit which in any age causes men to be unfaithful to Christ and indifferent to His claims.

And then the world finds out that Christ rejects them and they will pay the price of disobedience.

The great city – this is a symbol of the godlessness which in every age lures men away from the worship of the Creator. It is a manifestation of secular humanism in its attempt to destroy the remaining vestiges of true religion (Mounce, p. 274).

Any society or country that turns itself from God is its own worst enemy.

- 9-11. Those who reject Christ and His word will suffer the wrath of God.

Wrath . . . poured out full strength - God who loves perfectly also punishes perfectly.

No mercy is mingled with His wrath!

These will be punished without relief eternally.

This warning is to both the unbeliever and the Christian.

To the unbelievers to repent and obey the gospel of Christ.

To the believers who might be tempted to deny their faith in the face of persecution.

Satan tries to get men to believe there is no such thing as a hell, but John is strongly affirming its existence.

12. *The patience of the saints = those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.*

Patience - ὑπομονὴ - Lit: a standing under.

The Christians know their troubles in this world are temporary, but their tormentors troubles will be eternal

This helps maintain the steadfastness that will bring eternal bliss.

13. This is the second of seven beatitudes in this book.

Those who die in the Lord:

Rest from their labors they had on the earth, and

Their reward for their labors is waiting for them.

From now on – “To assure those facing the prospect of martyrdom that to die in the Lord is to enter into eternal blessedness is not to deny the same reward to those saints who previously died in less trying circumstances” (Mounce, p. 278).

Labors - κόπων - labor to the point of great weariness and even pain.

The Holy Spirit is not mentioned often in this epistle, but He is here in the middle of the book, in the beginning to the churches and in the final invitation (22:17).

Their works follow them - “These works follow them in the sense that there can be no separation between what a man is and what he does” (Mounce, p. 278).

There are levels of reward and punishment (1 Cor 3:8-15).

14. *One like the Son of Man* - not Christ.

15. A second angel with instructions for the first angel - begin the harvest of the redeemed.

When will this be? When the sins on the earth are full (complete).

Compare with the Amorites in Genesis 15:16.

16. Then the angel harvests.

17-20. Another angel and more instructions

This time for a harvest of the evil ones.

This harvest is thrown into God's great winepress outside the city.

How much blood from the wicked?

Approximately 200 miles long and 4 feet deep! A fantastic symbol.

The precise moment to reap has already been determined by God.

B. The Seven Bowls of Wrath..... Ch 15-16

Chapter 15.

In chapter fourteen judgment has arrived and we now expect the new heavens and the new earth to be declared. But, another pause is inserted here.

This vision is for the comfort and encouragement of the church which is to be delivered from the wrath of God.

All preparation for the end is finished!

Remember – these are visions, they are not to be used for an exact chronology of the end time.

1. *Seven last plagues* - Lit: seven plagues, which are the last.

For in them the wrath of God is complete - Lit: for in them the wrath of God is brought to an end.

Wrath - θυμὸς - passion, anger, rage.

The wrath of God has been building to a climax, and it is as if the wrath of God could not get any greater.

2. The victors!

Sea of glass = glassy sea.

Who have the victory over = who have overcome.

They have overcome:

The beast,

His image,

His mark, and

The number of his name.

Many times, in the first century, the day a Christian was martyred was called his day of victory.

Standing on the sea of glass - Lit: standing by the glassy sea.

3-4. *Song of Moses . . . of the Lamb* - it is a song of the righteousness of God's anger against sin!

Lord God almighty - Lit: Lord God the almighty.

Saints - ἑτοῖς - Lit: nations.

For all nations shall come - Lit: for all shall come.

There is not a single word in this song about the accomplishments of the Christians – there is only praise for God's greatness.

5. *Temple* - Holy of Holies.

6. *Of the temple* - not in the Greek texts.

7. *Bowls* - broad and shallow bowls so that the wrath can be easily and completely poured out.

These bowls are not narrow and deep, they need to be easily emptied.

Read Romans 1:18.

8. *Filled with smoke* - the sign that all preparations are complete.

Compare with:

Mt Sinai,

Tabernacle completed and

Temple completed.

Enter the temple - Lit: enter into the temple.

Into - εἰς - directional and always means from the outside to the inside.

Same word in Acts 2:38 translated “for.” This is important!

Chapter 16

The seven bowls (plagues) are poured out.

The pouring out of these bowls represents the final judgment of God against the enemies of Christ and His redeemed.

The seven trumpets were sounded over a part of the earth and men, but these are on everything - complete!

1. Marching orders from the Holy of Holies is given.

On the earth - εἰς τὴν γῆν.

εἰς - from out of the spirit world into the physical world.

γῆν - not the world order (κόσμος), but all of the physical world including men.

2. 1st Bowl - Malignant Sores.

Foul - harmful and offensive smelling.

Loathsome - πονηρὸν - evil.

3. 2nd Bowl - Sea Turns To Blood.

Blood as of a dead man - thick, corrupt and foul.

4-7. 3rd Bowl - Waters Turn To Blood.

4. *Rivers . . . springs* - that which brings life to the land.

Without water to drink all life ends.

5-7. *Angel of the waters* - unknown who this angel is.

And who is to be - not in the Greek, the final sequence has already begun.

This is judgment - time ceases.

Time = measured duration.

Eternity = unmeasured duration.

They have shed the blood of the saints and prophets - the souls under the altar no longer have to cry, "How long?"

For it is their just due - "Ἄξιοί εἰσι - Lit: They are worthy.

Worthy - deserving of what is given, whether good or bad!

This is the reason for these bowls!

Another from - not in the Greek.

The altar is speaking - remember, this is a vision.

Lord God the almighty. The definite article is significant.

Judgments – any view of God which ignores His hatred of sin reveals more about the man than about God.

8-9. 4th Bowl - Men Are Scorched.

With fire - Lit: in fire.

They blasphemed - these men are acting just like the beasts they worship.

No repentance here.

10-11. 5th Bowl - Darkness And Pain.

10. Judgment on the ruler and the ruled.

11. Same reaction – they blame God for their problems.

Again, no repentance here.

12-16. 6th Bowl - Euphrates Dried Up.

12. The Euphrates was regarded by the Romans as their eastern boundary and a barrier against any invading forces from the east.

To dry up the water of the Euphrates was to remove it as a barrier and make it possible for invading forces on a broad front.

“The greatest enemies of Rome, the one nation she could not subjugate, were the Parthians who lived beyond the Euphrates. Their cavalry was the most dreaded force of fighting men in the world” (Barclay, p. 2.129).

13. *Spirits* - πνεύματα - breaths.

Unclean . . . like frogs - represents words or teachings.

Dragon = Satan.

Beast = political powers.

“Men duped by the subtle propaganda of secularism have cut themselves off from the source of truth and must bear the inevitable consequences” (Mounce, p. 299).

False prophet = false religion.

This includes anyone who would add to or take away teaching from the Bible as well as paganism (22:18; Gal1:6-9; Deut 4:2, 12:32; Prov 30:6).

This would cover . . . “magic-vendors, religious imposters, fanatics, whether deceivers or deceived, regarded as persons who falsely interpret the Mind of God. True religion has no worse enemies and Satan no better allies” (Swete, p. 207).

“A man who tries to introduce the worship of other gods, who tries to make men compromise with the state or with the world, who tries to seduce other men from the exclusive worship of God is always a false prophet” (Barclay, p. 2.132).

Almost all false prophets are so deceived they actually think they are right and are doing the will of Jehovah God.

14. *Spirits of demons* - their teachings.

Of the earth and - not in the Greek text.

Encouraging evil political and religious leaders to gather their forces to fight Christ.

15. The third beatitude in Revelation.

Keeps his garments - remains faithful to Christ.

Garments are the righteousness of Christ.

Naked . . . shame - without these garments all of your sins are shown.

READ 2 Peter 2:20 – the latter end is worse for them than the beginning (cf. Heb 10:26).

Again, degrees of punishment.

“The kind of spiritual preparedness that Christ requires is the discernment which cuts through the deceptive propaganda of Satan and his henchmen” (Mounce, p. 301).

16. *Armageddon* - Μαγεδών - Megiddo, a broad valley where many battles and great slaughters took place.

Remember, this is a vision and “wherever it takes place, Har-Magedon is symbolic of the final overthrow of all the forces of evil by the might and power of God” (Mounce, p. 302).

- 17-21. 7th Bowl - Earth Utterly Shaken.

To look at this vision as they would in the first century would be to understand that Rome is the beast and the priests of the “emperor gods” would be the false prophets.

17. *It is done!* - the last of the bowls are emptied.

The end comes with this seventh bowl.

The final battle has not been described yet, but all is ready.

18. Great and terrible things happen as a result of the last bowl being poured out.

Mentioning earthquakes would impress the Christians of the first century as there were several in this area about this time.

19. *Great Babylon* - probably represent Rome here.

But Rome represents all evil powers till the end of time.

Remembered – God had not forgotten her, but is now mindful of her in His wrath.

God is going to feed all evil powers with *the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.*

Since God does everything perfectly they will be the recipients of God's perfect wrath.

20. *Every island . . . mountains* - everything flees from the wrath of God!
21. *Hail . . . weight of a talent* – today's equivalent is estimated differently by various commentators. Some say between 45 and 90 pounds and others say between 108 and 130 pounds.

The literal weight is not what is important in this picture, it is the terribleness of their punishment.

They blame God for all of these catastrophes and still refuse to repent.

These seven bowls have reminded us that God has given each person the awesome responsibility of either opening his heart to God or closing his heart to Him.

C. The Fall of the Great Harlot and the Beasts Ch 17-19

Chapter 17.

This chapter forces us to remember that the foes of Christ are very real.

Their power and cruel hatred are not only real but frightening as well (Erdman, p. 135).

“Now John fixes his eyes firmly on the end-time. He concerns himself not with the apparent triumph of the evil, but with their final and complete overthrow. He sees God as casting down every stronghold and hurling His judgments against the wicked. No might of theirs avails. God is completely triumphant” (Morris, p. 202).

This chapter is tied to the previous one as it is one of those angels who is now speaking.

1. *Harlot* - πόρνης not μοιχός which means adulteress.

She is not a bride, was never a bride, and therefore not the bride of Christ and cannot be the apostate church.

This is talking about civil powers at their worst.

Harlot = Babylon = Rome.

This is not pagan Rome nor Papal Rome, but imperial Rome.

This, then, is secular power with low moral standards, which has committed horrible evils and has seduced others into sharing her guilt.

Many waters = great authority.

2. She is accused of two sins:

Leading other rulers to commit her sins with her, and

Leading even more to sin through the influence of these other rulers.

Unless they repent God will never hold guiltless the man or country who seduces others to sin (Barclay, p. 2.142).

3-4. Described in great worldly wealth.

She is supported by a beast that is not identified - most probably Satan.

Sin is presented as beautiful and something to be desired.

Golden cup - full of sin.

This is her method of seducing others to sin.

You would expect something good to be in a golden cup especially when offered by someone who is so splendidly dressed.

But to partake is to lose your soul.

5. Her name is written on her forehead.

Prostitutes in public brothels at that time wore their names on their headbands.

Mystery - in Greek this is not something abstruse; it is something very unintelligible to the uninitiated but crystal clear to the initiated (Barclay, pp. 2.144-145).

The mystery made known here is that the word "Babylon" stands for "Rome."

6. *Drunk* - in the successes of her sins.

With the blood of the saints . . . martyrs - she had slain a great number of the saints.

She enjoyed what she was doing, and

She felt she was doing a necessary duty.

This process seems to be very prominent in civil powers in our day.

I marveled with great amazement – this is not admiration!

Beware lest by marveling you become involved in these sins.

7-8. *Will ascend out of the bottomless pit* - the beast will be released for a while.

Go into perdition - but will not prevail.

Perdition - ἀπώλειαν - Lit: ruin, hell or destruction.

Marvel – “Dazed by evil. The one way to avoid its fascination is to keep our eyes on Jesus Christ. Then evil is seen evil for what it is’ (Barclay, p. 2.147).

Remember that no matter how great the successes of evil are, it has within itself the seeds of destruction (unrest, danger, misery, wars, scarcity and pestilence alongside great wealth).

The one who chooses to follow evil has chosen the loosing side.

9-13. A description of these being defeated.

9. *Seven mountains* - Rome sits on seven hills.

10. Persecution is going to continue.

Seven kings – the number seven is symbolic and in this verse would stand for the power of the entire Roman Empire from its beginning to its end.

11. *Is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven* - when one evil power dies another comes to take its place.

A strong false teaching that arose during this time was called “Nero Redivivus.”

“Nero, the epitome of evil and the abuse of power, was (he lived and ruled) and *is not* (that is, he is now dead). Yet (according to the myth) he will *return to life* and once again seize power” (Mounce, p. 316).

It is as if there is no end to evil governments.

Perdition - but all of these have the same end.

Total defeat and sent to hell.

12. *No kingdom as yet* - more are coming.

Ten horns . . . ten kings - ten equals completeness.

“They may simply stand for all of the world powers which in the end will turn against Rome and destroy her” (Barclay, p. 2.147).

“The number ten is symbolic and indicates completeness. It does not point to ten specific kings nor to ten European kingdoms of a revived Roman empire” (Mounce, p. 317).

One hour - a short time.

Their rule is not eternal!

As kings with the beast – They are in association with the beast, they have no separate power of their own.

13. *These are of one mind* - all are against Christ and His kingdom.

These cooperate willingly, they have not been forced into this relationship.

14. This verse is the theme of the book of Revelation as well as the entire Bible!

All of these (those just mentioned) will fight against Christianity.

Every one of them will lose - why?

Because Christ is:

The Lamb of God,

Lord of lords and

King of kings!

Who goes into heaven with the victorious Lamb?

The *called* (by the gospel),

The *chosen* (or elect - those who have faith in and obey God’s plan for saving men unchanged by any person or group of people).

The *faithful* (to the end - of their physical life or the end of time).

The specific role (in battle) of these faithful followers is not told to us.

15. *Waters* = all of the unfaithful.
16. A house divided cannot stand!

When the apostate and idolatrous religious system has served the civil authorities purposes it will be overthrown.

“There is no cohesion in evil. Wicked men are not just one happy band of brothers. Being wicked, they give way to jealousy and hatred. At the climax their mutual hatreds will result in mutual destruction” (Morris, p. 213).

Flesh - is a plural word.

Burn - κατακαύσουσιν - will burn utterly.

17. *God has put into their hearts* - God in His foreknowledge knew how they would, of their own free will, fall to these evil enticements, so He uses their evil hearts to accomplish His own will.

Examples:

Joseph’s brothers selling him,

Pharaoh during the plagues and

Judas betraying Jesus.

“The truth behind this is that God never loses control of human affairs. In the last analysis God is always working things together for good” (Barclay, p. 2.149).

18. The great civil power that was Rome.

Chapter 18.

Babylon The Great Has Fallen (Rome has fallen)!

“The author of Revelation is not at this point discussing how believers are to live under normal circumstances within the state. He is portraying in a prophetic manner the ultimate collapse of a monstrous antichristian world order determined to defeat the purpose of God in history” (Mounce, p. 321).

1-2. Another great and glorious angel from heaven.

His message is simple - defeat of evil is complete!

A prison for every foul spirit - the place of their greatest freedom has become their prison.

A cage for every unclean and hated bird - or haunt, just as literal Babylon had become a haunt with literal wildlife.

3. Whether rulers of nations or rulers of the business world they have all fallen under the sins of Babylon.
4. *Come out* - do not follow evil to do evil.

The brethren must have been truly tempted to follow her sins as she could stop her persecutions and their lives could even become prosperous.

But, God wants them to be fully aware of the consequences of their falling away from Him.

To share in Babylon's (Rome's or any evil government's) sins is to also share in her punishment.

5. *For her sins have reached to heaven* - her sins are now full and it is time for punishment.

Compare to the Amorites (Gen 15:16).

Remembered - had God forgotten? NO! This only means that it is time to take action based on what has gone on before.

- 6-7. Double . . . full measure - the idea is that punishment will be measured absolutely to the full, and based exactly upon what she had done.

Not that she will be punished doubly, but absolutely complete, no sin left unpunished.

Lived luxuriously - can also be translated "headstrong pride."

Queen . . . no widow - queen in her own right, not because she had been married to a king and then widowed.

Will not see sorrow - Lit: "sorrow not not shall I see."

She sees her happy state never ending.

This is the illusion of the wealthy and prosperous in every age.

8. *Come in one day* - suddenly, the time will not be foreseen.

9-10. Rulers mourn.

Standing at a distance - they were not afraid to come close when they were partaking of the powers and pleasures of her sins.

But, they partook of her sins, therefore they will partake in her punishments.

None of these is depicted as loving her, they were thinking only of what they could get out of their association with her.

In one hour - the swiftness that punishment comes!

11-17a. Merchants of the earth weep and mourn.

They weep over their financial loss, not because of any love for Babylon.

Those who had made fortunes as a result of Babylon's evil rule will now suffer too.

12-13. "The purpose of the long list is to impress the reader with the tremendous flow of trade which poured into Rome, enabling her to live luxuriously as the mistress of the world" (Mounce, p. 329).

Bodies – It has been estimated that there were as many as 60,000,000 slaves in the Roman Empire. They were considered as little more than human livestock.

Souls of men - each person loses their own soul, but these merchants had helped in the process and are therefore accountable for these evils.

14. *Splendid* - Lit: sumptuous.

15. They too stand at a distance.

Fear - at last, but for the wrong reason.

17a. *Came to nothing* - Lit: have been laid waste.

17b-19. Sea merchants mourn.

They also lament as the others and also stand back.

The great city had brought profit to them, but she also had no affection toward them.

None of them lifts a hand to help her.

19. Threw dust on their heads - truly a vision, where did the dust come from while on the seas?

20. Holy apostles - ἄγιος καὶ οἱ ἀπόστολοι - Lit: saints and the apostles.

God avenges all of His faithful.

21-24. The completeness of the punishments of God.

No sign of evil is left, vindication is complete.

Rome will be punished for several reasons. Some of which are –

She worshiped wealth and luxury,

She lived wantonly,

Her pleasures were in physical things, not godly things and

She was the source of many of the persecutions against Christians.

21-24. “In verses 9-19 we saw how Rome’s political and commercial allies were affected by her fall. In the verses which follow we view her collapse from within” (Mounce, p. 333).

21. When anything is thrown into deep water there is no sign or remembrance left on the surface.

Shall not be found - Lit: shall not not be found - emphatic!

22-23. No sign of life is left, all is gone.

Shall not be - five times the same double negative (not not) is used in these two verses.

22. “Fine arts” flourished, but no more.

Fine craftsmanship flourished, but no more.

Sound of a millstone - normal daily life shall cease.

Bit by bit God is picturing the death of this great evil.

23. *Bridegroom . . bride* - also no new life will start.

Sorcery - Lit: drugs.

24. Because she is the reigning ruler of the world wherever the lives of Christians were sacrificed the responsibility lies at her door.

Chapter 19.

There are four names on Christ in this chapter.

Verse 11 - Faithful and True,

Verse 12 - A name only He knows,

Verse 13 - The Word of God and

Verse 16 - King of kings and Lord of lords.

1. *After these things* - this is a new vision.

Alleluia - Lit: praise ye Jehovah (ye is plural).

This word is in the book of Revelation only.

2. *True* - as opposed to false.

Blood of His servants shed by her - Lit: blood of His servants out of her hand.

These servants were snatched out of her hand by the gospel.

True and righteous are His judgments – Christians must be careful not to fall under her sway or we too will suffer great loss.

The world, and many times Christians, like a “complacent and reasonable” religion.

Many times we seek to bend the will of God to serve our own desires.

We want to alter the gospel and the shape of the church to conform to what we feel they should be.

Almost always men seek “reformation” not “restoration.” Why??

3. *Her smoke rises up forever and ever!* - no pause in the punishment!
4. Praise is continual in heaven.
5. *A voice came from the throne* - not sure if this means the throne itself or from the very close proximity of the throne.

Both small and great - whether small or great in this life is of little importance, what is important is how we stand in judgment.

6. *Multitude* - or crowd.

Omnipotent - or Almighty.

7. *His wife has made herself ready* - the bride is here called “wife” because of the certainty of the heavenly union.

God’s omniscience has seen the end from the beginning, so to call her wife is not incorrect.

Marriage – Barclay lists three requirements for a successful marriage which must also be found in the marriage of the Lamb and His Church (p. 2-173):

Love,
Intimate communion,
Joy and
Fidelity.

8. *Fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints* - our works do follow us!
9. The fourth of the seven beatitudes of Revelation.

True - again, true as opposed to false.

10. *See that you do not do that* - at this time and later men came to worship angels and departed people, but the angel says very clearly that is never to be done!

I am your fellow servant - no matter how great or small we are in the kingdom we are counted alongside mighty angels as being God’s servants.

Angels are no more than simply servants of God.

God alone must be worshiped.

Any other mediator (intermediary, ie. angels, saints, Mary) between God and men, other than Jesus Himself, must be utterly rejected and strongly opposed.

Spirit of prophecy = testimony of Jesus.

Testimony of Jesus can be either:

The testimony Jesus gave, or

The testimony about Jesus.

Because of the context it appears the second is meant.

11. Jesus comes forth on a white horse.

“The great victory has been won. The power of evil has been broken. There remains only to be complete the final ordering of things, by putting the wicked away permanently and introducing the righteous to heaven” (Morris, p. 229).

12. *Many crowns* - all crowns are His, either victors’ or rulers.’

“To be crowned with more than one crown may seem strange, but in the time of John it was quite natural. It was in order to show that he was the king of more than one country” (Barclay, p. 2.179).

He had a name written that no one knew except Himself - in the first century magicians believed if you knew the name of a person it gave you power over them.

John could be saying no person has power over the Christ, He is supreme, only He knows His name.

Again, there are some things that are not ours to know.

13. *Dipped in blood* - Christ overcame by shedding His own blood, not by shedding the blood of others.

The Word of God – “To a Jew a word was not merely sound; it did things” (Barclay, p. 2.181). Compare John 1:1-5,13.

This same idea is in Hebrews 4:12 – *For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

“When John here called the warrior Christ The Word of God, he means that here in action is all the power of God’s word; everything that God has said, and threatened, and promised is embodied in Christ” (Barclay, p. 2.182).

14. *Armies in heaven* - angelic and/or deceased saints.
15. *Goes a sharp sword* - no longer the gospel (word of peace), but the sword of war and vengeance. The time for repentance is over.

The world has continued in its willful disobedience.

Now the time for mercy has ended, and time for justice has arrived.

Rod of iron - His unbreakable will, the gospel.

Winepress of the fierceness and wrath - the final judgment on evil doers.

“Any view of God which eliminates judgment and his hatred of sin in the interest of an emasculated doctrine of sentimental affection finds no support in the strong and virile realism of the Apocalypse” (Mounce, p. 347).

Many commentators try to tell us that God is not vengeful. That He has wrath, but is not vengeful. But, the Bible says: *Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord* (Rom 12:19) (also see Rom 3:5; 2 Thess 1:8; Heb 10:30 and Jude 7 just in the New Testament alone).

16. *KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS* - kings and lords of this earth only have a limited rule.

Some of these had in mind to rule the whole world (i.e. Alexander, some Roman emperors, Napoleon or Hitler).

Today none of them have any say in world affairs.

They ruled a limited time, a limited territory and a limited number of people with a limited power.

Thigh - represents manliness and authority.

- 17-18. A picture of complete defeat for God’s enemies.

Great and small - no matter how evil you are, just a little bit or strongly committed, God’s wrath belongs to you!

19. Evil will not give up until finally defeated by Jehovah!
20. *Cast alive into the lake* - here they are not confined in an abyss, as for safe keeping, but into a pool of blazing sulfur.

All evil governments and false religions are cast into the lake of fire.

The beast represents all secular power opposed to the church, and the false prophet represents any religion not approved of by God in His Bible.

This shows utter destruction, all that the beast stood for no longer exists!

21. And all of those who followed them are defeated.

This includes all who were deceived either directly or indirectly.

“The scene is one of judgment, and the sword is the proclamation of divine retribution that slays all who have in the final alignment of loyalties arrayed themselves against God and the forces of righteousness” (Mounce, p. 350).

D. Judgment on Satan and the New Heaven and Earth.....Ch 20-22

1. The Thousand Years and Final Judgment.....Ch 20

Chapter 20 - A number of things necessary to the millennial theory of an earthly reign of Christ is missing - there is no mention of:

An earthly reign,

David's throne,

Jerusalem in Palestine or

Jesus being on earth.

Christ's kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, not a physical one.

Premillennialists force a physical and materialistic understanding on this chapter bringing in all of the above.

Two sets of verses show all of the Premillennial's beliefs of the above to be false!

Matthew in his first chapter gives Jesus' lineage to prove He has the right lineage to be the Messiah.

In chapter 1, verses 11-12 Matthew shows Jeconiah as being in that lineage - *Josiah begot Jeconiah* and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon. And after they were brought to Babylon, Jeconiah begot Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begot Zerubbabel.*

*Jeconiah = Coniah = Jehoiachin.

But, Jeremiah tells us this about Jeconiah in 22:30 - *For none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah.*

There is no reason to try to refute all of their arguments item by item when these verses prove their entire theory false.

1-3. Binding of Satan.

1. The beginning of a new vision.

Bottomless pit - better “shaft of the abyss.”

Key . . . chain - symbolical, no spirit being can be shackled by a physical key or chain.

This shows plainly the angel had authority over the pit and was able to restrain Satan.

The purpose here is not punishment, it is for restraint, to limit his influence.

2. *He laid hold of* - ἐκράτησε - Lit: seized, to get into his power, subdue, vanquish.

Notice this is just an ordinary angel, not Christ or an archangel.

Bound him for a thousand years - $10 \times 10 \times 10 = 1,000$ – this simply means a long time.

This cannot be literal when everything else in these passages is not.

“Even the way in which the word *thousand* is used in Scripture warns us against taking this literally. *Psalm 50:10* says that the cattle on a thousand hills belong to God; and *Job 9:3* says that a man cannot answer God once in a thousand times. Thousand is simply used to describe a very large number” (Barclay, p. 2.191-192) (emphasis in original).

Again, this is simply a vision.

Satan is still active, but he is limited (1 Pet 5:8).

Satan cannot destroy Christianity through a world-wide persecution.

Satan cannot deceive anyone who will truly accept the testimony of Jesus.

Satan cannot overcome anyone who trusts in God (1 Cor 10:13).

3. Satan is -

Cast into the pit,

Shut up and

Sealed.

In other words he is restricted and can only do what God allows him to do.

So that he should deceive the nations - into persecuting the church!

Released for a little while - he will be allowed to act more freely.

We are not told in what way, or how much freedom he will have.

4-6.1,000 Year reign.

Now our attention is centered on those who have suffered in the Lord's cause.

4. *Judgment* - how do Christians, living or dead, judge those outside Christ?

Our godly Christian lives and actions convict them.

Our godly Christian lives prove people can live righteously!

Final judgment still belongs to the Lord, and He judges them knowing they could have lived righteously - we have and the righteous dead had.

Lived and reigned – a problem for premillennialists: if reigning is limited to 1,000 years then living must also be limited to 1,000 years.

Who would be left to go to heaven?

Souls of those who had been beheaded – this represents all who gave their lives in faithfulness to God and Christ, not just to those who were literally beheaded.

5. *The rest of the dead* - all of the lost!

The first resurrection - remember, this is a vision and this has reference to the spiritual battle. This can have 1 of 2 applications –

- a. Our baptism, or
- b. Our physical death and being raised from all worldly trials and temptations.

I lean toward “b.”

After our baptism we are still involved in the daily conflict with Satan and all of his forces.

As a result, we are still susceptible to falling from the faith.

After our physical death we are removed from all the influences of Satan and his followers. We can no longer fall from the faith.

6. Fifth beatitude in Revelation.

Second death = the lake of fire (see verse 14).

Reign with Him a thousand years - whether on earth or in paradise we are reigning with Christ.

In Christ every ordinary Christian becomes a king and a priest.

7-8. Loosing of Satan.

It would appear that the death and resurrection of Christ are the acts which have restrained Satan.

No matter what or how strong Satan's influence has been these acts on Jesus' part restrained him!

However, Satan still has the power to tempt everyone (1 Pet 5:8).

The gospel is also still active and powerful.

It appears to us as if Satan's powers and influence are growing as time goes on

Gog and Magog - in Ezekiel 38 there was an evil prince and his country who were destined for defeat.

Whose number is as the sand of the sea - no matter how great the forces of evil are they will be defeated.

This is the decisive moment, the final battle.

9-10. Exit Satan.

On the breadth of the earth – Satan's forces are vast and great.

The power of God is so great there is not even a sign of a battle.

God loses no troops in this battle.

Satan's defeat is absolutely final!

11-15. Judgment Scene.

11. Christ on His throne.

No evil can remain in His presence!

12. *Dead, small and great* – no one is exempt from this judgment.

Books were opened - all deeds (works) of every person who has ever lived are written in these books.

The Book of Life – “The idea is simply that a record of all men’s deeds is kept by God. The symbolism is that all through life we are writing our own destiny; it not so much that God judges a man as that a man writes his own judgment” (Barclay, p. 2-196).

Salvation is definitely by God’s grace, but both the Old and New Testaments teach judgment based on works (cf. Psa 62:12; Jer 17:10; Rom 2:6; 1 Cor 3:8; 1 Pet 1:17, etc.).

Biblical faith is evidenced by the works it produces (Jas 2:17-26).

13. Here is the end of the work of the sea and death and hades.

These giving up their dead emphasizes the universal scope of the judgment.

This is where all of your works follow you.

Our degree of reward or punishment is based on our works.

However, our salvation is based on the blood of Christ and our obedience to the gospel.

How does anyone obey the gospel? By:

Hearing God's word – Romans 10:17.

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Believing Jesus is the Christ – Hebrews 11:6.

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Repenting of our sins – Luke 13:3,5.

... unless you repent you will all likewise perish . . . I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.

Confessing Jesus as Lord – Romans 10:9.

If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Baptism in water for the forgiveness of our sins – Acts 2:38.

Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Remaining faithful unto death – Revelation 2:10.

... Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

There is no other way!

14. *Death and Hades* – they are ultimately as powerless as all other forces.

Ultimately there is no power but that of God, all else is absolutely impotent.

The lake of fire = the second death.

15. *Anyone not found written in the Book of Life* = all of the lost.

Judgment rendered according the perfect record of all of our deeds.

This is final, no recourse is ever to be offered.

Jesus said that this eternal fire was prepared for the devil and his angels. In this judgment all whose names are not written in the book of life will share in their fate.

Recap of chapter 20 (William Hendriksen in "More Than Conquerors") –

A. Where does all of this take place?

1. Where the thrones are - verses from 1:4 through 22:3 show this is in heaven.
2. Where the souls of the disembodied souls of the martyrs are (6:9).
3. Where Jesus lives - they lived and reigned with Christ (20:4).

B. What is its character?

1. It is judging with Christ (3:21; 14:1,3; 22:4).
2. It is living with Christ (7:9).
3. It is sharing royal glory with Christ.
4. It is the first resurrection.

The translation of the soul from this sinful earth to God's holy heaven.

It is followed by the second resurrection when the body too will be glorified.

2. The New Jerusalem (part 1).....Ch 21

Remember – there is nothing left that is physical, all is spiritual and needs to be understood as such.

1. A new vision –

Gone is Satan,

Gone is the Beast and False Prophet,

Gone is Babylon and

Gone are those whose names are not written in the Book of Life!

New heaven and a new earth - gone is the old heaven and the old earth!

Earth - γῆ - physical earth!

Not κοσμός - world order!

Compare 2 Peter 3:5-7.

New - καινὸς - new in quality or kind (used here).

New - νέος - new in time, but same as the old (not used here).

We say "this is a new day." But, it is just like all of the preceding days (24 hours including light and dark).

Here it is new in that the old has become obsolete and is replaced by what is new in kind.

Illustration of naval boats sitting in a harbor –

καινὸς – two brand new ships; one is an aircraft carrier and the other is a submarine.

νέος - two identical aircraft carriers, one built last year and one built this year.

The first heaven and the first earth have passed away - the old heaven and the old earth have become obsolete and are replaced.

They have fled away; no place is found for them; the things that could be shaken have been removed, and only the unshakable kingdom remains (cf. Heb 12:27).

Now:

Heaven = the dwelling place of God.

Earth = the dwelling place of man.

Therefore:

The new heaven and earth = the new dwelling place of God and man together.

No more sea - this alone suggests a totally new state of existence.

Without the sea and its waters life as we know it could not exist.

The cycle of life ceases.

The sea has fulfilled its last function in the book of Revelation in giving up its dead (20:13).

Some have said that this brings an end to seven things:

Sea,

Death,

Grief,

Crying,

Pain,

Night and

All that is under God's curse.

Literal or not this list represents the whole range of evil.

The sea in Revelation has been the source of the Beast (12:3) and the throne of the harlot (17:1).

But now the sea is gone with all other representatives of evil.

"The sea, forever in motion, is a type of perpetual unrest, or anxiety. But the sea of unrest, the sea on anxiety is no more; the 'peace that passeth understanding' now prevails" (Swete, p.130).

Scripture resembles a flower. We find the seed in Genesis, the growing plant in the books which follow, the fully developed and beautiful flower in the Apocalypse (Hendriksen - MTC):

Genesis

God created heaven and earth

Lights created

Paradise is lost

Cunning and power of the Devil

Man sent away from God

Revelation

New heaven and earth

Lamb is the light

Paradise is regained

Devil in the lake of fire

Man at home with God

Man barred from tree of life

Man eats of the tree of life

2. *New Jerusalem* - same word for new here as in verse 1.

Our new abiding place!

Remember, this is still a vision!

This is a spiritual city not physical.

This is the city that was looked forward to in Revelation 3:12.

A bride all pure and clean, not like Babylon all full of evils.

“A young lady is apt to be thoroughly prepared looking her best on the day of her wedding. So with those who constitute ‘the bride’ of Christ” (Morris, p. 244).

3. *A loud voice* - not the voice of God; He speaks in verse 5.

Dwell - Lit: tabernacle.

Confirmation that God will dwell with us in this new Jerusalem.

From this point on God will remain with His people eternally.

4. All of these things will be done away with.

Why? - Because the former things have passed away.

No more death - ever since the first sin in the garden both physical and spiritual death have been on this earth.

Death was cast into the lake of fire (20:15) and now all things associated with death are removed.

5. Both heaven and earth have been shaken and have now been removed.

Only the unshakable kingdom remains.

And now the Eternal One speaks and affirms that all is done

Jehovah speaks and says - “Behold, I make all things new.”

New - the same Greek word here as in verse 1.

Not like anything that ever existed before!

These words are true and faithful - things which concern the eternal welfare of mankind must rest on a solid and secure base.

Jehovah is that base.

6. *It is done* - Jehovah wants no mistake so He tells John this Himself.

Alpha and Omega; Beginning and End - here it is the Father speaking, but Jesus also claims this status (22:13).

Give and *freely* are the same Greek word.

Therefore this should read - *I will give of the fountain of the water of life, I give to him who thirsts.*

But the idea is the same - God gives eternal life to those who have faith and obedience.

7. *He who overcome shall inherit all things* should be - *The one overcoming shall be given these things.*

He shall be My son - there is NO HIGHER HONOR than this!!!

“It is the overcomer who is to inherit these blessings of the eternal state. In the letters to the seven churches we learned that the overcomer will eat of the tree of life (2:7), not be hurt by the second death (2:11), be given hidden manna and a white stone (2:17), receive power over the nations (2:26), not have his name blotted from the book of life (3:5), be a pillar in the temple of God (3:12), and sit with Christ on his throne (3:21). All this is the inheritance of those who remain constant in their faith during the period of testing” (Mounce, p. 374).

All of those who deny Christ either by not responding to the gospel or falling from grace after becoming a Christian have no inheritance in the family of God.

8. *But* - as opposed to what I have just said.

The following is a partial list of those who are lost and going into hell.

Cowardly = fearful (2 Tim 1:7).

We praise heroes, but it is cowards who head up this list.

Many of these were Christians who were not brave enough to say “Jesus is Lord,” but gave in and said “Caesar is lord.”

Unbelieving - the exact opposite of belief.

John 3:18b - *he who does not believe is condemned already.*

These . . . “are those who refuse to accept the Gospel or those who with their lips accepted it, but by their lives showed that they did not believe it” (Barclay, p. 2.206).

Abominable - detestable, idolatry with all of its pollutions.

Murderers - killers, slaughterers.

Sexually immoral - fornicators.

Sorcerers - drug users, witchcraft.

Idolaters - εἰδωλολάτραις - Lit: idol worshipers.

All liars - notice this is the only sin with “all” in front of it.

This includes Christians who still tell lies!

This includes Christians who lie to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3).

Quibbling is also included in this sin.

Quibbling is telling truth in a way that will deceive.

Attorneys use this tactic. They ask questions so that when answered without qualification they mislead judges and juries.

Part - μέρος - portion, lot, destiny.

The lake = second death.

This is the fate of all unbelievers and apostates.

9. An angel who helped destroy evil on the earth is given the privilege of showing John what is going to take evil’s place.
10. John’s inspired vision takes him to where he can see the new Jerusalem coming

down from God.

11. *Having the glory of God* - glory belonging to God. John can only attempt to describe it.

The city (God's people in eternity) radiates His glory.

God's people were the light of the world radiating God's light for all to see.

12. This is a walled city.

A wall is for protection and safety.

Because all evil is banished this would refer to it being a secure place and inviolate.

The wall is merely a part of the description of an ideal city in those days when they were accustomed to the security of strong outer walls.

Twelve gates and angels.

Named after the twelve tribes of Israel.

Therefore, the faithful of ages past have a share in this city!

13. Twelve = organized religion.

Notice the order of directions of the gates - East, North, South and West.

The entrance to the Tabernacle was always to face the East.

East was at the top of their maps at this time.

The sun came up in the East (considered as the direction "up") and the sun went down in the west (considered as the direction "down").

14. Notice the continued use of the number twelve for the foundations.

And on them were the name of the twelve apostles - καὶ ἐπ' αὐτῶν δώδεκα ὄνόματα τῶν δώδεκα ἀποστόλων – and on them the twelve names of the apostles.

15. *A gold reed to measure* - for protection.

Everything not measured is outside the city and therefore not protected by the walls.

Everything not measured (everything outside the city) is lost!

16-17. The city foursquare - 12,000 furlongs = 1,500 miles.

This is approximately the distance from Austin Texas (USA) to Toronto Canada.

The surrounding wall is approximately 72 yards tall.

This being a perfect cube reminds us of the Holy of Holies in the temple in Jerusalem.

18-21. What these verses say is that God's city is greater, grander and more glorious than anything man has ever seen, or can see in this lifetime.

19-20. Some of the foundation jewels are the same as was on the high priest's breastplate.

"The various stones mentioned in the Bible are hard to identify with any exactness because of the many different species and colors as well as the lack of a standard terminology" (Mounce, p. 382).

22. *Temple* - formerly where God and man met.

No temple - the earthly tabernacle and temple were places where some manifestation of God might be observed, worship of God conducted and His commandments received.

In the presence of God none of this will be necessary.

23. No need for physical light for - *the glory of god illuminated it, and the Lamb is its light* (Isa 60:19-20).

The earthly lights, created, used and dissolved have given away to their Source - the Light of eternity.

The question is – do we see the light while here on earth?

"Only when we see things in the light of God, do we see things as they are. Some things which seem vastly important are seen to be unimportant when seen in the light of God. Some things which seem permissible enough are seen to be dangerous when seen in the light of God. Some things which seem unbearable are seen to be a path to glory when seen in the light of God" (Barclay, p. 2.216).

Jesus is the key to whether or not a group of people is a Church of Christ - it is Christ's presence (see chapters 2 and 3).

And He is present only if we hold the pure faith and truly obey His word in the New Testament.

24. The righteous men of all nations will be there.

Today, the righteous are the only real and permanent glory any nation possesses.

When all who have their citizenship in heaven are gathered home, then the glory and honor of the nations will have entered the city.

25. *Its gates shall not be shut* - for two reasons:

- a. Gates were shut at night for defense, which is not needed because God is our defender.
- b. And because there is no night (darkness) there at all.

27. By no means - οὐ μὴ - Lit: not not.

Shall by no means enter it anything that defiles - nothing unworthy, only the redeemed!

The redeemed are those who have taken His name, His character and His righteousness by accepting His grace through faith and obedience.

3. The New Jerusalem (part 2).....Ch 22

Up to this point it has been the exterior of the city that has been described. Now we move to the interior.

1. *A river of water* - there was a river in the garden of Eden, but man lost it by means of sin.

But, sin cannot enter here!

Once we have it we cannot lose it.

Water of life . . . proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb - God and Christ are the source of life therefore this water to sustain us also comes from them.

2. The picture in this verse is hard to understand.

The words for “street” and “tree” are both singular, not plural.

Its street - could mean either of two things:

- a. The main street of the city, or
- b. Between its streets throughout the city.

Just as *the tree* is also mentioned as *each tree*.

The picture is intended to show that the tree which gives life is restored and is in this city.

Also, the tree is full of ripe fruit all of the time. Its giving of life will never stop, there is no "off season."

I do not know of a fruit tree that gives fruit every month of the year.

Leaves . . . for the healing of the nations - as none of the diseases of Egypt came upon Israel when they obeyed Jehovah, so none of the diseases of the physical earth can enter this city which has access to these leaves.

3. *And there shall be no more curse* - the ground of the earth was cursed because of man's disobedience when he ate of the forbidden fruit in the garden (Gen 3:17).

But, in this city there is no curse because the saints are perfected.

And His servants shall serve Him - all of the saved will serve Him forever.

Serve - λατρεύουσιν - Lit: worship.

If heaven is pervaded with worship would it not be a good idea to learn all we can about true worship now?

This disproves the idea that heaven is a place to do nothing forever.

Heaven is not a place of indolent leisure, this is a place of active worship and service to God.

4. *And they shall see His face* - face to face forever.

God will never hide His face from us.

It will always be toward us for our good eternally.

This may well be the greatest blessing of all - seeing His face for all of eternity.

And His name shall be on their foreheads - to see Him as He is (1 Jn 3:3) will be an eternal transformation, and marked by eternal ownership.

5. No need for any artificial or physical light of any kind - *for the Lord God gives them light.*

And they shall reign forever and ever - those who have suffered and endured now reign.

There is no one to reign over so this refers to an exalted and blessed place where the saints share in royalty.

6. The visions of this book are now complete!

The rest of the book is closing exhortations

The speakers in the rest of the book are the Lord Himself, John or the angel.

He said to me - this is the Lord speaking, see verse 16.

Faithful - Lit: trustworthy.

As opposed to men's ways.

True - as opposed to false.

This confirms the truthfulness and unchangeability of what has been written in this book.

Of the holy prophets - τῶν πνευμάτων τῶν προφητῶν - Lit: of the spirits, of the prophets.

The word "holy" is not in this passage, but the word "spirits" is.

The word "spirits" is plural and represents the Holy Spirit as it did in the opening chapters of this book.

Must shortly take place - τάχει - Lit: must come with swiftness.

This is the same word as used in 1:1.

The end is here, no more delay!

"The book is a genuine prophecy (1:3; 22:6, 9-10, 18-19) by a duly commissioned prophet (1:1,9-10; 22:8-10) to be read in the churches (1:3, 11; 22:18) for the

encouragement of the faithful (1:3; 22:7,12,14)" (Mounce, p. 390).

7. This verse is the sixth of the seven "faithful sayings" in this book.

Blessed is he who keeps - the one who truly waits for the Lord's return will be busy doing the Lord's work while he is waiting.

This shows there are commands in this book, therefore -

- a. Look for them,
- b. Learn them,
- c. Keep them and
- d. Every good promise will be yours in that great day.

This blessing is pronounced upon the one who reads and obeys, in other words an apt student of God's word who is also obedient to God's word.

"The devout student is the best of all students. There are many who are devout, but not students; they will not accept the discipline of learning and even look with suspicion upon the further knowledge which study brings. There are also too many who are students, but not devout; they are interested too much in intellectual knowledge and too little in prayer and service of their fellow-men" (Barclay, p. 2.224).

- 8-9. *I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel* - it is so wonderful that such beings are sent forth to do service to the faithful (Heb 1:14).

But, they are not worthy of worship no matter how great their glory is!

And, one day by God's grace, we will be their equals (Lk 20:36).

10. *Do not seal the words . . . for the time is at hand* - the end of time is near, but has not arrived yet.

"The visions are not to be kept secret as though referring to a distant day. They belong to the present, and the end of the age is regarded as about to appear" (Erdman, p. 178).

There are more who will obey the gospel between now and the end, therefore, do not seal this book up.

The words of this book are intended for reading until the end of time.

11. *Unjust . . . unjust still*, etc. - if after all of these warnings people still will not obey, let them remain in that state, it is their choice.

Righteous . . . righteous still - same as above.

Your attitude towards God's word is what determines where you will spend eternity.

Read the powerful and vengeful curse pronounced in 1 Corinthians 16:22. WOW!

Accursed - ἀνάθεμα μαραναθα – Lit: devoted to destruction, Lord come quickly.

In other words - if you do not love the Lord, let you be accursed now and Lord come quickly and seal it!

Powerful condemnation! This lets us know how the Father feels about those who reject His Son.

When the Lord returns there will be no time for repentance.

His return will be too quick to allow time for that.

Let all repent while they have the time now.

12. *My reward is with Me* - you will have no more actions upon which your eternal destiny depends, what you have earned is now due and will be paid.

Reward - μισθός - pay, wages, reward.

According to his work - all of your works follow you.

All evil works that have been repented of and forgiven will follow you, however they will not be remembered against you (Ezek 33:14-16).

This is where many suffer needlessly - they do not forgive themselves even though God has already forgiven them (1 Jn 3:19-21).

No actions are hidden from the eyes of the Lord!

13. Here Jesus is claiming equal status (essence) with the Father!
14. Number seven of the seven beatitudes of Revelation.

May have the right to the tree of life - those who do not believe and obey have no right to the tree of life.

Right - ἔξουσία - power, authority - the unrighteous do not have the strength or authority to reach up to the tree of life, or even to enter the city where it is.

May enter through the gates - legally, having obeyed all of the rules in order to enter the city.

Illegal entry would be to enter any other way than through the gates. These are the paths the unrighteous would take, but the walls are too high and too strong to allow unauthorized entry.

See Revelation 21:7.

15. A view of those outside the city.

Practices a lie - not just thinking a lie, but actually putting it into practice.

If we think much on a sin, the odds are we will one day actually commit that sin.

16. Jesus, being equal with the Father, is the final authority and is sending this message to the saints in the first century and then to us.

“The plural ‘you’ indicates that it was intended for others besides John. It stresses that the revelation is not a private affair but for the entire church” (Mounce, p. 394).

17. The standard welcome of this book is stated again at the end of the book.

And the Bride say come – every Christian is to be a missionary!

Whoever desires - through hearing, believing, obeying and remaining faithful.

18. This book (scroll) is God’s final word! Period! He will add nothing to it nor take away anything from it.

This admonition to not change the word of God is not new.

Read the following:

Deuteronomy 4:2,

Deuteronomy 12:32,

Proverbs 30:6 and
Galatians 1:6-9.

Accursed - ἀνάθεμα - Lit: devoted to destruction.

19. *If anyone takes away* – this is a warning against distorting that which this epistle is teaching.

This also applies to all of God's word (the Bible).

"It is addressed not to future scribes who might be tempted to tamper with the text. . . the warning is against willful distortion of the message" (Mounce, p. 395).

20. The Lord is saying – victory is Mine and I am coming and will seal everyone in whatever state he is in - saved or lost!

If we are looking for His appearing, we will love His appearing!

21. This verse actually says - *My love be with all you in Christ Jesus, amen.*

Only those in Christ Jesus receive this love!

Conclusions from this epistle –

"The book must not be neglected; but grave responsibility rests on all who undertake to teach its precious and inspiring truths. Even though sincere, those who allow the book to form a basis for unbridled fancy or a ground for bitter dispute and controversy cannot be excused from serious fault and blame" (Erdman, p. 180). Compare James 3:1.

There is no acceptable relationship with God, nor is there any acceptable service to Him, that does not stem from an unconditional submission to Him. God must have absolute rule over all of a man's relationships, whether man to God, God to man or man to man.

FINE

APPENDIX

APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

This term designates a group of writings in which the mode of presentation is that of the apocalypse. The term apocalypse itself (from apokalupto—to uncover, to unveil) may mean the matter revealed, the form of the revelation or the writing in which the revelation is recorded. It is in a sense including practically all these meanings that it must be understood in the phrase apocalyptic literature.

Apocalyptic Literature is specifically a variety of prophetic composition. It differs from prophecy pure and simple in the following ways:

- A. It clothes the divine message in the form of a vision or a series of visions. The vision form was the most natural if the prophet was to present his message as an apocalypse. Therefore, although there are apocalypses in which the vision form is not used, in general a prophetic message which was given in the form of a vision is likely to be apocalyptic.
- B. The subject matter presented. Prophecy in general deals with the will of God on all sorts of matters. The apocalypse is a revelation of things that in their nature cannot be reached except by disclosure from above. Such are the inner and hidden arrangements of the universe, the method and original conditions of the creation, but most of the **FUTURE OF THE WORLD**, and the **DESTINIES OF GOD'S PEOPLE AND OF THE WORLD**.
- C. The freer use of symbolism. Principles and ideas are clothed in the figures of living beings (eagles, sheep, goats, bulls, etc.) Sometimes these are composite, the features of various creatures being brought into a mixed figure, in order to express the exceptional nature of the forces at work. Symbolical numbers are used for the same purpose (3,4,7,10,12, etc.)
- D. The Apocalypticist views the world as largely under the control of the forces of evil and God is reserving his interference for the future. It is this that gives the apocalypses their prevailingly eschatological content. This also brings them into the doctrine of the division of duration into ages: "the present age," the "coming age" (ho aion autos, ho aion erchomenos).
- E. The apocalypticist generally takes up the task of comforting God's people in distress (the prophet may speak for a large variety of purposes—to stir the conscience to a clearer appreciation of righteousness, to warn against the displeasure of God, to rebuke, to exhort to good deeds, to direct the affairs of state, etc.) The apocalypticist therefore predicts the triumph of God over the evil forces, the relief of the persecuted and suffering saints, and the glories and favors reserved for them in God's plan.

The apocalyptic usually chooses some ancient sage, specially favored of God with special intimacy, and makes him the central figure of his composition, and the vehicle of the Divine Revelation. Enoch, Noah, Moses, Isaiah, Daniel, Ezra and Baruch are the seers (though not necessarily the authors) of the most prominent apocalypses.

The Period When The Apocalypses Flourished

The apocalyptic form of writing was incipient in the early prophetic groups (see Isaiah 24 - 27 and Zechariah 1 - 8). But Apocalyptic Literature had the most currency between 200 B.C. and 150 - 200 A.D. During the early part of this period the conditions were specially adapted to its use as the prophetic vehicle of address. The people had struggled manfully to regain their independence from the oppression of the Seleucid kings of Syria. They did so after severe persecutions. Apocalyptic writing was well adapted to convey encouragement to them in the form of great world pictures, showing that their oppressors were destined to collapse and Israel to rise into dominion under the Messiah. Their pictures were so drawn as to be understood by them but not by their oppressors.

NON - CANONICAL APOCALYPSES: The Books of Enoch, the assumption of Moses, 2nd Esdras (4th Ezra), the Apocalypses of Baruch, the Sybilline oracles (Book III), the Psalms of Solomon, the Testaments of the twelve Patriarchs, the Ascension of Isaiah, the Book of Jubilees.

H. Norman Gipson

CITIES OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF THE APOCALYPSE

EPHESUS	(Rev 2:1-7): Ancient city; population c. 200,000-500,000; leading port of Asia Minor; on major trade route; made free city 98 B.C.; Ephesians were Roman citizens; destructive earthquake occurred A.D. 17; theater held 25,000; famed for worship of Artemis; her priestesses were cult prostitutes; also center of emperor cult-temple built for Domitian.
SMYRNA	(Rev 2:8-11): Harbor town; population c. 200,000; wealthy academic community; had "street of gold" with a temple at each end; modern Izmir.
PERGAMUM	(Rev 2:12-17): Capital of Attalid kingdom 3rd-2nd century B.C.; second largest library in Roman Empire; famous for parchment; home of the Asclepion (health resort), great altar of Zeus, and three temples to emperor.
THYATIRA	(Rev 2:18-29): City of many trade guilds; located on imperial post road; modern Akhisar.
SARDIS	(Rev 3:1-6): Wealthy fortress city set on a hill accessible to Asia Minor's most fertile river basin; destroyed by earthquake A.D. 17; rebuilt by Tiberius.
PHILADELPHIA	(Rev 3:7-13): Fortress city on imperial post road; educational center for Hellenism; destroyed by earthquake A.D. 17; rebuilt by Tiberius; modern Alasehir.
LAODICEA	(Rev 3:14-22): Producer of world-famous black wool; center for banking; school of medicine; underwent two earthquakes and rebuilt once and without imperial aid; modern Eski Hisar.

Chamberlin, D.

FORGIVENESS OF SINS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Including New Testament Times Prior To The Cross of Christ

INTRODUCTION:

Many honest souls have read Hebrews 1:1-18 and have concluded that the sins committed during the Old Testament times were “rolled forward” to the cross of Christ and were then forgiven at that time. This postulates that the sins committed in the Old Testament times were NOT forgiven until that time. That there was, in fact, no forgiveness of sins during the Patriarch period or the Mosaic dispensation. But, as we shall see, the Bible clearly states God had forgiven sins in Old Testament times.

This “rolling forward of sins” theory forces the word of God to contradict itself. Yet, these good souls, at the same time, will not allow that there are any contradictions in the Bible. Their theories put them into the untenable position of both affirming there are contradictions and that there are no contradictions. It is impossible that both of those beliefs can be true!

I. PASSAGES STATING THERE WAS FORGIVENESS OF SINS DURING OLD TESTAMENT TIMES:

If there was no forgiveness of sins at any time prior to the cross of Jesus, then we must find another meaning for the following passages, or admit that there are, in fact, contradictions in the word of God and that Jehovah lied to those saints.

- A. Isaiah 44:22 – *I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, and like a cloud, your sins. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you.*

How would any person reading this 700 years before the cross understand what Jehovah said? They would have taken God at His word for He cannot lie. Those sins were forgiven!

- B. Numbers 14:18-20 – *'The Lord is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation.' "Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy, just as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt even to now." Then the Lord said: "I have pardoned, according to your word."*

This starts out as a quotation of Exodus 20:5-6 with the explanation that God had already been forgiving their sins. Would these Jews have understood that their sins were “rolled forward,” or that they were actually forgiven? They understood that their sins were forgiven!

C. Isaiah 43:25 – I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins.

He who blots out shows continuous action, not something done off in the future. Their sins were being forgiven at that time!

God does not forget their sins for it is impossible for Him to forget anything. The idea is - Jehovah does not remember their sins against them anymore. Compare Ezekiel 33:16 – None of his sins which he has committed shall be remembered against him; he has done what is lawful and right; he shall surely live.

D. Luke 5:20 – So when He saw their faith, He said to him, “Man, your sins are forgiven you.”

Jesus had not gone to the cross yet. Did He lie to this poor man, or did He speak the truth and the man's sins were actually forgiven at that time? Who standing there understood Jesus to say that his sins were being “rolled forward” to the cross? Nobody did! His sins were forgiven right then! Compare Mark 2:5.

E. 2 Samuel 12:13 – Then David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.” And Nathan said to David, “The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die.”

Did Nathan tell David that Jehovah *has put away your sin*, or that Jehovah will forgive him some time in the future (after rolling the sin forward to the cross)? David's sins were actually forgiven at that time!

F. Psalm 32:5 – I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,” And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.

This sentence is in the past tense NOT future tense. There is no “rolling forward” of sins here. The only way one could understand the word *forgave* as being in the future is if this passage is uninspired. Either that or God lied. His iniquity (sin) had already been forgiven!

G. Psalm 103:2 – Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits; Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases.

This is present tense NOT future tense. Did David, under inspiration, understand that sins were being forgiven right then OR sometime in the future? Their sins were being forgiven at that time!

II. ADDITIONAL PASSAGES BEARING DIRECTLY WITH THE FACT THAT GOD WAS FORGIVING SINS PRIOR TO THE CROSS:

A. Romans 3:21-26 – ²¹*But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,* ²²*even the righteousness of God which is through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe, for there is no difference;* ²³*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God;* ²⁴*being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,* ²⁵*whom God set forth to be a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because of His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,* ²⁶*to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

What this passage is saying is that God had been forgiving sins committed prior to Jesus' death and if Jesus had not gone to the cross Jehovah would have been unrighteous in forgiving those sins when He did.

It should be noted here that the Greek words used in Acts 2:38 for "forgiveness" and here in verse 25 for "passed over" are synonyms.

Acts 2:38	ἄφεσιν	"to send from" "dismissal" "forgiveness" "freedom" "pardon" "release" "deliverance" "remission" "liberty"
Romans 3:25	πάρεσιν	"to send (set) aside" "dismissal" "forgiveness" "passing over" "letting pass"

The idea in both passages is that sins were actually being forgiven.

Verses 21-22 – *Righteousness* (justification) in these verses is not referring to the attribute of God but is addressing God's plan for man's sanctification. (Sanctification is that process in which the Holy Spirit uses the word of God and providence to bring men and women into the likeness

of Jesus Christ in word, thought and deed.) This process is a system of faith – not a system of law-keeping.

Verses 23-24 – God is telling us that there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles – all have sinned and all must now be saved by faith, in obedience to Christ. Also, this system of faith (grace) is only in Christ Jesus.

Verse 25 – The only way to have our sins covered (here called a propitiation) is by the blood of Christ which He offered on the cross. This propitiation is obtained only through (by means of) faith.

Sin is a violation of God's law. The penalty (wages) for sin is death. Jesus paid that penalty for all by His death on the cross. These verses show God had been forgiving sins under both the Patriarchal Law and the Law of Moses. If Christ had not given His life (blood) on the cross God would have been unjust in forgiving those sins committed prior to the cross (paradise would have been filled with sinful, unforgiven souls if they had not already been forgiven by God – Lk 16:19-31). And it is just that point that Paul is making – Jesus did prove the Father was righteous in forgiving those souls prior to His death. His dying on the cross paid the price for all sin whether committed before OR after the cross. Revelation 13:8 tells us that the Father knew *as a fact* before the foundation of the world that Jesus would be our propitiation by dying on the cross. This fact was so firm in God's mind this scripture says Jesus was *slain before the foundation of the world!*

“Righteousness” in this verse refers to the attribute of God.

Verse 26 – Now Paul again refers to God's attribute of being “just.” Because of the blood sacrifice of Jesus, God was “just” in forgiving sins prior to the cross and also “just” in His actions of forgiving obedient souls after the cross.

B. Psalm 51:16-17 – ¹⁶*For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering.* ¹⁷*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart – these, O God, You will not despise.*

David understood the blood of bulls and goats would not and could not affect forgiveness of sins (Heb 10:4). Here David has his sin with Bathsheba in mind. David was forgiven of this sin with Bathsheba – *The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die* (2 Sam 12:13b). Only faith and obedience combined with repentance could bring forgiveness. And that forgiveness, just as ours today, is based on the fact that Jesus made the only blood sacrifice acceptable to God. That sacrifice was actually known by God before the foundation of the world.

God knew Jesus would die on the cross to pay for all the sins of all people who will ever live. This knowledge (God's) is called omniscience. Since God knew this as a fact, not just a possibility, He forgives sin anywhere in time He pleases. To say God must wait until the time Christ was actually crucified is to say God is constrained (controlled) by time. God created time, it is a creature. To say God is controlled by His creature (time) is absurd.

Forgiveness of sins takes place in the mind of God. God knew Jesus' crucifixion from the foundation of the world. All sin, if it is forgiven, is forgiven based on the blood sacrifice made by Jesus on the cross. Where in time this takes place is of no consequence to God, only the fact of it matters.

III. WHAT DOES HEBREWS 10:1-18 ACTUALLY SAY?

- A. The sacrifices made according to the Law of Moses prior to the cross did not in themselves bring about forgiveness of sins. This was not possible (Heb 10:4). These sacrifices were commanded by Jehovah, but were not the basis of forgiveness – they were the condition of forgiveness then just as faith, repentance, confession and baptism are the conditions today – the blood of Jesus Christ is the only basis for forgiveness of sins accepted by God!

If there was a “rolling forward” of sins to the cross, God was forced to be bound by time (which He created) and was forced to wait until Jesus’ death in order to forgive sins. If God is truly omniscient He is not bound by time! He can forgive sins anytime (before or after the cross) based on His absolute knowledge that Jesus dies on the cross and that His blood pays for all sins of all time. The Messiah’s blood flowed both ways from the cross validating forgiveness that was given prior to the cross and accomplishing forgiveness of believing and obedient souls since the cross.

The definition of omniscience is – the knowledge of everything that is the object of knowledge – past, present or future – whether real or imagined.

Isaiah, in 46:9-10 says, *Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.”* Understanding this passage and knowing what omniscience means we know that God did, in fact, always know that Jesus would die on the cross for the forgiveness of sins. He did know when and how it would happen. With this knowledge God is free to forgive sins anytime He pleases and can declare that, *“My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.”*

Whether He forgives sins after or before the cross is immaterial to Jehovah (see Appendix A). We, not being omniscient, might have difficulty understanding this attribute of God.

God also knew before the foundation of the world that the Church of Christ was going to be established (see Appendix B). He knew the establishment of the church was based on the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Just as He knew the church would come into existence He knew Jesus would shed His blood for the forgiveness of sins. *Revelation 13:8 – And all who dwell on the earth shall worship Him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*

B. Hebrews 10:1-18 – *¹For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. ²For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purged, would have had no more consciousness of sins. ³But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. ⁴For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.*
⁵Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. ⁶In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. ⁷Then I said, 'Behold, I have come – in the volume of the book it is written of Me – To do Your will, O God.'" ⁸Previously saying, "Sacrifice and offerings, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them" (which are offered according to the law), ⁹then He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God." He takes away the first that He may establish the second. ¹⁰By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ¹¹And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹²But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. ¹⁴For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. ¹⁵And the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before, ¹⁶"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them," ¹⁷then He adds, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." ¹⁸Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.

10:1 The law was not intended to be the answer to sins. It only represented what was to come.

No law, of any kind, ever made one righteous. All law can do is identify violations (sins).

No law, even with sacrifices added, could make any adherent innocent.

10:2-3 A question is asked and the Greek construction demands a “yes” answer. The reasons for a “yes” answer are given.

1st - the word “once” (ἄπαξ) carries the meaning of “once for all time” (cf: Jude 3; 1 Pet 3:18).

2nd - this is not that they would not remember their sins, but they would have put them out of their consciousness. But, the truth of the matter is that those sacrifices did, in fact, remind them of their sins.

10:4 Why a reminder? Because no bloody animal sacrifice could take away sins. The Hebrew writer will go on to prove that only the blood sacrifice of the Messiah could satisfy the Father and take away sin.

All that has been said in the first three verses leads to one conclusion: the blood of animals cannot take away the memory of, or bad conscience resulting from sins. The people’s conscience was not made “perfect” (i.e. complete) as God intended. The only real efficacy of the bloody sacrifices of the altar was the moral effect upon the people and the fact that they pointed forward to the Lamb of God. Incidentally, the idea of “pointing forward to Christ” eliminates alleged difficulties between this verse and verse 11 with such verses as Leviticus 4:26; 17:11 and Numbers 29:5. The people’s sins were not “rolled forward,” they were “passed over” (forgiven) (Rom 3:25-26). Very simply, the Old Law taught one that he was a sinner.

The point here is not that God rejected unworthy sacrifices, but that the entire Old Testament systems were unable to deal effectively with sins.

10:5-8 These verses are presented as Christ’s words. In essence this shows that Christ’s sacrifice was known even in Old Testament times and that it is superior to any other sacrifice - here specifically to the Law of Moses. It also shows Jesus came of His own free will, and then freely submitted to the will of the Father.

Notice the following contrasts:

Animal sacrifices	-	1 Samuel 15:22.
Justice	-	Isaiah 1:12-17
		Amos 5:21-25
Being right with God	-	Hosea 6:6
		Psalm 51:16-17

Psalm 69:30-33

10:9 This verse clearly shows Christ's obedience to the Father, and that obedience included obedience to the Old Testament laws, and then establishing His new law.

10:10 "By that will" - the singular will of the Father and the Son and, by extension also, the Holy Spirit's.

The blood sacrifice of the physical body of the Messiah is absolutely sufficient to forgive all sins of all time.

And, that sacrifice was "once for all." This is a strengthened and emphatic form of the word in Greek. This one sacrifice, given only once, is all that God requires. But, it is required! No other sacrifice will do!

10:11-12 The priests are presented as standing. Such a posture shows they were still working (offering sacrifices) and their work was not done (finished). As opposed to this, Christ has finished, in His sacrifice, all that is required in a sacrifice to achieve forgiveness of sins. Therefore, He sits – having accomplished all that was required. There is no more sacrificial work for Him to do.

10:13 All that remains now is judgment day, the day when all of His enemies are made His footstool.

10:14 "For those who are being sanctified" refers to the saved of all time whether past, present or future. When all of the saved are viewed as a whole, the process is still continuing. Even though finished for some, the process goes on now and into the future.

10:15-17 How does the Holy Spirit testify to us? Through the Scriptures! The specific testimony here is recorded in Jeremiah 31:31ff. Again, the message is that the Old Testament system was terminated just as it had been prophesied. This is a repeat of the argument made in Hebrews 8:8-13.

10:18 The conclusion - the old is done away and the new is now in force just as the Father had willed it. The final sacrifice has been accomplished by Christ and there is no more sacrifice for sins (cf: vs. 26-31).

IV. IF THE THEORY OF "ROLLING FORWARD OF SINS" IS TRUE IT RAISES OTHER QUESTIONS.

How did God treat the sins of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and others

prior to the Law of Moses given at Mount Sinai?

How did God treat the sins of the non-Jews (Gentiles) prior to the cross?

Hebrews chapter ten is addressing those under the Law of Moses - it does not address how sins were handled prior to the cross for all those who were not Jews.

The answer is that God forgave their sins the same way – by means of their true faith and repentance, based on the blood of Christ.

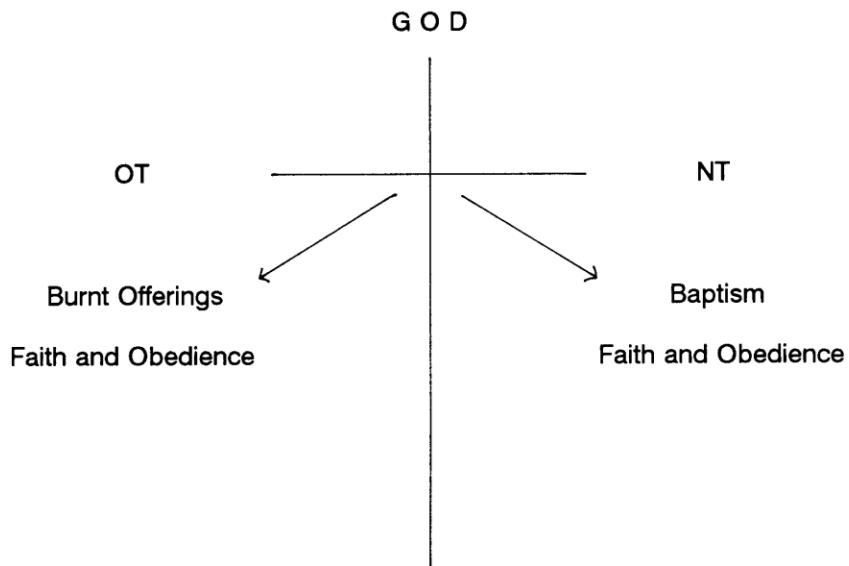
V. CONCLUSION.

1. The Old Testament clearly states repeatedly that sins were being forgiven in those Old Testament times.
2. The New Testament shows Jesus confirmed Jehovah's righteousness in forgiving sins in Old Testament times by going to the cross (Rom 3:21-26).
3. The New Testament shows that no sins were (O.T. times), or are (N.T. times), forgiven except based on the blood of Christ (Heb chapters 8-10).
4. Forgiveness of sins takes place in the mind of the forgiver. If there is no forgiveness in the mind of the forgiver (in this case Jehovah) there simply is no forgiveness.
5. Because of Jehovah's omniscience He knew, before the foundation of the world, as a fact the blood of Christ would be shed for the forgiveness of sins (Rev 13:8).
6. Jehovah has been, based on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, forgiving sins since the foundation of the world.
7. Therefore, because of the foreknowledge of Jehovah, the forgiveness of sins in the Old Testament times was actually extended and received in those times. God neither postponed forgiveness, nor rolled sins forward to the cross, in order for them to be forgiven.

APPENDIX A
OMNISCIENCE AND OLD TESTAMENT FORGIVENESS OF SINS
(Including New Testament Times Prior To The Kingdom)

Old Testament Times Passages:

<u>Isa 44:22</u>	Lev 16:30	Ex 34:9	<u>Num 14:18-20</u>
2 Sam 12:13	Isa 6:7	<u>2 Chron 7:14</u>	Psa 32:5
Psa 86:5	<u>Isa 43:25</u>	Psa 103:2-3	Psa 130:4
<u>Lk 5:18-26</u>	Isa 33:24	Isa 55:7	<u>Mk 2:10-11</u>
Jer 36:3	Mt 9:2-8	<u>Rom 3:23-26</u>	Mt 6:12
Lk 18:14	Lev 4:20,26,31,35	Lev 5:10,13,16,18	Lev 6:7
1 Kgs 8:30,39			



God, being omniscient, saw the cross in time (Rev 13:8). Therefore, He forgave sins prior to the cross as well as after the cross. The fact that Christ's blood is the agent does not alter when in time God actually forgave the sin (cf. Isa 46:10).

God's knowledge is (DIETS):

<u>Distinct</u> -	It is free from vagueness or confusion.
<u>Immediate</u> -	It does not come by senses or imagination.
<u>Eternal</u> -	It is comprehended in one timeless act of the Divine mind.
<u>True</u> -	It corresponds to the reality of all things.
<u>Simultaneous</u> -	It does not come by successive observation or reasoning.

APPENDIX B

THE CHURCH IN PURPOSE

I. THE CHURCH WAS IN THE PURPOSE OF GOD AS EARLY AS THE BIRTH OF PAUL.

- A. “But when it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from my mother’s womb, and called me through his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles; straightway I conferred not with flesh and blood . . .” (Gal 1:15-16a). From this scripture we learn that God separated Paul from the time of his birth to preach the gospel among the Gentiles. Certainly God knew that the preaching of the gospel of Christ would result in the establishment of the church in communities where it is preached. To say that God purposed that Paul should preach the gospel, but did not know that such preaching would result in the founding of churches of Christ is unthinkable.
- B. The word of God is the seed of the kingdom (Lk 8:11). Preaching the word of God is sowing the seed of the kingdom (Mt 13:19,23). When the seed of the kingdom is sown in the hearts of people and allowed to have its way, children of the kingdom will be the result (Mt 13:38). A group of children of the kingdom in any community constitutes the kingdom in that place. And since the kingdom is the church (Mt 16:18-19), it follows that this group of children of the kingdom produced by the preaching of the gospel, is the church in that community. It was in the purpose of God that Paul should preach Christ among the Gentiles and since this preaching results in the establishment of churches of Christ, it follows that the purpose of God included the establishment of churches of Christ through the preaching of the gospel by Paul. Since he was separated in the mind of God for this work from the time of his birth, we know that the church was in the purpose of God as far back as the birth of Paul.

II. THE CHURCH WAS IN THE PURPOSE OF GOD IN THE TIME OF MOSES.

“I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come; how that the Christ must suffer, and how that he first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26:22-23). Here we learn that the prophets, including Moses, foretold the suffering of Christ on the cross. Paul tells us that Christ purchased the church with his own blood shed on the cross (Acts 20:28). Is it possible that God knew that his Son would suffer on Calvary, but did not know that he would purchase the church with his blood shed in that suffering? John saw the “four living creatures” and the “four and twenty elders” fall down before Christ, the Lamb, and sing his praises, saying, “For thou wast slain, and didst

purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth" (Rev 5:9-10). The people who are purchased with the blood of the Lamb are made to be a kingdom. Did God know in the time of Moses that the Christ would suffer, but did not know that through his suffering men would be purchased and that those so purchased would constitute the kingdom, the church? Such a conclusion is unthinkable. God knew and purposed in the time of Moses that the church should be purchased through the suffering of Christ.

III. THE CHURCH WAS IN THE PURPOSE OF GOD IN THE TIME OF ABRAHAM.

Paul tells us that there was revealed to him a mystery which was not so clearly made known in other generations, "to wit, that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (Eph 3:6). The promise here mentioned is the promise made to Abraham that all nations were to be blessed in his seed (Gen 12:3; 22:18; Eph 2:11-22). It is in fulfillment of this promise that we have all gospel blessings (Acts 3: 25-26; Gal 3:7-9). The one body is the church (1 Cor 12:13). When God told Abraham that all nations were to be blessed in his seed, Christ (Gal 3:16), he meant that the Gentiles were to be fellow-heirs with the Jews; they were to be fellow-members of the body, which is the church (Eph 1:22; Col 1:18); and fellow-partakers with the Jews of all that is included in the promise to Abraham. And all these blessings were to come to the Gentiles through the gospel of Jesus Christ of which Paul was made a minister and a preacher. God could not plan for the Gentiles to be fellow-members of the body which is the church without planning the existence of the church. So we conclude that the church was included in the purpose of God when he made the promise to Abraham.

IV. THE CHURCH WAS IN THE PURPOSE OF GOD BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD.

The expression "foundation of the world" has been interpreted by some to mean the beginning of the Christian dispensation. But Paul's use of it in Ephesians 1:4, seems to be a parallel with the expression "eternal purpose" in Ephesians 3:11. Peter speaks of Christ being foreknown before the foundation of the world, but manifested "at the end of the times" for our sake (1 Pet 1:20). The manifestation of Christ refers to his coming in the flesh, which was the period just preceding the Christian dispensation. But Peter speaks of the "foundation of the world" as a time prior to "the end of the times." Jesus said the blood of all the prophets shed from the foundation of the world would be required of his generation and then added that this includes all the prophets from Abel down to Zachariah (Lk 11:50-51). From his use of the expression we learn that the foundation of the world must extend back as far as Abel, so it must refer to the creation of the world. Now for the proof that the church has been in the mind of God since before the creation of the world.

- A. Paul says that it is God's eternal purpose that the wisdom of God is to be made known to "the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places" through the church (Eph 3:11; 1:19-20). So the church is included in the eternal purpose of God.
- B. Paul teaches us that God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love (Eph 1:4). But in Ephesians 5:25-27, we learn that it is the church for which Jesus gave himself that is to be "holy and without blemish" (cf. Titus 2:14). So the chosen of Ephesians 1:4, is the church of Ephesians 5:27. And therefore the church was in the purpose of God before the foundation of the world. Paul speaks of this same purpose as including the called (2 Thess 2:14) and the justified (1 Cor 6:11) and those who are yet to be glorified (Rom 8:28-30).
- C. Peter Says we are redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ "who was fore-known indeed before the foundation of the world" (1 Pet 1:20; cf. 2 Tim 1:9-10). From the context we learn that he was foreknown as a lamb through whose blood we would be redeemed. Is it possible that God could have foreknown that Jesus would suffer as a lamb in sacrifice for the redemption of our souls from sin and yet did not know that the re-deemed would constitute the church? Such a conclusion would be false and ridiculous. So from this we learn that before the creation God knew man would sin, that he would give his Son to suffer for man's sin, and that those redeemed by the blood of Christ would be his kingdom, his church (Rev 5:9-10). So the church was included in the purpose of God from before the foundation, creation, of the world. It is not an after- thought with God; it is not something hurriedly arranged to meet an emergency on account of God being unable to accomplish what he had attempted at the time the prophets said he would do it. The church, next to heaven itself, is the climax of all God's gracious purposes to show the exceeding riches of his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

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HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE LUKEWARM LAODICEANS

Often I have read Rev. 3:15-16 and found myself asking two questions: (1) “Are hot, cold and lukewarm three categories of one’s moral or spiritual condition?” and (2) “Is it conceivable that God really prefers the ungodliness of paganism over lukewarm Christianity?”

Traditionally, “hot” refers to Christians on fire for the Lord, “cold” to non-Christians totally opposed to the Lord, and “lukewarm” to Christians who appear to be unable to let go of the world but want to be religious. Is this what our Lord had in mind when John wrote these words? In order to have a broader perspective of “hot,” “cold,” and “lukewarm,” the historical situation of Laodicea may be of value.

Upon visiting and studying ancient Laodicea, J. S. Rudwick and E. M. B. Green discovered some interesting facts [“The Expository Times” 69 (Oct. 1957-Sept. 1958): 176-78]. The old city of Laodicea did not have a local water supply. Rudwick and Green discovered an aqueduct in the southern part of the site which indicated Laodicea received its water from the modern town of Denizli, five miles south. Since hot mineral springs are common in that area, and the aqueduct was coated with mineral deposits, Rudwick and Green concluded that Laodicea’s source of water must have been one of the hot mineral springs. Therefore, in order for Laodicea to receive its water, the water traveled through the aqueduct some five miles. While in the aqueduct the hot mineral water slowly cooled and was lukewarm when it arrived in Laodicea. All people in the area of Laodicea knew that lukewarm mineral water would disappoint the thirsty traveler. It would only make a person vomit. Consequently, after the lukewarm water arrived in Laodicea the people had to allow it to cool before drinking it.

Further, it is valuable to know something about the water of two of Laodicea’s closest neighbors. Hierapolis, a few miles north of Laodicea had hot spring water which was recognized to have some medicinal value. The Greek word *zestos* (hot) would likely remind the Laodiceans of their neighbor’s water. Also only a few miles away was the city of Colossae. *Psuchros* (cold) describes Colossae’s water, a very precious element in that area. Cold water is always useful and especially so in the first century. The weary, thirsty traveler would find refreshment from the cold water of Colossae.

In view of this information concerning the water of Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colossae, it seems appropriate to reconsider “hot,” “cold,” and “lukewarm,” in Rev. 3:15,16. The hot water of Hierapolis was useful in that it helped the sick become well again. The cold water of Colossae provided refreshment for the weary. Laodicea’s lukewarm water, however, made one vomit; it only made the healthy sick. Is it possible the Laodiceans’ Christianity is being compared to their lukewarm, sickening water? If so, “hot,” “cold,” and “lukewarm” are not so much degrees on a “spiritual thermometer” (Rudwick and Green) as they are illustrations from the historical context hot and cold water was useful,

and if the Laodicean Christians had been either hot or cold they also could have been useful. Unfortunately, the Laodiceans were lukewarm and just as their water made one sick, so their form of Christianity made God sick. Hot and cold are commendable characteristics, but lukewarm Christianity “upsets the Lord’s stomach.”

This interpretation may also find support from the use of the words themselves. First, the order of the two words, hot and cold, in the Greek text is inconsistent. The phrase is used three times in the passage. In verse 15 the word order is “cold or hot” but in verse 16 the order is reversed to “hot or cold.” The grammar itself does not demand this interpretation but it appears to suggest that hot and cold are equally commendable. Second, in verse 15 John wrote, “I wish you were cold or hot.” Simply by reading the text, does it not sound as if Jesus would be pleased with either?

What was the sin of the Laodicean church? Why were they compared to their own water? They had been blinded (verses 17-18). The Laodiceans were known for their wealth. Their banking and wool industries had brought tremendous revenue into the city. As the Laodiceans viewed their condition everything appeared to be fine, but they had apparently placed their confidence in themselves. They were saying, “I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing” (verse 17, NIV). Like the rich fool (Lk. 12:13-21) the Laodiceans could only think of themselves and were not really useful to anyone. Hot and cold water were useful for medicinal purposes and refreshment but lukewarm water was useless. Jesus wanted the Laodicean Christians to become either cold or hot so they could be useful to others, but in their lukewarm state they were blinded from their real condition. No one is immune from this same problem today.

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July 13, 1982

REVELATION - WHEN WRITTEN?

Traditionally, the Book of Revelation has been dated near the end of the first century, around A.D. 96. Some writers, however, have advanced the preterist¹ view, contending that the Apocalypse was penned around A.D. 68 or 69 and thus the thrust of the book is supposed to relate to the impending destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70). A few prominent names have been associated with this position (c.g., Stuart, Schaff, Lightfoot—and our own Foy E. Wallace, Jr.) and for a brief time it was popular with certain scholars. James Orr has observed, however, that recent criticism has reverted to the traditional date of near A.D. 96.² The fact is, the evidence for the later date is extremely strong. In view of some of the bizarre theories that have surfaced in recent times (e.g., the notion that all “end time” prophecies were fulfilled with the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70),³ which are dependent upon the preterist interpretation, we offer the following.

External Evidence.

The external evidence for the late dating of Revelation is of the highest quality.

(1) Irenaeus (A.D. 180), a student of Polycarp (who was a disciple of the apostle John) wrote that the Apocalyptic vision “was seen not very long ago, almost in our own generation, at the close of the reign of Domitian.”⁴ The testimony of Irenaeus, not far removed from the apostolic age, is first rate. He places the book near the end of Domitian’s reign, and that ruler died in A.D. 96. Irenaeus seems to be unaware of any other view for the date of the Book of Revelation.

(2) Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 155-215) says that John returned from the Isle of Patmos “after the tyrant was dead,”⁵ and Eusebius, known as the “Father of Church History,” identifies the “tyrant” as Domitian.⁶ Even Moses Stuart, America’s most prominent preterist, admitted that the “tyrant here meant is probably Domitian.” Within this narrative, Clement further speaks of John as an “old man.” If Revelation was written prior to A.D. 70, it would scarcely seem appropriate to refer to John as an old man since he would only have been in his early sixties at this time.

¹. From a Latin word, meaning “that which is past.”

². **International Standard Bible Encyclopedia**, IV, p. 2584.

³. An advocate of the Max King, A.D. 70 doctrine recently admitted to this writer that his entire theory would collapse if it could be demonstrated that the Book of Revelation was written after A.D. 70.

⁴. **Against Heresies**, V. 30.

⁵. **Who Is The Rich Man?**, p. 42.

⁶. **Ecclesiastical History**, III, 23.

(3) Victorinus (late 3rd century), author of the earliest commentary on the Book of Revelation, wrote: "When John said these things, he was in the island of Patmos, condemned to the mines by Caesar Domitian. There he saw the Apocalypse; and when at length grown old, he thought that he should receive his release by suffering; but Domitian being killed, he was liberated."⁷

(4) Jerome (A.D. 340-420) said, "In the fourteenth then after Nero, Domitian having raised up a second persecution, he [John] was banished to the island of Patmos, and wrote the Apocalypse..."⁸

(5) To all of this may be added the comment of Eusebius, who contends that the historical tradition of his time (A.D. 324) placed the writing of the Apocalypse at the close of Domitian's reign.⁹

M'Clintoch and Strong, in contending for the later date, declare that "there is no mention in any writer of the first three centuries of any other time or place."¹⁰ Upon the basis of external evidence, therefore, there is little contest between the earlier and later dates.

Internal Evidence.

The contents of the Book of Revelation also suggest a late date, as the following observations indicate.

(1) The spiritual conditions of the churches described in Revelation 2-3 more readily harmonize with the late date. "The church in Ephesus, for instance, was not founded by Paul until the latter part of Claudian's reign: and when he wrote to them from Rome, A.D. 61, instead of reproving them for any want of love, he commends their love and faith (Eph. 1:15)."¹¹ Yet, when Revelation was written, in spite of the fact that the Ephesians had been patient (2:2), they had also left their first love (2:4) and this would seem to require a greater length of time than seven or eight years, as suggested by the early date.

(2) This book was penned while John was banished to Patmos (1:9). It is well known that Domitian had a fondness for this type of persecution. If, however, this

⁷. **Commentary on Revelation**, 10:11.

⁸. **Lives of Illustrious Men**, 9.

⁹. Eusebius, III, 18.

¹⁰. **Cyclopedias**, VIII, p. 1064.

¹¹. T. H. Home, **Critical Introduction**, II, p. 382.

persecution is dated in the time of Nero, how does one account for the fact that Peter and Paul are murdered, yet John is only exiled to an island?¹²

(3) The church at Laodicea is represented as existing under conditions of great wealth. She was rich and had need of nothing (3:17). In A.D. 60, though, Laodicea had been almost entirely destroyed by an earthquake. Surely it would have required more than eight or nine years for that city to have risen again to the state of affluence described in Revelation.

(4) The doctrinal departures described in Revelation would appear to better fit the later dating. For example, the Nicolaitans (2:6,15) were a full-fledged sect at the time of John's writing, whereas they had only been hinted at in general terms in 2 Peter and Jude, which were written possibly around A.D. 65-66.

(5) Persecution for professing the Christian faith is evidenced in those early letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor. For instance, Antipas had been killed in Pergamum (2:13). It is generally agreed among scholars, however, that Nero's persecution was mostly confined to Rome; further, it was not for religious reasons.¹³

Arguments For The Early Date Answered.

In the absence of external evidence in support of an early date for Revelation, preterists generally rely on what they perceive as internal support for their view. In the main, their arguments are:

First, it is contended that the Gospel of John has a much smoother style of Greek than does the Apocalypse. Thus, the latter must have been written many years prior to the Fourth Gospel—when the apostle was not so experienced in the literary employment of Greek. To this it may be replied:

(a) “Archaeological” discoveries and literary studies have recently demonstrated that along with Aramaic and Hebrew, Greek was commonly spoken among first century Palestinians. Thus John must have known and used Greek since his youth.¹⁴

(b) B. B. Warfield contends that “the Apocalypse betrays no lack of knowledge of, or command over, Greek syntax or vocabulary; the difference lies, rather, in the manner in which a language well in hand is used, in style, properly so called; and the solution of it must turn on psychological, not chronological, considerations.”¹⁵

¹². Eusebius, III, 18; II, 25.

¹³. Everett Harrison, **Introduction to the New Testament**, p. 446.

¹⁴. R. H. Gundry, **Survey of the New Testament**, p. 365.

¹⁵. Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia, III, p. 2036.

(c) R. H. Charles, author of the commentary on Revelation in the **International Critical Commentary** series, and perhaps the greatest expert on apocalyptic literature, regarded the so-called “bad grammar” as deliberate, for purposes of emphasis, and consistent with the citation of numerous Old Testament passages.¹⁶ It might be noted that in the 404 verses of Revelation, Westcott & Hort’s **Greek New Testament** gives over 500 references and allusions to the Old Testament.

(d) Finally, as M’Clintoch and Strong point out, “It may be admitted that the Revelation has many surprising grammatical peculiarities. But much of this is accounted for by the fact that it was probably written down, as it was seen, ‘in the Spirit,’ while the ideas, in all their novelty and vastness, filled the apostle’s mind and rendered him less capable of attending to forms of speech. His Gospel and Epistles, on the other hand, were composed equally under divine influence, but an influence of a gentler, more ordinary kind, with much care, after long deliberation, after frequent recollection and recital of the facts, and deep pondering of the doctrinal truths which they involve.”¹⁷

Second, it is claimed that Revelation must have been penned before A.D. 70 since it has no allusion to the destruction of Jerusalem; rather, it is alleged, it represents both the city and the temple as still standing. In response we note:

(a) If John wrote this work near A.D. 96, there would be little need to focus upon the destruction of Jerusalem since the lessons of that catastrophe would have been well learned in the preceding quarter of a century. However, it must be noted that some scholars see a veiled reference to Jerusalem’s destruction in 11:8, where “the great city,” in which the Savior was crucified (Jerusalem), is called Sodom - not merely because of wickedness, but due to the fact that it was a destroyed city of evil.¹⁸

(b) The contention that the literal city and temple were still standing, based upon chapter 11, ignores the express symbolic nature of the narrative. Salmon says that it is “difficult to understand how anyone could have imagined that the vision represents the temple as still standing. For the whole scene is laid in heaven, and the temple that is measured is the heavenly temple (11:19; 15:5). We have only to compare this vision with the parallel vision of a measuring-reed seen by Ezekiel (ch. 40), in which the prophet is commanded to measure—surely not the city which it is stated had been demolished fourteen years previously, but the city of the future seen by the prophet in vision.”¹⁹

¹⁶. Gundry, p. 365.

¹⁷. **Cyclopedia**, VIII, p. 1064.

¹⁸. Theodor Zahn, **Introduction to the New Testament**, III, p. 406.

¹⁹. George Salmon, **Introduction to the New Testament**, p. 238.

Third, some argue for an early date of the Apocalypse by asserting that the enigmatical 666 (13:18) is a reference to Nero. This is possible only by pursuing the most irresponsible form of exegesis. To come up with such an interpretation one must: (a) Add the title "Caesar" to Nero's name; (b) Compute the letter/number arrangement on the basis of Hebrew, whereas the book was written in Greek; (c) Alter the spelling of "Caesar" by dropping the "yodh" in the Hebrew. All of this reveals a truly desperate attempt to find a reference to Nero in the text.

Additionally, Leon Morris has pointed out that Irenaeus discussed a number of possibilities for deciphering the 666, but he did not even include Nero in his list, let alone regard this as a likely conjecture.²⁰ Noted critic Theodor Zahn observed that Nero was not even suggested as a possibility until the year 1831.²¹

In view of the foregoing evidence, a very strong case can be made for dating Revelation at about A.D. 96. Accordingly, the theory of "realized eschatology," which is grounds upon the necessity of the Apocalypse having been written prior to A.D. 70, is shown to be without the necessary foundation for its successful defense, to say nothing of the scores of other scriptural difficulties that plague it.

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²⁰. Leon Morris, **The Revelation of St. John**, p. 38.

²¹. Zahn, III, p. 447.

ROMAN EMPERORS – 1

In the Time of the New Testament

EMPEROR	DATES OF REIGNS	CONTACT WITH THE N. T. ACCOUNT
Imperator Caesar <u>Augustus</u> (Octavian)	27 B.C.-A.D. 14	Birth of Jesus; census occurred which caused Joseph and Mary to go to Bethlehem; the beginning of the emperor cult, against which Christians resisted and were persecuted by Rome (Luke 2:1).
<u>Tiberius</u> Julius Caesar Augustus	14-37	Jesus had His public ministry and died during the reign of this emperor (Luke 3:1).
<u>Gaius</u> Caesar Augustus Germanicus (Caligula)	37-41	He demanded worship of himself; ordered his statue placed in the temple at Jerusalem but died before the order was carried out.
Tiberius <u>Claudius</u> Caesar Augustus Germanicus	41-54	Expelled Jewish residents from Rome, among them Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:2), for disputation and disturbance over one named "Chrestus" (Acts 11:28).
Imperator <u>Nero</u> Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus	54-68	First real persecution of Christians by Rome, though only around the city of Rome; Peter and Paul martyred (Acts 25: 10; 28:19).

Chamberlin, D.

ROMAN EMPERORS – 2

In the Time of the New Testament (Continued)

EMPEROR	DATES OF REIGNS	CONTACT WITH THE N.T. ACCOUNT
Servius <u>Galba</u> Imperator Caesar Augustus	68	Siege of Jerusalem took place in the time of this emperor and the next two.
Imperator Marcus <u>Otho</u> Caesar Augustus	69	
Aulus <u>Vitellius</u> Imperator Augustus Germanicus	69	
Imperator Caesar <u>Vespasianus</u> Augustus	69-79	He was the general in charge of crushing Jerusalem rebellion in the late 60s, but upon the death of Nero he proceeded to Rome to become emperor, leaving the task to his son Titus, who besieged Jerusalem until its fall, and that of the temple, in A.D. 70.
Imperator <u>Titus</u> Caesar Vespasianus Augustus	79-81	He was the general who conquered Jerusalem against the Jewish Zealots in A.D. 70.
Imperator Caesar <u>Domitianus</u> Augustus Germanicus	81-96	Great persecution of the church during his reign; he demanded to be called Lord and God (Domines et Deus); his persecution probably served as the background for the writing of the Apocalypse (Revelation) to encourage Christians.

Chamberlin, D.

ROMAN PERSECUTIONS OF CHRISTIANS

Dates	Emperor	Nature and Extent of Persecution	Notable Martyrs
64	Nero	Took place in Rome and vicinity only. Christians were made scapegoats for burning of Rome. Sadistic measures included burning Christians alive to illuminate Nero's gardens	Paul, Peter
c. 90-96	Domitian	Was capricious, sporadic, centered in Rome and Asia Minor. Christians were persecuted for refusal to offer incense to the genius of the emperor.	Clement of Rome, John (exiled to Patmos)
98-117	Trajan	Was sporadically enforced. Christians were lumped with other groups whose patriotism was considered suspect. Christians were to be executed when found, but not sought out.	Ignatius, Symeon, Zozimus, Rufus
117-138	Hadrian	Was sporadically enforced. Policies of Trajan were continued. Any who brought false witness against Christians were to be punished.	Telesphorus
161-180	Marcus Aurelius	Emperor was a Stoic who opposed Christianity on philosophical grounds. Christians were blamed for natural disorders.	Justin Martyr Pothinus Blandina
202-211	Septimus Severus	Conversion to Christianity was forbidden.	Leonidas, Irenaeus, Perpetua
235-236	Maximus the Thracian	Christian clergy were ordered executed. Christians were opposed because they had supported emperor's predecessor, whom he had assassinated.	Ursula, Hippolytus
249-251	Decius	Was first empire-wide persecution. Offering of incense to genius of emperor was demanded. Enthusiastic return to paganism required utter extermination of Christianity.	Fabianus, Alexander of Jerusalem
257-260	Valerian	Christians' property was confiscated. Christians were prohibited right of assembly.	Origen, Cyprian, Sixtus II
303-311	Diocletian Galerius	This was worst persecution of all. Churches were destroyed, Bibles burned. All civil rights of Christians were suspended. Sacrifice to gods was required.	Mauritius, Alban

Chamberlin, D.

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